

Gospel of John - episode 5

Chapter 2 part 2

Welcome to our sharing on Saint John's Gospel. We're talking about the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. And I left you in our last sharing with the wonderful piece that the love that was going to govern the new people of God was this divine love that comes from the Father through the Son and to us, and through us to other people. Now we're only at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus in John's Gospel, so the old order - which is the Mosaic covenant - and the new order - which is the new covenant that Jesus is beginning to inaugurate - are side by side. And so, you're going to get this confusion of the old and the new. And it's only after the Resurrection that the new takes over completely, so we will have the thinking of the old and the new together, side by side.

Now, we have the guests who are present at Cana of Galilee: These people all belong to the old order. The only thing they're going to understand is that Jesus creates a miracle, and they will either see him as a prophet or a miracle worker or whatever. But that's not where John wants **you and I** to be. We have had a wonderful introduction to chapter two. And so, we come to this on the higher platform knowing who Jesus is, knowing what he is doing, and therefore, we're in a different position to them. Now some of the people who are belonging to the old order are like the old wine - remember from the Synoptic Gospels? Mark 2:22 said, for example, that you can't put new wine into old wine skins.

So, the new heady, revelation that Jesus is making doesn't actually fit into the tight structures that the Judean leadership actually operate. It is way above the Law. They are in a position where they **don't want** to know, because if Jesus is right - and they know he's right - then it means that they will have to retire. They will lose their jobs, their income, their power base and all the rest of it, and they don't want that. So that's the opposition that comes to Jesus. Luke 5:39 told us that those who drink the old wine prefer the old wine. But what we're going to get here in chapter two, it's not old wine or any other wine. It's going to be the best wine.

It's going to be Heaven's best And Heaven's highest that's going to be given to us. So, while the people on the lower level will just read it as new wine as in the wine bottle. That's not what John is actually talking about. Here at Cana of Galilee, the old wine of the old covenant is being pushed aside, and the new wine of the new covenant is being presented. There are two points in John's Gospel that are very important. I've already given you two hinge points about Jesus leaning on the heart of the Father for all eternity and the beloved disciple leaning on the heart of Jesus.

There are another two hinge points as well. Here in chapter two, we get the overflowing gift of wine and in chapter six, we get the overflowing gift of bread. And that's the whole Eucharistic theme that John has in this Gospel which I will deal with later. So, the prophets had spoken about the overflowing gift of wine that was going to be given by the Messiah. Listen to this: Amos chapter 9: 13 "The days are coming, it is the Lord who speaks, when harvest will flow directly after ploughing and treading of grapes soon after sowing, when the mountains will run with new wine and the hills will flow with it".

Joel 4:18 "When that day comes" - that's the day of Messiah - "the mountains will run with new wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the riverbeds of Judah will run with water". Now the wine and the water all represent the overflowing gifts of the Messiah when he comes. So, what we're talking about here, therefore, is the transformation of the old into the new. Jesus is going to

bring the miracle of transforming people's lives from the old to the new. So, to use the language of wine, we have to let the old wine of our past lives be completely transformed by Jesus as we begin to drink the new wine of the Kingdom of God. Or, to say the same thing in different words, we've got to hand him the water of our past so that he can give us the wine of the Kingdom of God.... so, there's lots of stuff here that I can only give you a general comment for.

But when we begin really drinking the new wine of the Kingdom of God, we will become recognizably and completely different. As we were told in chapter one, we will be transformed into Sons of God. The way Saint Paul puts it into Corinthians 5:17, we will be 'a whole new creation in Christ'. It's going to be completely different. So, the next point I want to bring up is that you were told that the Mother of Jesus was there. That's a strange way for John to introduce Jesus' mother. She's not given a name or anything else.

The reason for this is that Jesus is the last of the Judean kings, and in the Judean kingship, the king's wife was never mentioned. It was only ever the king's mother that was mentioned because the king's mother was called the great Jebera, or we would say in English, the great lady, or in America, they would say the first lady. She was named because she had given birth to a king who is in the bloodline to the Christ, the Messiah. So, here in Cana of Galilee, when the wedding of the new covenant is being presented to us, we have the mother of the king present and active. This is very important. So, if you go back to, the book of Genesis, for example, you're told in Genesis 3:15 that the answer to the human race lay in a mother and her Son.... Or if you shift to Isaiah 7:14, it's the king and his mother that are the answer to the human race.

Since Jesus is presented as the Davidic messianic Judean king - shown here - then we look at God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:14. "Your house and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me, the Lord said. And your throne will be established forever". Well, how could a human throne be established forever? It is that Jesus is lifting the whole concept of kingship onto the higher plane, and it is as a spiritual kingdom that it will last forever. And Jesus will be the king that lasts forever. So, Jesus' response to his mother is another thing that we have to actually really look at. He said, "woman", why didn't he say mother? He said, "woman, why turn to me?" That's a strange way for a son to react to his mother. "My hour has not yet come".

John makes you ask questions of everything because there's much, much more to this than appears to the eye. In starting the whole new covenant - in starting the whole new family of God's people - all the old family ties have to go, and they have to be replaced by all the new family ties. This is dealt within the Synoptic Gospels in greater detail than John deals with it here, because Jesus is forming the new family. And so, 'mother' is not so important; 'Woman' is, which I will speak about in a few minutes. So, from Cana of Galilee Mary's role as Jesus's mother goes into the background, and she doesn't reappear again until he is on the Cross, when she becomes the mother of the new family of God, the mother of all who believe, and the mother of the church.

In this New Era of Redemption, she has to wait until then because he has his work to do, and then she will have hers. If you look - if you try and picture this wedding - there are actually two couples present, but you can't see them. And the two couples are not what you think! It's not the young people who are getting married. The two couples are, in fact, Adam and Eve and Jesus and Mary! They're the two couples represented here in Cana of Galilee. That's why you really need to go deep into this stuff. The whole history of humanity revolves around these two couples.

Adam and Eve brought the human race to the Fall and disintegration. And Jesus and Mary brought the human race to Resurrection and life. Now it is as the New Adam that Jesus responds to the New

Eve and calls her by her original name 'Woman' (Capital W). She's addressed as the New Eve. In other Words, she's given an official title. And when you go back to the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis chapter three, You find that the old Adam allowed himself to be influenced by the old Eve to do something against God's Will; Jesus isn't going to do that. Throughout the whole of the Gospel Jesus will only do what his Father wants him to do, nothing else. Here's a little summary of the Gospel of John: "I only do what my Father tells me to do. I only say what my Father tells me to say. I do the Will of the one who sent me.... and there's lots more! And then his final one, which I absolutely love, is in John 14:31. "I want the world to know that I love the Father, and therefore, I do exactly what my Father tells me". So here..... but that's a little bit further down in the Gospel. Jesus tells us that the reason why we do God's Will is that we love him.

Therefore, if Jesus gives a sign At Cana of Galilee, which he did, it meant that it was the Will of God, not the will of a human being. It's very interesting. But John does tell us that it was the second Eve who urged the second Adam to hasten the Redemption.... just as the first Eve had urged the first Adam to make his fatal mistake.... so, the action of woman has come full circle. The woman was involved in the fall and the woman is involved in the rising. The extraordinary thing about the way God works is the sheer detail of it.

Now what does Mary actually say? What she says is extremely important. She did not say 'now, be a good Son and look after me.... and I know who you are and all the rest of it. And for the sake of your mother, would you ever do this good turn to the others?' That would be totally on the level of 'below'. Not at all. She's not there! She's on the level of 'above', and she says the most incredible thing, "they have no wine". Who are 'they'? And what is the wine? Once you start asking questions, you begin to move into it.

So, if you're reading this on the level of below, she's simply asking Jesus to be nice. And, you know, the family are embarrassed because the wine the wine has run out. That's not what John is saying! Not at all. On the level of 'above', Jesus' mother is the only person present who knows what Redemption actually is! She has experienced the fullness of Redemption in her immaculate conception. She knows what the overflowing gift of wine is. She knows what this living water is like. She knows what this new life is like. She knows all about this agape love, and she says, **the rest of them** need it. The rest of them is every single person from Adam to Zachary.

She's asking for Redemption for the rest of her children. And so, the 'they' are very important. It doesn't matter what age they are, what country they come from, what generation they live in or anything else, whoever they are, if they're children of Adam, she wants them redeemed. I think it's absolutely fantastic. And so, what you're what you are seeing coming from her is agape love. She wants everybody else to experience what she herself has experienced, which is really wonderful. And when Jesus said to her, "my hour has not yet come", He understands perfectly what she's saying, That if he is to give them the new wine, he has to be crushed Like a bunch of grapes in in Gethsemane, and he has to be destroyed physically on the Cross to pay the price for this new wine to flow.

And like any little lamb that has been chosen for the altar, You are hearing the lamb bleating in pain. 'My hour hasn't come'. It's not the time! So, it's not the time for that one, but what he does do is he gives his mother the sign that he will do it... and that's the important thing here in Cana of Galilee. He gives her the sign and the assurance that he will give the overflowing gift of wine, but just not now. And it is in the last Passover of Jesus that he will actually do this.

So, the whole Gospel is made up of the events that lead to this point where Jesus actually gives us the new wine. But there's something else here that people don't see at all. Jesus has already been pointed out as the lamb that will be sacrificed to take our sins away. And the priests in the temple, when they choose a lamb for Passover, One of the things they do is that they lay hands on the head of the animal that is their anointing of that animal for sacrifice. Figuratively speaking, blessed mother is doing that. She is figuratively laying her hands on the head of her own Son, her only Son whom she loved. I don't know if you're hearing the reference to Abraham, and she is going to allow him to be sacrificed to give the new wine for the rest of us. So, in doing this, Mary has actually anticipated the whole priesthood in the church!

Since it wasn't the time she would wait, and she goes right back into the background until her request is actually given. And that's why you don't see her in John's Gospel at all until then. So, did Jesus' mother understand his reaction? Absolutely. They understood one another very, very well. So, she turned to the servants who were there and she gave them one command only. And in all of the 4 Gospels, there's only one command given by Jesus' mother.

That one command is, "Do whatever he tells you". I think it's the one command the entire church needs! 'Do whatever Jesus tells you'. Do whatever his Gospel tells you. Do whatever he tells you in your heart. Do whatever his spirit guides you to. Do whatever he says. I better say that the servants represent all the people who are going to be in the church in the future; you probably got that by now.

The Words that blessed mother actually used are the words of the Pharaoh in Genesis 41. Because at the time of this Pharaoh there was a 7-year famine in Egypt... and all over the Middle East, in fact. At the time Joseph, the son of Jacob, was the saviour figure who saved the whole of the Middle East, through his extraordinary agrarian policies, in Egypt. And when people came from all over the Middle East, Pharaoh would simply say to them, "go to Joseph. Do whatever he tells you".

So, what you have here is that Jesus's mother is surrendering completely to Jesus' ministry and surrendering completely to his teaching. She is his first and greatest disciple... and she says to all others who are going to be constituted her children in John 19, when Jesus is on the cross, "Do whatever he tells you." Surrender to him. It's a most wonderful thing. So, she's pointing to Jesus as the only person who can save humanity. And Jesus is the only one who can give the overflowing gift of wine here and the overflowing gift of bread in chapter six, which is the elements of the Eucharist.

So, let's come to the six Stone water jars. I think you're probably ahead of me now. Why were there six? Well, first of all, we need to look at the water jars. The UDAOI were the people in Jerusalem and in Judea... but this event takes place in Cana of Galilee. The people in Judea had all of these rights of cleansing between various stages of a meal, so you needed an awful lot of water there. What you are being told now is that this is happening in Cana of Galilee, which means that the influence of the leaders in Jerusalem had now spread widely.

And these very Galileans who were despised by the people in Judea are actually carrying out these rules and regulations that they made. So, this is why you have all the water that's there. But the water represents the gift of salvation. And Jesus is going to replace all of that cleansing with the washing of the feet in chapter 13. And the washing of the feet is his prophetic way of presenting baptism, which is going to be the real cleansing that he is going to offer to all of us.

Now why are there only six? six is a negative number in the bible. It represents imperfection. The human being was made on the sixth day, and we have failed God in every dispensation that He's given to us. No matter what God has done for us we managed to fail him wonderfully. So, it

represents the imperfections of the old Law. And number seven is perfection, and Jesus is going to restore everything; He's going to bring it to completion and perfection. So, the water represents the Mosaic Covenant, and it was good. It was the best thing that they had, but it's not good enough for Redemption.

Jesus is going to actually change the water to make this thing good enough for Redemption. In other Words, everything they had in the old covenant, no matter how good it was, it was still imperfect. And it needed this divine touch to change it. What Jesus does is that he changes the very nature of the water into something else.... and this, of course, is the preparation for the changing the very nature of bread and wine into his own body and blood in the Eucharist later on. So, when it comes to the miracle itself you kind of say to yourself, 'but where **is** the miracle'? When does it happen? At what point does this miracle actually happen? It's very, very interesting because Jesus simply gave a command to the servants, and he said, "fill the water jars. Take it to the steward now" and when the water had arrived at the steward, it was wine. So, you have to say to yourself, What's going on? Well, Psalm 33:9 says that "God spoke, and it came to be".

When you go back to Genesis chapter one, God said, and it came to be. This is what you have here as well; and you have the servants obeyed the command of Jesus. Now we won't look at the lower level as to what the servants were thinking or saying to each other when they were doing it! That is irrelevant. The fact is that they **obeyed** Jesus.... they **did** fill the water jars with water. They **did** draw some out, and they did bring it to the steward.

They were the three commandments.... the three commands.... and what you're going to find as we go on in the next chapters is that anybody who obeys the Word of God experiences the Power of God in their lives. It's when **we obey** the Word of God that we experience the Power of God. Reading it and not doing anything about it, Saint James will tell you, is not the thing! It's obeying the Word of God, and that's where the miracle is. I'll continue this reflection in our next segment. Thank you for listening.

INTERVAL: PART TWO

Welcome to our sharing on Saint John's Gospel. I want to give you some final reflections on this episode of Cana in Galilee, which we have been looking more deeply into. I've mentioned about the wine and the water and the command of Jesus in our last episode, and now I want to come to the steward. Is there any significance in the steward? And, of course, it's John's Gospel! Of course, there is. The steward, we're told, tasted the new wine.... that's the first thing. The second thing is that he made a judgment about this new wine. He said it was the best wine. And thirdly, he had no idea where this wine was coming from. This is going to be a recurring theme as we go through John's Gospel.

We'll find in chapter three, for example, that the people have no idea where the new life is going to come from. In chapter four, they will have no idea where the living water is coming from. In chapter six, they'll have no idea where the bread from heaven is coming from. And in chapter eight, they have no idea where Jesus himself is coming from. So, it's the mystery of people looking at God's presence and work it from 'below'. But if we're approaching this from 'above', then it makes sense. The steward actually represents the leaders of the church, which I will show you in a minute.

But John says, “this was the first of the signs given by Jesus. It was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen”. Now what was his ‘glory’? And his disciples believed in him. So, this is the next thing. What was his glory? What exactly, was he manifesting here? And this was the first of his signs. Well, the thing is that in Isaiah, 7:11-14, every prophet was meant to give signs to prove that he was a prophet..... to authenticate himself as a prophet.

And in that text, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah gave the Emmanuel sign that God would live with us. Now if Jesus was the Messiah, the Messiah was expected to repeat the Mosaic signs. In other words, there would have to be a bread sign and a water sign and a teaching sign and a miracle sign and so on. So, he begins giving his signs..... I mentioned to you that there was a mosaic theme running behind all of this text. It's too big for this particular series, so I said I would just mention it as we go along. And this is the first of his signs that he will give..... miracle signs just as Moses did. And he will also give a bread and a water sign as well.

Once he begins giving the signs, people can remember what they have been taught in the scriptures. If they remember this, they will realize they are looking at the person that the scriptures have described. And that's what you're told the disciples did here, that they began to have faith in him and to have faith in his mission. But if you go to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Saint Paul will say that the Jews were always asking for signs, and that fact actually was a block to their faith. Jesus always asked for faith in himself as a person. If we put our faith in him as a person, like the servants at Cana in Galilee simply took his Word and did what he asked. They didn't ask for anything or any explanations. They just simply did it.

And it's the little people who will simply do the Word of God are the ones who will experience the glory of it as well. So, when John says that he showed his glory for the first time, this means he begins to manifest himself..... He begins to show who he really is. Now what did he show? The strange thing is you can read this and miss the point completely! Jesus simply gave a word, and it came to be, which is exactly what the scriptures say about God. Therefore, what you are looking at, what is being manifested is that Jesus is the Creative, Spirit-filled, Life-giving Word of God in our midst! And they see that this Creative Spirit-filled Word of God is very Powerful, and very effective, as I have shown you in the Old Testament scriptures already.... So that's what you mean by ‘manifesting his glory, and the disciples believed in him’.

The final sign that this one leads to it was mentioned in the prophet Joel in chapter three. “After this, I will pour my spirit on all mankind. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the slaves, men, and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, and I will show great signs in the heavens and on the earth”. So, this sign was leading to that, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which was going to change everything. But that's for another time....

So, your question is, are you finished talking about Cain of Galilee? And I say, Not quite. The amazing thing is that if you look at this from a Christian perspective, you see an entire prophetic picture of the church. That's the amazing thing. Everybody in the whole scene represents the members of the church. We're either apostles - meaning leaders - or we're servants.... meaning ordinary folks, or we're guests, or we're whoever, but we're all members of the church. So, everyone is committed to God in the New Covenant..... that's represented by the unnamed couple. The apostles and all the servants of God obey his word and do God's Will; that's absolutely basic in the Kingdom of God.

Blessed Mother is present interceding for all her children. Jesus is present as the Saviour of all the world and manifesting himself through the wonderful miracle of the Eucharist daily. The steward is



Peter and all his successors - the ones who have to lead the people of God when Jesus returns to heaven. So, it is the judgment of the leaders of the church represented by the steward here who were originally members of the Mosaic Covenant who say that we had good wine before, but this wine is God's highest and God's best.

Now in John's Gospel, there are three Passovers, AD 28, 29, and 30. And Jesus becomes the Lamb of God in Passover AD 30. When John names the Passover he's doing a countdown to this extraordinary event which is going to take place in Passover 30 AD. Let's read it first. "Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And in the temple, he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons. And the money changers were sitting there at their counters. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the temple. Cattle, sheep as well. He scattered the money changer's coins, knocked the tables over, and he said to the pigeon sellers, 'take all of this out of here, and stop turning my Father's house into a market'. Then the disciples remember the Words of scripture, zeal for your house Will devour me". The Jews - meaning the Judean leaders - intervened, and they said, "what sign Will you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "destroy this sanctuary, and in three days, I will raise it up. I am going to stop there because it's a good deal before I move on to the next bit. It's just before the Passover, and all Jewish men were obliged to attend Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. They were the three great feasts of the year. They were not excused from not attending. It was absolutely critical that they attend because this was the center of their religion.

Women were not obliged to attend. They could attend, but they were not obliged. The reason for that is very simple; it was domestic reality. The women could be pregnant or breastfeeding.... they could have very small children on their hands. Any woman in that condition, the long journey to Jerusalem would be utterly cruel, and the children could die, so, women were not obliged, and it was not an anti-woman law. It was for the protection of the mothers and the children, but the men had to, attend.

Any male over the age of the bar mitzvah, which was their coming of age, their teenage ceremony, was obliged to go... so Jesus had to be there. Now this city was dominated by the temple in Jerusalem. At this time the temple was one of the wonders of the world. It was a great tragedy that it was destroyed in AD 70. It was not only the center of the worship for the people in the land of Palestine, as we would say, but also for the Jews that were scattered in the diaspora in all the countries around Israel as well. The temple was run by the Sanhedrin, whom John calls the UDAOI, which we erroneously call 'Jews' instead of Judeans. You would expect that since they are the experts in scripture and theology that they would be the ones who would recognize Jesus the first and that they would receive him well. Everybody knew it was the time for Messiah also.....

That is all dealt with in the Synoptic Gospels so we don't have to repeat it here in John. Since they all knew it was the time for the Messiah and that Jesus was fitting the bill absolutely perfectly, you would expect these people to accept him, but no. They prefer the old wine. And not only do they prefer the old wine, but, the temple in Jerusalem was their base for political as well as religious power, and it was also their source of income, so they had a lot to lose if Jesus was right! In fact, it's in Jerusalem that Jesus will meet his greatest opposition, and it is in Jerusalem that he will be completely condemned for being who he is, the Son of God.

And yet everybody in Jerusalem, in the temple, and all the men who attend there all are called 'Sons of God. Psalm 82:6. "I said you are Gods, all of you, sons of the Most High". And the strange thing is that the Incarnate Word is rejected by the very people to whom the Word of God was given as their greatest privilege. So, we need to look at the temple just for a minute or two, in case you don't know

the structure of it. The temple was a huge structure, and the temple we're talking about is the one that was built by Herod just before the time of Christ... and He did something amazing. He added an outer court for the Gentiles which was the largest section of the temple. Before that Gentiles couldn't enter the temple.

But the outer court was surrounded by very high walls, and there were huge bronze gates opening up into the inner courts, And there was a big notice on these gates that any Gentile entering into the inner courts would be killed on-site. That means you'd be killed for entering the presence of God! The Gentiles were at least allowed into the outer court. Samaritans wouldn't be allowed even onto the steps leading up to the outer gate! Samaritans were completely rejected from the temple altogether. All of this is very important for what's coming. Once you were circumcised or a member of the people of Israel, you can go through those bronze doors, and you enter into the court of the women.... the court of the women was also called the treasury. This is very important.

The treasury, they had huge vats. Men coming in from all over the known world would come, and would put their big donations into these baths. We have the case of the widow's mite... represented in the Synoptic Gospels. And they would show their importance by the number of coins that they would put in. Since they didn't have paper money, it was bags of heavy coins that they were putting in. This we call the treasury and was the source of immense wealth for all of the Sanhedrin. Once you pass the women's court, there are more big bronze doors, and then you go into the court of the men and the holy place, the court of the priests, where the sacrifices took place.

And then beyond that, there was a little small temple within the temple, all by itself, a structure within a structure, and it was the Holy of Holies. I call it a maximum-security prison for God! He was walled and walled and walled away from the people. This is terribly important for understanding what Jesus does. Terribly important. In fact, God was so imprisoned that only the High Priest, once a year on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), could actually go into the Holy of Holies, to represent the people and to put the blood of the covenant on the Ark of the Covenant asking for forgiveness. That means that the entire people of God were **refused access to God**, and that's why I call the temple a maximum-security prison because it very effectively kept everybody away from God.

Jesus wanted to change this, and he wanted, first of all, to release the court of the Gentiles so that the Gentiles could, in fact, pray. Have you ever tried to pray in a marketplace where there was cattle and sheep being sold? It's a bit hard! Jesus wanted to restore this place as a place where the Gentiles could pray. He also wanted to make the temple a place where the Samaritans could enter and that they could pray to God as well, because after all, they were children of God, and they were loved by God just like everybody else. So, he has to bring in the despised people into the Presence of God. Finally, he wanted to release the temple itself. Because since nobody could come to God, God did something absolutely drastic. This is my language. He broke out of the temple, and he became Incarnate. And he went to the very people that everybody said he would never go to! He went to the Samaritans. You'll see that in chapter four.

He goes to the Galileans. You see that already in chapter two. He actually lived among them in Nazareth. What good can come out of Nazareth? It was a despised place. He went to the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, everybody whom the Sanhedrin considered couldn't possibly come into the Presence of God. He even went to lepers! It was even worse than that. He went to people who were demonized!! He went to everybody who couldn't come to him, so Jesus made an unbelievable challenge to the leaders of Judaism and told them, in effect, that they were doing all the wrong things. They were keeping God away from his own people, and God loved them, and he wanted them. So, Jesus decided that the temple needed to be cleansed.

And so, it was time for action, not words. He knew that he could talk to them for the whole of his life, and they wouldn't listen. Jesus was aware, as everybody else was aware, that at the time of the Incarnation, there was huge corruption in the priesthood. And when the men were obliged to come to the temple three times a year, they all had to bring animals for sacrifice... and, of course, they would want to bring the animals from their own farm. That would be the least expensive thing that they could do. But what they found was that when they got to the temple, their animals were examined and rejected by the priests.

Now I just got to ask you to look this up yourselves. If you go to the book of Leviticus, you'll find all of the laws about the sacrifices and all the rest of it. And, you know, these priests at the time of Christ, were going to benefit from the meat of the sacrifices that were not actually burnt sacrifices. If the animal was simply offered to God, then the meat was given to the priest. So, what did the priest do? They refused the animals coming from the people's farms, and they themselves had animals reared especially for the temple so that they would get the best meat. This is the story behind the shepherds in the shepherd's field in Bethlehem! I just want to point to it. I won't talk about it now, but the sheep and the lambs in that field were being reared for the priests in the temple!

So, not only were the animals from the farms actually rejected, but they had to buy the animals from the priests in the temple, and they had to buy them at exorbitant prices. So, you've got corruption coming into the thing, apart from all the rest that's going on.... It's even worse than that. In the temple, the priests would only use the shekel, which has become the currency of Israel again. And so, the people coming in from all the countries around didn't have that kind of money because they were all in the Roman Empire, and they had to use the coins of the Roman Empire, so, they would have to exchange their money. But the exchange rates were all unjust. There were terrible sins being committed... sins of injustice being committed **in** the temple, apart from the noise and the hassle and the all the rest of it of having an animal market in the temple itself, so it was an entire abuse of the temple precincts and of the laws of worship.

As far as Jesus was concerned God was getting nothing out of this.... this was not the worship of God. And so, he decided that the world, the unbelieving world, the level of below, the egotistical world that wants everything for itself and wants to get rich quick and will use other people and all the rest had invaded the house of God. It was time to stop. It was time for a surgical operation. It was time for drastic action. It was not the time for talking. So, Jesus made a whip out of cord. Now the cord was most likely the cord that was holding his clothes together around his waist, and he just made it into knots. He knew that he would get no response from the human beings in the temple so, what he did was he started a stampede among the animals, for the animals didn't like being whipped, so, Jesus whipped them into a stampede! And, of course, in rushing out of the temple they knocked over all the money changers tables and everything! There must have been the most wonderful confusion in the place, but I wouldn't have thought the language of the men involved would be wonderful. I would imagine Jesus was cursed from a height for spoiling their day of commerce!

But the interesting thing is everybody who was there, apart from the sellers and all the rest, the money changers, stood and they watched. Why? They recognized it. They recognized the action. Listen to this. This is Malachy 3:1-2. "Look", Malachy said.... and Malachy is the last prophet of the Old Testament, the last book of the Old Testament before you read Matthew's Gospel, "I am going to send my messenger to prepare the way before you..." and that messenger was John the Baptist. "And then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter the temple and who will be able to resist when he comes? Who will be able to stand when he appears? For he Will be like the refiner's fire and the fuller's alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine

them like gold and silver, and then they will make their offering to the Lord as it should be made". In other Words, they all knew that the temple was overdue being cleansed, And that somebody needed to come, put some order into what was happening in the temple because the priests had allowed such abuse. It was unbelievable. Zechariah 14:21 said, "He was looking forward to the day when there would be no further traders in the temple". So, the prophets had warned them that the Messiah would come, and one of the signs that the Messiah was here was the cleansing of the temple. I'll continue this reflection in our next episode.