

The Journey... Walk as Jesus Walked

Part II – Cleaning House... Jesus Clears the Temple

John 2:13-25 – March 7, 2010

After the wedding in Cana, Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem for Passover and what He discovers upsets Him! Jesus is genuinely mad. We see the Savior not only as a miracle man, but as a passionate man! What can we learn from the 3 different groups of people who witness this event?

I. The purging of His Father's temple: His **passion** for reverence (v. 13-17)

A. The clearing of the temple (v. 13-15)

This is the first of 2 temple cleansings (see Matt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45-46). Some feel there is only 1 incident (Barclay) but most scholars favor 2 different occasions. This first one is at the beginning of his ministry and the 2nd one during the Passion Week.

Remember: We get a chronology of Jesus' public ministry of 3½ years from the 3 Passovers mentioned in John (cf. 6:4; 11:55).

The Passover

¹³*The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

The Feast of **Passover** commemorated Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt – when the Lord killed, by His death angel, the firstborn of the Egyptians but passed over the houses of the Israelites (Ex. 12:23-27). It was celebrated annually on the fourteenth day of Nisan (March/April). On that day, between 3:00 and 6:00 P.M., lambs were slaughtered and the Passover meal eaten. (MacArthur)

The elaborate evening-celebration of the feast in the days of our Lord's sojourn included the following elements:

- A prayer of thanksgiving by the head of the house; and drinking the first cup of wine.
- The eating of bitter herbs, as a reminder of their bitter slavery in Egypt.
- The *son's* enquiry, "Why is this night distinguished from all other nights?" and the *father's* appropriate reply, either narrated or read.
- The singing of the first part of the Hallel (Ps. 113 & 114) and the washing of hands.
- The carving and eating of the lamb, together with unleavened bread. The lamb was eaten in commemoration of what the fathers had been commanded to do in the night when the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt and delivered his people. (See Ex. 12 and 13.) The unleavened bread was a memorial of the first days of the journey during which this *bread of haste* had been eaten by the ancestors. It was also an emblem of purity.
- The continuation of the meal, each one eating as much as he liked, but always eating all of the lamb.
- The singing of the last part of the Hallel (Ps. 115-118).
- The day on which the lamb was killed was followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of Nisan. So very close was the connection between the Passover-meal proper and the immediately following Feast of Unleavened Bread that the term *Passover* is frequently used to cover both. Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 1-2: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

In obedience to Exodus 23:14–17, **Jesus went up to Jerusalem** to observe both the Passover and the following week (Feast of Unleavened Bread). He goes from 680 ft. below sea level in Galilee to 2500 ft. above sea level in Jerusalem.

1. The wickedness (v. 14)

¹⁴And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

There is an estimated 2 million people in Jerusalem during Passover (Barclay). It was required of every adult male (12 years and older) residing within 15 miles of Jerusalem to

attend the Feast. Everyone over 19 had to pay a temple tax of a half a shekel (2 days' wages) as well (Ex. 30:13–14; Matt. 17:24–27). They would only accept temple approved coins (Galilean shekels or sanctuary (Tyrian) shekels) because the foreign currency would be considered unclean.

Jesus finds dishonest merchants selling animals in the temple. It was called the Bazaar of Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas the reigning high priest. This whole practice was hated by the people and it was overturned in 67 AD!

These pilgrims came from all over and thus it was “impractical” for them to bring their own animals. They bought at greatly inflated prices... up to 20 times (\$4.00 vs. 20 cents) more in the temple court area vs. outside the city. These animals also had to pass inspection and not surprisingly, those not purchased at the temple often didn't pass! If it did, they had to turn around and also pay for its sacrifice! Everything cost money: the inspection, the purchase, the sacrifice. They had turned the sacrificial system into an ancient form of almost mafia-like control and extortion.

The people had no way to fight back. Jesus fought for them! What had started as service had been corrupted and perverted. People were being exploited! [Ex. paying taxes twice!](#)

2. [The whip](#) (v. 15)

¹⁵And He made a scourge of cords, and 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.

- The [money changers](#) also provided a necessary service. Because they had a monopoly on the market, the money changers charged an exorbitant fee for their services (as high as 12.5 percent)! (F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 74).

- The money changers “extorted” these poor pilgrims to convert their Roman money to Jewish money; they also converted large coins into smaller coins... for a fee.
- The whip might have been made of the ropes that held the animals, but the fire in Jesus’ eyes was probably enough to get people moving!
- Jerome thinks the very sight of Jesus made the whip unnecessary. “A certain fiery and starry light shone from His eyes, and the majesty of the Godhead gleamed in His face.”

B. The causes of Anger

1. **Frustration/ unmet expectations**
2. **Deep hurt**
3. **Fear**
4. **Injustice**

Did Jesus sin?

- No... His was a righteous anger fueled by the injustice of the situation
- Did He hurt anyone? I doubt it. Just their pride!

C. The condemning of the thieves (v. 16-17)

¹⁶and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.” ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, “ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.”

1. The sellers He faces (v. 16)

- Jesus accuses them of turning His Father’s house into a market! Religion had become a business! They were making money off of the name of God. There was no spirit of reverence. Rush in and rush out. We’ve got to move people through.

- App: Do we do that today?
- Jesus' display of force would have immediately created pandemonium in the temple court: the animal sellers frantically chasing their beasts, which were running aimlessly in all directions; the startled moneychangers (and, no doubt, some of the bystanders) scrambling desperately on the ground to pick up their coins;
- Those who were selling the doves hastily removing their crates as Jesus had commanded them; the temple authorities rushing to see what all the commotion was about. Yet Jesus was neither cruel to the animals (those who object to His mild use of force on them have never herded animals), nor overly harsh with the men.
- Apparently the uproar He created was contained enough **not** to alert the Roman garrison stationed in Fort Antonia, which overlooked the temple grounds. The watching Romans may have found some satisfaction in this assault on the temple system and its leaders, who gave them so much grief. MacArthur, J. (2006). *The MacArthur New Testament commentary: John 1-11* (90–91). Chicago: Moody Press.

2. The Scripture He fulfills (v. 17)

- Psalm 69:9 predicts that the Messiah will do this! Cf. Mal.3:1-3
- Psalm 69 is quoted 17 times (John 15:25; 19:28-29) in the NT and is one of the 6 most quoted psalms in the NT (the others are 2, 22, 89, 110, and 118).

II. The prediction about His physical temple: the **power** of His resurrection (v. 18-25)

A. The ignorance of the Jewish leaders (v. 18-22)

1. A sign demanded (v. 18)

¹⁸*The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"*

- They (temple police force or members of the Sanhedrin) insist that Jesus work a sign/miracle to validate His authority from God. Note: They didn't arrest Him
- **Skeptics are always looking for a miracle! Prove it!** Signs are designed to support faith, not create it in and of themselves. **Read: John 12:37**
- **Sign** (semeion): John's favorite word. Not just a marvelous wonder (teras) or an extraordinary power (dunamis) but a sign which told something about the person who did it... the nature and the character of God! It always had a spiritual end; they show the fingerprint of God!
- Each successive "sign" confirms the deity of Christ. First he turns water to wine... authority over social institutions and now kicking out the merchants... authority over religious institutions.
- **Authority:** This so infuriated the Jewish religious establishment, that they were out to "get" Him from this day forward. Jesus had drawn a line in the sand (He would literally later in His ministry: woman caught in adultery).

2. A sign described (v. 19)

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

- Destroy (Luo): to untie
- He is referring to His future crucifixion and ultimate resurrection. If He dies and is raised from the dead, it would authenticate His claim as Messiah!
- His death ultimately brought down the abuse of the sacrificial process and the temple customs involved.
- **New temples are built in the hearts of believers!**

3. A sign doubted (v. 20-21)

The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

- They think He is referring to Herod's Temple and not His body. It was still in the process of being built and it had been under construction for 46 years! It would not be finished for another 30 years... just a few years before it was destroyed! Why were they confused? Their spiritual blindness kept them from seeing truth. (John 3:3, 4:14; 6:51; 7:34). They spoke with contempt!
- The word for temple back in v. 14-15 was *hieron* which refers to the temple as a whole and specifically the outer court. The word used in v. 19-20 is *naos*, which refers to the inner sanctuary. It was also used in reference to the body (I Cor. 6:19) and our body is the temple of the HS).
- App: God wants to dwell in our innermost being; not just be attached to us in a peripheral way!

4. A sign discerned (v. 22)

²²So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

- Raise it up: *egeiro*. John uses 5 times; to wake up and refers to awakening the dead. Paul used it this context as well as Jesus in reference to Lazarus.
- This verse describes what the disciples thought... looking back on this event.
- After Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples understand the full significance of His statement. At the time, they didn't quite understand either! It was until further reflection that they remembered what He has said some 3 years previously.

B. The insincerity of the Jewish laity (v. 23-25)

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

1. Many in Jerusalem profess belief in Jesus, but for insincere motives! Intellectual assent isn't belief! (Even the devils believe there is a God... James 2:19). It is a play on the words... no faith in their faith!
2. They wanted the miracles, not the Messiah
 - They wanted to associate but not consecrate.
 - They wanted signs but not surrender
 - They wanted to believe Him but not follow Him.

Summary: Jesus' lordship goes hand in hand with His deity. As the God of the universe, He is worthy to be worshiped and obeyed. The three vignettes in this passage (v. 12–25) underscore His deity with unmistakable clarity. As God He single-handedly cleansed the temple with messianic zeal; as God He accurately predicted His own resurrection; and as God He truly knew the contents of men's hearts.

At the same time, these three accounts also picture the process of salvation. The first scene, the cleansing of the temple, graphically depicts God's hatred of sin and impurity. The second scene, the discussion of Jesus' resurrection, reveals that God provides new life in Christ; and the final scene, the shallow belief of the people, reveals that God's provision of salvation comes only through genuine saving faith. MacArthur, J. (2006). *The MacArthur New Testament commentary: John 1-11* (96). Chicago: Moody Press.

III. The Plan in Following Jesus... 3 different responses

- A. The Jews were **confused** and were not convinced. They wanted to **challenge** Jesus. It offended Him!
- B. The crowd was **curious** but not committed.

They wanted to **use** Jesus! He didn't trust them!

1. Interestingly, this event only temporarily derailed the practice, because it is obviously back into full swing within 3 years and maybe even the next day!

2. **Sin creeps back into our lives like a slithering snake.**

C. The disciples are convinced and committed.

They wanted to **believe** Jesus! He died for them!

1. Jesus wants your heart not your external conformity to rituals (**Psalm 51:16**). Sacrifices alone are not enough!

2. Application: What is your response today?

Table Talk:

1. If you had seen what was going on in the temple, what would you have done?
2. Read the accounts of the 2nd cleansing (see Matt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45-46). How are the accounts similar? How are they different?
3. In what ways do we offend God today?

Sneak Peek:

Read John 3:1-21. It is the story of Nicodemus. Why did he secretly come to Jesus at night? Why was he so confused? What verses would you use if you were going to share the gospel with someone?