

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“Another Side of Jesus”

John 2:12-25

Open your Bibles to John’s Gospel Chapter 2. We are going to finish the chapter. Let’s read our text and then study it as it was written. Beginning in verse 12 John writes:

¹²After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

¹³Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. ¹⁵When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶And He said to those who sold doves, **“Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” ¹⁷Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”**

¹⁸So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?”

¹⁹Jesus answered and said to them, **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”**

²⁰Then the Jews said, “It has taken 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. ²²Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

²⁴But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, ²⁵and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

Last time we read about the first sign that Jesus did in His new ministry. He, His mother and the disciples were at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. But there was a problem. The

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

bridegroom and his family had somehow not provided enough wine to last the seven days of the feast. Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to Him and asked for help. I don't know if she thought He would go to the local Dandy and get some or what. But Jesus went to the Father to see what He should do. Jesus was all about doing the Father's business. He didn't want to do anything until His time had come. It had. So Jesus had some servers fill up washpots full to the brim with water. These basins were used for the ceremonial washing that the Jews had added to the Law of Moses. So this was not the best water. However, He transformed it into wine. But not just any wine. It was new wine. The best wine ever produced. The servers took it to the master of the ceremony, and he boasted of how good it was. And this was wonderful. But Jesus didn't do this sign just to quench the thirst of the people at the party. This is why He did it (John 1:11):

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

This beginning of signs is a miracle of conversion. It speaks of a change from the old ways of the Law, ceremony and purification to the new life found in Jesus. And you have to believe that it blew His disciples' minds. It was not that they didn't believe before. In fact, we know that they did. But now their belief was deeper. And that is what we, as Christians, want. The Lord does great things in our lives, and we believe in Him all over again as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Him.

So we pick up this story some time after the wedding. Jesus and His followers hit the road. Look at verse 12:

After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

The village of Capernaum was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. And this town became the home base for Jesus for much of His ministry. So it would seem that He moved His family (Mary and His "brothers") there. But the Lord did not stay there long. He had some more of the Father's business to attend to — this time in Jerusalem. Look at verse 13:

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

The Passover was one of three feasts that all Jewish men were supposed to attend each year (along with Pentecost and Tabernacles). Though Jesus would deliberately violate the man-made religious traditions of the Pharisees, He always obeyed the statutes of the Law. So He and His band of merry men head to the big city. The Lord had been there many times. But not like this.

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

He had been identified as the Messiah by John the Baptist, and He would act like it. Look what happens when He gets to the Temple grounds (verse 14):

And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.

On the Temple grounds there were four courtyards, each surrounded by walls. You had to walk through a door to get from one to the other.

The first courtyard, called the Court of the Gentiles, was accessible to everyone. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, could all congregate there.

Next to the Court of the Gentiles was the Court of the Israelites. Gentiles were barred from entering into this courtyard on the penalty of death.

The third courtyard was the Court of Men. Jewish males were the only ones who could access this court.

Finally, adjoining the Temple itself was the Court of Priests. Only the priests were allowed to enter this court. It was where the sacrifices and other priestly duties took place.

It was in the outer court, the Court of the Gentiles, that our His story takes place. This was where they sold the different animals for the Temple sacrifices.

Why did they sell them?

To make money.

These priests, like many before them, were not just about helping people know God. They were all about fleecing the flock. This is the way that it worked:

First of all, if you lived far away, it would be difficult to bring an animal to sacrifice that met the standards of the Law. The animal had to be without blemish. Because of that, animals that met this criterion were raised near the Temple Mount. And the people would bring money to exchange so they could purchase an animal to sacrifice. So they had a built-in client base. But the priests had taken it one step further. Even if you were able to bring your own animal, it quite often would be declared unfit. And the reason they did this was because they were charging exorbitant prices for these “pure” animals.

Then, just to make matters worse for the people but better for them, they only accepted Temple coinage. So the money-changers got in on the game and charged high prices to exchange foreign money. This was double bad for the people, because they also had to pay a Temple tax. Of course, the only money this could be paid in was the Temple

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

shekel. So they were getting people both coming and going. Think about what this looked like to Jesus.

The Court of the Gentiles was supposed to be a place where the Jews would be a light to the lost of the world. It was supposed to be a place where the Gentiles could come and pray. Instead, it was no better than the local bazaar. Animals and all they bring with them were in cages and pens all over the place.

Can you imagine the smell?

And to top that off, people were getting ripped off left and right. The leaders of the Temple were making a buck off God. So what began as a convenience became a business, and not a ministry.

Can you imagine what God thinks of some of the churches in our country, not to mention some TV evangelists?

When Julia and I were in Nicaragua, we were invited to one of our fellow servants' church for Sunday service. Like many churches, before the sermon they took an offering. But when the ushers took the offering plates up, the pastor looked at them with disdain. Then he began to chastise the people for how little they had given. This — in the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. So he sent the ushers back out with the plates to collect more. Julia and I got up and began walking out. This pastor yelled at us all the way out the door!

In the place where the sheep were supposed to get fed, they were only getting fleeced. That is what was happening on the Temple grounds as Jesus walked up. And so He set out to do His Father's business. Look what happens next (verse 15):

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

Here the story is quite different than what we read earlier in the chapter (borrowed from John Courson):

At the wedding, Jesus sat at the table.

Here, He is throwing tables.

In Cana, He worked quietly and privately.

Here, He is reacting conspicuously and publicly.

At the wedding feast, the emphasis was on joy.

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Here, the end result is judgment.

But notice something important here. Jesus did not whip the animals or the people. He just cracked the whip. This was not a display of violence. It was a display of Jesus' authority. He was ministering in His Father's name. He didn't hate on the people. He hated what they were doing to each other, and specifically what they were doing in the sight of the lost. Look at verse 16:

And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!”

The Temple was His Father's house and was supposed to be a place of worship. Later we will talk about the accounts (from the other Gospels) of when Jesus cleansed the Temple. In that case He said that His Father's house was to be a **“house of prayer.”** But the people had made it a **“house of merchandise.”**

So Jesus tells those who sold doves to **“take these things away!”** He commands them to stop making His Father's house a marketplace. So much for Jesus meek and mild. He is angry with righteous indignation. And don't miss this.

Jesus did not just grab whatever He could get His hands on. John says He **“made”** the whip out of cords. He took time to look over the situation and then fashioned this whip.

So many people (especially in our time) want to focus on the Jesus of love. They see Him as kind of like Mr. Rogers. But that is not the Jesus who walked the Earth.

He was a carpenter by trade. He worked with His hands. He was a man's man. He was *meek* — but that word in the original language speaks of *power under control*.

So here is the difference between Jesus and many men. The Lord never lost control of His indignation. In Ephesians 4:26-27 the Apostle Paul wrote:

²⁶“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil.

Here Jesus provides the perfect example of what this means. Although He acted with firmness and passion, He was always completely in control. So much so that His disciples remembered this Scripture (Psalm 69:9). Look at verse 17:

Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”

Once again, the actions of the Lord help His people grow in the faith. And this should be a great witness to us as well.

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Which Jesus are we going to lead people to, the Jesus who made wine or the Jesus who made a whip?

Both.

His goodness leads to repentance. His grace saves. But don't miss this:

The fear of the Lord leads to wisdom and understanding.

One must see not only the Jesus of conversion, changing water into wine, but they must also know the Jesus of cleansing (cleansing of the Temple). This is how Jesus works in His people: conversion first, and then cleansing. But many people do not come to know this Jesus.

In fact, to many, He is a stumbling block. The Jewish leaders did not see Him as a Messiah figure fulfilling prophecy after prophecy about the coming King. They saw Him as another in a long line of troublemakers who was getting in their way. Look how they react to Jesus' good work (verse 18):

So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

This wasn't necessarily a bad question for the Jews (religious leaders) to ask. They were, after all, the leaders of the people. So they wanted to know what gave Jesus the authority to do what He just did in the Temple. The problem was that they demanded a "sign" to prove it.

But what sign could He have provided that was eloquent other than what they had just witnessed?

They all should have known that what was going on at the Temple was corrupt. In fact, they didn't question why Jesus threw over the tables. They just wanted to know in whose authority He did it. So instead of giving them a sign, Jesus makes a prediction. Look at verse 19:

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

Jesus used this moment to predict what would happen at the cross. Of course, the spiritually blind Jewish leaders did not understand what He was saying. In fact, they will twist these words to send Jesus to the cross. This happens throughout John's Gospel.

People misunderstand the spiritual truths Jesus teaches because they interpret them only in material or physical terms.

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

In chapter 3, Nicodemus will wonder at how a man can be placed back in his mother's womb and be born again.

In chapter 4 the woman at the well will ask Jesus what He is going to use to draw **“living water”** out of the well.

And then in chapter 6 many will leave Jesus because He calls Himself the **“Living Bread.”** They thought He was telling them to eat His flesh.

Thus, it is not surprising when the Jewish leaders question Jesus by saying this (verses 20-21):

²⁰Then the Jews said, “It has taken 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.

The Temple in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus was a work-in-progress. Herod had begun renovating it in 20 BC so it had now been 46 years. But it would not be finished until 64 AD, just in time for Titus Vespasian to destroy it. The historian Josephus tells us that some 18,000 men were employed working on the project. So it is easy to see why someone who is spiritually bankrupt would scoff at the idea that a single carpenter could raise it back up in three days. But one must wonder how Jesus delivered this statement.

Did He point to Himself as He spoke?

He did say **“I will raise it up.”** He knew that these very same religious leaders would, in fact, do their best to destroy Him.

Had they been more perceptive, the Jews would have realized that God *never* revealed His presence in Herod's Temple. In fact, the glory of the Lord departed the Temple during Ezekiel's time and will not return until the Millennial Kingdom. But, in a sense, it had returned at that moment as Jesus walked onto the Temple Mount.

The active Temple at that time was Jesus. It was on Him that God's presence rested — in flesh and blood and not brick and mortar. Thus, Jesus' death and resurrection was the ultimate sign to Israel. And the disciples of Jesus would, after His death, figure this out. Look at verse 22:

Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

This is the third time in this chapter that the disciples **“remembered”** or **“believed.”** In verse 11 the water changed into wine caused them to *believe*. In verse 17 the cleansing of

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

the Temple caused them to *remember*. But here in verse 22 it says the resurrection causes them to both *remember and believe*. This shows us that not only did they trust in Jesus, they grew in their knowledge and relationship with Him.

That is the purpose of John's Gospel. He wrote to help us grow in the faith. As we continue in our study of John, keep these things in mind.

You see, many people believe in Jesus. But they never come to know Him. This is what we are going to talk about for the rest of our study. Look at verse 23:

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover, He did many signs that are not recorded for us in any of the Gospels. It may be that these miraculous works were what attracted Nicodemus, who we will talk about next time. For sure, they (the signs) caused many to profess to believe in Jesus. But this was not true faith. It was superficial at best.

The people admired what He did. But they are like their leaders. All they want is a sign. That is not what saving faith is all about. I call these kinds of people "make-believers." In fact, James, the brother of Jesus, wrote this about just believing in Jesus (James 2:19):

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

Here is the problem about these people:

They are always looking for another sign. And then when the one they are looking for doesn't happen, they leave. My friend Debbie in Reno, when she found out that I got saved, said, "*I tried the Jesus thing but it didn't work for me.*" You can't "try" Jesus.

You either know Him or you don't. Your faith can't be built on just what Jesus does. It is all about who He is. He is not genie in a bottle that allows you three wishes. He is God who came in the flesh to save you. And the biggest miracle of all is that, in His mercy and grace, He saves any of us.

Why?

Because He knows. Look at verses 24-25:

²⁴But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, ²⁵and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

The word John used for "**commit**" here is the same word he used earlier for "**believed.**" Many believed in the signs Jesus did, but they never went any further.

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

So Jesus didn't believe in them. Like I said, they were "make-believers." They did not know what it takes to become His disciple. Next time we will meet someone who was probably there when this all happens. But he takes the next step. His name is Nicodemus. Read ahead and see what the Lord tells him about the kingdom. But we have two more things to discuss before we end this study.

First, we need to ask the question, "How many times did Jesus cleanse the Temple?"

Here in John it is at the beginning of His ministry. But in the synoptic Gospels, it is toward the end. I believe He did it twice. Here is an explanation from *Got Questions*:

There are differences in the two events, aside from their being nearly three years apart. In the first cleansing, Temple officials confronted Jesus immediately ([John 2:18](#)), whereas in the second cleansing, the chief priests and scribes confronted Him the following day ([Matthew 21:17–23](#)). In the first event, Jesus made a whip of cords with which to drive out the sellers, but there is no mention of a whip in the second cleansing. So there are two recorded occasions when Jesus cleansed the Temple—the first time at the beginning of His public ministry, and the second time just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem shortly before He was crucified.

The second thing we need to discuss is the anger that Jesus had and what He did in response.

Should we ever **"cleanse the Temple?"**

My answer to that, at least from my heart, is that I am not Jesus.

It is a good thing for me to have righteous indignation about the things that are going on in the world. It is a good thing for me to do all that I can to battle against the wickedness that is so prevalent in our society. But Jesus is the Judge.

My commission in this world is to make disciples. So I believe we should stand for the truth, but not be destructive.

What do you all think?

Let's pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG