

John 2v13ff

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[0 : 00] Oh well, hello and welcome. It's a real honour and a privilege to be here. My name is Adam Kersis. I'm afraid I was actually introduced slightly wrong because I'm not from Tunbridge Wells, I'm from Royal Tunbridge Wells.

! So we've got to get that right. Please do keep your Bibles open as we'll be referring to it throughout the talk. But to start us off, let's just have a bit of poetry from Dylan Thomas. Do not go gentle into that good night. Old age should burn and rave at close of day. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right, because their words had fought no lightning day. Do not go gentle into that good night. Good men, the last way by, crying how bright. Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay. Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight and learned too late.

[1 : 13] They grieved on its way. They grieved on its way. Do not go gentle into that good night. Grave men near death who see with blinding sight. Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light. And you, my father, there on the sad height. Curse, bless me now with fierce tears, I pray. Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Oh, those are some beautiful words from Dylan Thomas, aren't they? And to my shame, I have to admit, I only actually know them because of the film *Interstellar*.

A call to rage against the dying of the light. To fight for every breath, every moment. Because once it's all over, then off we go into that eternal night.

Do you feel that thing called upon you? To not waste a second. Because soon, it will all be over and done, this thing we call life.

[2 : 20] Is this all life is? A moment? A blip? Is that all we can expect? Is that all we can hope for? John writes his entire letter, spiralling in on this topic of life.

And he claims that if we recognise that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and believe it, then we can have life in his name. A life that will last for longer than a moment, than a blip.

A life that will have purpose, and joy, and satisfaction. And right here, right at the beginning of John's letter, he focuses in on a false religion that will rob you of life.

And he gives you a glimpse of a radical relationship that will give life to you. And he does this in two points. Firstly, a false religion turns a temple into a marketplace.

So, a false religion turns a temple into a marketplace. So, Jesus lived in the first century Israel. And John's letter tells us of a time when Jesus was celebrating the Passover.

[3 : 26] The Passover was this great feast, remembering when the Jews were saved from Egypt. A divine rescue. And if you were a first century Jew, then there is one place that you want to be during the Passover.

You want to be in Jerusalem. And if you're in Jerusalem, then there's one place you definitely want to be, if you're there during the Passover. You want to be in the temple. The temple, that's the place to be during the Passover.

The temple, it represents the very heart of the Jewish faith. The Jerusalem temple was the Mecca for the first century Jews. At the temple, people could come, and they could meet with God.

But at the temple, God's physical location was symbolically found. At the temple, sacrifices for sin could be made. At the temple, that's where it's all going down. Now, the temple, it worked a little bit like an onion, or if you like *Shrek*, like an ogre.

It had layers. That first layer, now that layer was the furthest any Gentiles, so non-ethically Jewish people, could come into. Then the next layer was the furthest any Jewish women could come.

[4 : 37] And then the next layer, and then the next layer, the furthest the Jewish men could come. Until finally you hit a barrier. A barrier which only the high priest could pass.

And in this outer limit, in this outer courtyard, this layer, the courtyard of the Gentiles, this is where our verses, our story is set.

So please sit down with me again, verse 13. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeon, and the money changers sitting there.

Now, it's not particularly unusual for you to get money changers near the temple. Because there's a certain type of currency which they would have used in Jerusalem, and that the temple would have been using.

And actually people who travel far away just wouldn't really have had that, that sort of money. So you need money changers. Again, it's not particularly unusual for you to get people selling oxen and sheep and pigeons near the temple.

[5 : 38] Because again, if you've travelled from Spain or from Italy to get to this famous temple in Jerusalem, you're probably not going to bring along an oxen with you that would just slow you down and make it a costly venture.

However, what was unusual was to have them in the temple itself, in the very court of the Gentiles, its outer layer. Because how could the Gentiles come and meet with God?

Come and offer their sacrifices for sin? If all around them is this noise and this hubbub and the shouting and the bleating and the selling and the bartering and the mooing and the smell and the stench of a busy, thriving, dirty marketplace.

And Jesus, he's not happy about this. He's not happy about it at all. Let's continue reading. Verse 15. And this is Jesus here. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen.

And he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, you can imagine, he would have said this pretty loudly, take these things away.

[6 : 47] Do not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. This is a highly charged, like emotional response to the temple becoming a marketplace.

And it caused, it caused the disciples to remember from Psalm 69, zeal for your house will consume me. Jesus, he's consumed from his father's house.

This is, this is God's house, his home. This is where God should be honoured, where he should be worshipped, where he should be praised. This is where people from all over the world can come in reverence and awe and fear and meet with God.

This should be a place of prayer and petition. This should be a place where people can acknowledge their sin and offer up to that sacrifice. This house, it is so important, it is too important for Jesus not to act.

He is filled with this emotional zeal to drive out all those who would rob his father's house of its true purpose. Jesus is not weak and mild.

[7 : 58] He is consumed with zeal for his father's house because it matters, because it's important, because these market traders and these money lenders and the priests who put them there in the first place, they are peddling a false religion.

A religion that cares more about profit than it does about faith. A religion that cares more about money than it does about atoning sacrifice. A religion that cares more about consumers than it does about the king of the entire universe having a relationship with his people.

Jesus, he wants nothing to do with this fake religion, with this false religion. Jesus, he wants this religion out, gone.

If you fill a diesel car with petrol, it's not going to go anywhere because that's not its purpose. And if you fill a temple with a market, then it's not going to achieve its purpose either.

What do you do with a diesel car fueled with petrol? You drain it. And what do you do with a temple filled with a marketplace? You drive it out. False religion turns the temple into a marketplace.

[9 : 10] False religion needs to be driven out. The Jews put the market over the temple, the money over the magnificent, the immediate over the mattress. They were so focused on what was right in front of them that they lost sight of the most amazing thing of all.

Meeting with God. They were peddlers of a false religion. And we've got to ask the question, are we peddlers of a false religion? Do we get distracted by the immediate, by the things that are right in front of us, that we can feel and that we can touch and that we can see, that actually we forget that we were made to know our maker.

We were made as humans to know God. We were made as humans to meet with God. Do we squander our chance to experience the magnificent, the miraculous?

Do we squander our chance to meet with God? Because we're so focused on the now, on the immediate, on the things which are right in front of our eyes. It's a false religion when a temple becomes a marketplace.

Jesus burned with zeal against it and he will burn with zeal against any similar attitudes now. Have you noticed what this also tells us about Jesus?

[10:30] Jesus, he's no man. Jesus is no simple human being. Jesus, he's like you and he's like me but he's also totally different to you and me. Jesus is the Son of God and thus he cares passionately, passionately, frantically, zealously for his Father's house.

So do we realise who this is, who John is telling us about? Do you realise that the very consequences of these words God became a man and now the world has changed.

So false religion, it turns the temple into a marketplace. But God didn't come to earth as a man just to tell us what was wrong but to start a radical relationship.

So that's my second point. The second point John makes here. The way to a radical relationship is through Jesus the temple. The way to a radical relationship is through Jesus the temple.

So let's look down at verse 18. So the Jews said to him, what sign do you show us for doing these things? Now, it's already interesting though, isn't it?

[11:32] Like, they're not challenging him ethically. Why do you send these market traders away? Like, supposing it's morally wrong. No, they challenge his authority to do such a thing.

They want to see a sign. It's like they already know that actually what they are doing is wrong. So they try to change the subject away from the action and onto his authority.

Let's continue reading, continue looking down. Verse 19. Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days.

So the Jews then didn't get it. They think, Jesus, he's just a little bit crazy. It took them 46 years thank you very much to build this temple and this Jesus guy thinks he's going to destroy it and then raise it in three days.

That's just rubbish to them. That's just inconceivable. Let's continue reading, verse 21. But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and then believed the scriptures and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[12:48] These verses, they're absolutely huge. They're absolutely massive because Jesus, he is claiming to be the temple. Jesus is claiming to be the temple.

See, it'll be a little bit like me maybe today coming up here and telling all of you, see, I want you to forget everything that you've ever learnt about rugby because actually everything you think you know about rugby you sort of got it wrong.

It'll be a bit like me coming up here today and saying actually, actually you've got to understand, me, Adam Curtis, I am Wembley Stadium. It's in me that you get the excitement, that you get the thrill and the energy.

It's in me that you get to come and watch and see beautiful rugby hopefully take place. It's in me that rugby is fulfilled and understood and seen. Now if I came up and did that today and said these things that I am Wembley Stadium and you've got to see it through me, then there's probably only two ways really to react.

Firstly, I think you'd be like, this man is crazy. This man is literally out of his mind. This is ridiculous. Or probably the only other option, if you weren't going to take that one, is you'd have to then believe what I said.

[14:00] So you are going to assume I'm crazy or you've got to believe what I said. So this is what Jesus is doing here. He's saying something equally as radical or more radical. The Jews, they put so much religious significance into the temple.

It's so important to them. It's where they meet God. It's where they offer their sacrifices to him. And Jesus is saying that his body is now the temple. All this religious significance can now be found in his body.

It is found in Jesus. Once you used to find God in the temple, now you find God in Jesus. Once you used to meet God in the temple, now you meet God in Jesus.

Once you used to offer sacrifices to God in a temple, now you offer them in Jesus. Jesus is the temple. And because Jesus is the temple, we no longer need to go to a geographical location to meet God.

Because Jesus is the temple, we can now have a radical relationship with God. We can find God in Jesus. We can meet God in Jesus. We can offer a sacrifice to God in Jesus.

[15:12] But the disciples only understood the significance of Jesus' work that he is this temple. Once they'd actually seen him rise from the dead, as we saw in verse 22, only then did they see how Jesus was the temple that was destroyed when he was nailed to a cross and then rebuilt when he rose from the dead after three days.

It's important to note that this is why Jesus had the authority to clear that temple in the first place. Remember the question the Jews asked him in verse 18? What sign do you show us for doing these things?

Well, the resurrection of Jesus, that is the sign and the proof. It's because Jesus has the power to defeat death that he has the authority to clear the temple. Jesus does not just say crazy things, I am the temple.

Jesus does crazy things. He defeats death. This is why the disciples trusted him and this is why we too are able to trust him now.

The way to a radical relationship with God is through Jesus, the temple. When I was a lot younger and a lot smaller, a little kid, we went on a family holiday with my cousins, my aunts, my uncles and we did loads of canoeing.

[16:27] Now one day my older brother, Jamie, my older sister, Becky, my older cousin, and so they wanted to canoe up the river towards the sea. So they crossed over the river in their canoe to the other side and then they started going up towards the sea.

And they just went on and on and on until actually eventually they just got a bit tired and decided they wanted to turn back. But as they started to row back up the river, they started to row against the current.

And it didn't matter how hard they rowed, they hardly made any distance until. Until they got to the point of just sheer exhaustion. And they had to call my mum and dad and our aunts and uncles and tell them that we're stuck.

We can't get ourselves across the river to the other side, where you guys are, and we can't move any further up the river towards you either. Now I must admit at this point as a little boy, my mind is a bit fuzzy.

All I remember is grown-ups chattering. And from what I've heard over the years, it would be fair to say that my parents were pretty panicked. And they ended up calling the Coast Guard.

[17:32] But this bit I remember with crystal clarity. My brother, my sister, my cousin, who got themselves into this stupid situation by themselves, they got airlifted by a helicopter from their side of the river, and they were brought over to our side.

I was so jealous. They got rescued by a helicopter, and all I got was this dull afternoon of sitting and waiting for them to return. Outrageous!

My brother, sister, and cousin, they were on one side of the river, and my family, we were on the other. And these two separate groups, they needed to become one. So they needed that helicopter. We're separated from God, and in the temple, we can meet with him. Jesus then, he's a little bit like that helicopter. Which enabled my brother, sister, and cousin, to be reunited with my family.

But you know what? Jesus being in a helicopter is just a rubbish illustration. Because Jesus isn't not just a helicopter, that's not strong enough. It doesn't stay good enough. It would be a little bit more like if you had my stupid lost teenager relatives here, and my family over here, and then just the river between.

[18:46] And a better picture of Jesus would be him sucking all that water up, and then just spraying it away. And then the ground literally folding together until the two sides pertain one.

Until they could meet. That's a truer image of what Jesus has done when he becomes the temple. Because it represents how radical this relationship is. it is world transforming. It changes everything. The other day I was in the pub, chatting to a mate of mine, and he asked me why I was a Christian. And I waffled on a bit, trying to give him a well reasoned answer. And yet this passage actually explains it perfectly and beautifully. I'm a Christian because in Jesus the temple, I have a radical relationship with God.

In Jesus, I know a God who made me. who knitted me together in my mother's womb. In Jesus, I know a God who sustains me, who gives me breath for each day and energy to keep on going. [19 : 51] In Jesus, I know a God who loves me so passionately and deeply that he would send his son to die for me on a cross. In Jesus, I know a God who gives life purpose, who gives joy in the struggle and deep satisfaction which nothing else can compare with.

In Jesus, I know a God who gives me life. Not just in the past and not just in the present, but in the future too. In Jesus, I know a God who will give me life which will last forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

Do you want to share in that life? Wonder that end? Will you come and meet Jesus? Will you come and meet with God?

Will you come to Jesus' temple and will you start a radical relationship with the God who knows you better than you know yourself? Will you come and call on the name of Jesus now and tomorrow and the day after until the end of time itself?

A false religion, it cares more about the immediate than the miraculous and it turns the temple into a marketplace. Jesus is having nothing to do with that because he is his father's son and he wants people to come and meet with God.

[21 : 15] Jesus offers us the chance to have a radical relationship with God by becoming the temple enabling all who call in his name to meet him. So should we rage against the dying of the lights?

No! That is a waste of time, a philosophy of pointless shallow immediate obsessed life. No! We should recognise who Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God and we should call on his name and know that if we do we will have life in all its fullest and all its glory now and then for all eternity. Why don't I pray?