John 2 Part 2 Cleansing the Temple

Read John 2:13-25

Vs 13 What time of year is this taking place? Passover takes place in the 1st month, Nissan. This is early spring. Why was Jesus heading to Jerusalem for the Passover? All males were required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem 3 times a year Deu 16:16 (for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). Where was Jesus? At Capernaum. The distance between the two places is about 100 miles, which would take 5 – 7 days to travel by foot. Although Jerusalem is south of Capernaum, it is on a hill and thus higher in elevation (Jesus went up).

Vs 14 What did Jesus find when He went to the temple? Businessmen engaging in selling oxen, sheep and doves and coin in the outer court. Why do you think these businessmen were there? Jews had to bring sacrifices to the temple according to the Old Testament laws. It was often easier to just purchase a sacrifice than to travel with it. The different animals (oxen, sheep and doves) were used for different offerings (sin, trespass, etc.) and based on income (if you could not afford an ox or a sheep, a dove would do – Lev 5:7,12:8). Also, each man had to pay the temple tax for himself and for his family (the equivalent of about two day's wages for a working man). Ex 30:13–16 However, only temple coin was accepted. So there were businessmen who would sell (exchange) foreign coins for the temple coin.

Vs 15 What was Jesus reaction? He made a whip of cords and drove the men and their animals out of the temple court. He also poured out the money changer's money and overturned the tables. The whip of cords is a tool Jesus fashioned from small cords, likely made of twisted rushes, reeds, or leather strips found in the temple courts. Contrary to some Hollywood movies, Jesus did not do it in a flash of anger. He carefully took the time to make it, and thought carefully about what He would do (directed by God, of course). It was much more a display of Jesus' authority than violence. Why did He do it? The outer courts of the temple was the only place Gentiles could come and worship (they were forbidden to go inside the Temple - Acts 21:27-29). This area (the court of the Gentiles Rev 11:2.) was made into a house of merchandise instead of a place of worship.

Vs 16 Who does He address in this verse? The ones that sold doves. Why them? In verse 15 we see him driving out the oxen and sheep but nothing is said of the doves. Doves were kept in cages so would not have been driven away. The sale of doves was also directed to the poorest people, and women. It is possible Jesus was particularly upset because these businessmen were taking advantage of the most vulnerable groups of people. What did He say to them? Take away (the doves) and stop making the Temple (the Father's House) a marketplace.

Vs 17 When Jesus did this remarkable thing, cleansing the Temple area from greedy businessmen, what did the disciples recall? The disciples were quoting Psalm 69:9 and connected it to the zeal Jesus had for the purity of God's house and worship practiced there. Remember, Jewish boys knew Scripture very well. By age twelve, they were expected to have memorized the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). Completing the memorization of the Torah by age twelve marked the transition to manhood (similar to a Bar Mitzvah), allowing the boy to participate in religious duties like the Passover sacrifice. What about the girls (I know you want to know…) - girls were typically expected to memorize specific books like Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Proverbs before being betrothed and learning domestic skills.

NOTE: John began with a miracle of conversion (changing water into wine). Then he showed Jesus performing a work of cleansing (the cleansing of the temple). This is always how Jesus works in His people: conversion first, then cleansing. Thank God we don't have to get cleaned up first, right?

Vs 18 Who responds to this cleansing? Notice it is NOT the disciples! They recognized what Jesus was doing. The other Jews who witnessed it did not. They are questioning the authority He had to do what He did. They asked for a sign! In Jewish tradition, a true prophet or messianic figure was expected to perform miracles to validate their divine commission. The leaders sought a supernatural credential to confirm Jesus' right to do what He did. Deu 13:1-3, 1 Cor 1:22

Vs 19 What sign did Jesus offer up? The destruction of “this temple” and the rising it up again after 3 days. Jesus spoke here of the temple of His body. He probably even gestured to Himself as He said this. Jesus knew that these religious leaders would attempt to destroy His body (through the gift of a Word of Knowledge), but He also knew that they would not succeed. At the trial of Jesus, one of the charges brought against Him was that He said He would destroy the temple (Matt 26:59-61, Mark 14:57-59). When He died on the cross, the mockers reminded Jesus of what seemed to be an impossible promise (Matthew 27:40, Mark 15:29). Jesus knew they were talking about the Jewish Temple but answered as it related to Himself. The body of Jesus is still a temple. Eph 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:5 both connect the idea of the church (the body of Christ) with a temple built upon and built by Jesus Christ. Jesus also confidently claimed the power to raise Himself from the dead, and He repeated the claim in John 10:18. It is interesting to note that the New Testament also claims that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 6:4, Gal 1:1), and that the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead (Rom 1:4, 8:11). The resurrection of Jesus was a work of each Person of the Trinity working together.

Vs 20 The Jews missed the connection Jesus was making (He was the temple). What point were they making? They were mocking Jesus who seemed to claim He could rebuild a temple it took the Jews 46 years to build. It is no surprise when unbelievers are unable to see Spiritual truths.

Vs 21 Here John is plainly telling the reader what Jesus actually meant.

Vs 22 Apparently even His disciples were bewildered by His statement. When did they finally understand? AFTER He was resurrected! This is when they finally believed. “Seeing is believing”. How are we supposed to believe? By faith – John 20:29

Vs 23 What happened as a result of the signs Jesus did at the Passover? Many believed in His Name (authority, character). What do you think they believed? They saw a Jewish man doing things they could not explain in the natural (miracles). It confirmed to them He was a prophet but not necessarily the Messiah. Jesus knew that this belief was thin, superficial belief. It wasn’t based on anything other than an admiration of the spectacular.

Vs 24 – 25 Did Jesus commit (entrust) Himself to them? No. Jesus did not entrust Himself to the people who believed in Him after witnessing miracles, because He knew all people and their true motives. The Greek word for "entrust" mirrors the word for "believed" in the preceding verse, creating a contrast: while the crowd trusted Jesus for the signs they saw, Jesus did not trust their superficial, fickle faith. Why didn’t He? He knew what was in them, that is, their thoughts. What did Jesus have no need of? The approval (*testimony, witness*) of any man. And why didn’t He want or need the approval of any man? Because, again, He knew what was in every man. Not only that, but He also know Who He was and knew His place compared to man.