

# 5 *What Makes Jesus Mad*

John 2:12–25



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What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of Jesus when he walked this earth? Gentle, meek, mild-mannered? Sort of like Mr. Rogers with a beard? While Jesus was certainly many of these things, this is not the complete picture. He also stood up for what was right and was not afraid to confront when he needed to confront. He was passionate about His Father's business, about God's holiness, and about people's souls, which led to the encounter we read about in this passage.

## **Starting off**

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What really ticks you off? What angers you when you see it?

Describe a time when you really lost your temper. In retrospect, was it really something you had the right to be angry about?

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1. Read John 2:12–25. How does John's picture of Jesus in verses 15–16 fit with today's popular concept of him?

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## **Another view of Jesus**

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Jesus commanded respect of others by His words and actions - Mark 4:41, 12:34.

He was direct at appropriate times - Matt 15:1-9, 12, 16.

He was not afraid to confront others - Lk. 11:37-53, 13:10-17, 13:32; Matt. 23:24, 33.

He is coming again in judgment - Rev. 19:11-16.

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2. Do you think Jesus was out of control here? Would it be appropriate to say that Jesus "lost" his temper as we often do?

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Is it possible to be angry without sinning?

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While we sometimes equate anger with a lack of control over our emotions, anger in itself is not a sin. God is said to be angry at times (Num 32:10, 13; Deut 29:26-28; Ps 30:5; 86:15) , and we are commanded that in our anger, we should not sin, nor to let it go on without dealing with it (Eph. 4:26). Appropriate anger is when we see things the way God sees them. Yet it should never be out of control or a dominant feature of our lives. As the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus was never guilty of sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22) and did not sin here.

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3. What was Jesus so angry about?

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See note below.

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### More about the Temple

William Barclay notes,

*"The Temple consisted of a series of courts leading into the Temple proper and to the Holy Place. There was first the Court of the Gentiles, then the court of the Women, then the Court of the Israelites, then the Court of the Priests. All this buying and selling was going on in the Court of the Gentiles which was the only place into which a Gentile might come. Beyond that point, access to him was barred. So then if there was a Gentile whose heart God had touched, he might come into the court of the Gentiles to meditate and pray and distantly touch God. The Court of the Gentiles was the only place of prayer he knew.*

*The Temple authorities and the Jewish traders were making the Court of the Gentiles into an uproar and a rabble where no man could pray. The lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, the cooing of the doves, the shouts of the hucksters, the rattle of the coins, the voices raised in bargaining disputes - all these combined to make the Court of the Gentiles a place where no man could worship. The conduct in the Temple court shut out the seeking Gentile from the presence of God. It may well be that this was most in Jesus' mind....Jesus was moved to the depths of his heart because seeking men were being shut out from the presence of God.*

*Is there anything in our church life - a snobbishness, and exclusiveness, a coldness, a lack of welcome, a tendency to make the congregation into a closed club, an arrogance, a fastidiousness - which keeps the seeking stranger out? Let us remember the wrath of Jesus against those who make it difficult and even impossible for the seeking stranger to make contact with God."*

*The Gospel of John: Volume 1*, ed. William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000), 113-114.

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4. Only the Messiah had the authority to cleanse the temple. The people recognized that and asked Jesus for a miraculous sign to confirm his identity (v. 18). To what "sign" did Jesus point them (vv. 19–22)?

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Why do you think that particular sign was so significant in Jesus' mind?

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**Question 4.** The disciples recognized Jesus' action as a fulfillment of prophecy (v. 17; see Ps 69:9).

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5. Why didn't the people immediately grasp what Jesus was talking about when he said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (vv. 19, 22)?

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Why didn't the disciples get it?

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Josephus tells us that King Herod the Great began building the Second Temple around 20-19 BC. It had taken about 46 years to rebuild and some believe it may not have even been completely finished at the time Jesus spoke this. Thus, the people were outraged when they thought that Jesus was saying he would tear it and rebuild it in 3 days!

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6. If people were believing in Jesus because of the miraculous signs, why didn't Jesus "entrust himself to them" (vv. 23–25)?

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Is there a difference between knowing about Jesus and trusting in Him?

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7. In what practical ways can you demonstrate the same concern toward the holy character of God that Jesus demonstrated?

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In what ways can we demonstrate it as a church?

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### **Did Jesus clear the temple twice?**

The other gospels record a scene very similar to this one (Matt. 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45), but they place it near the end of Jesus' ministry. This has led to several interpretations:

(1) John is correct in his timing and the other gospels are wrong, or the gospels are right and John has it wrong. But this would mean that there are errors in Scripture, which God says did not happen (2 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 1:20-21). More importantly, this is a completely unnecessary conclusion.

(2) John has re-arranged the chronology to suit his theological purposes. After all, the gospel authors do not state that they are trying to give a complete history of the life of Christ in strict chronological order, especially John (see John 20:30-31). However, in the first couple of chapters, John has specifically pointed out historical markers (1:35, 43, 2:1,12). It would seem odd for him to then insert a story from later in Jesus' ministry.

(3) These are two different events. While some have argued that this is unlikely because the Jewish leaders would never have let this happen twice, this is not necessarily the case. We know that Jesus was not stopped from entering the temple on other occasions after this event, and they could not keep their guard up against him indefinitely. In addition, John includes distinctive vocabulary and narrative details, which seem to separate this event from one described in the other passages.

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