

## Unit II: Jesus and the Temple

# Bake Sales Gone Bad!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 7:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: John 2:13-25; Matthew 21:12-17;  
Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48

PRINT PASSAGE: John 2:13-25

### KEY VERSE

And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. (John 2:16, KJV)

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To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:16, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Identify Jesus' desire to rout out the abuses of Temple worship.
- Grow in confidence that Jesus is the temple where God dwells.
- Commit to a life of reverence that shows proper respect to God.

### \*Key Terms

**Destroy (verse 19)**—Greek: *luó* (loo'-o): to loose; to release; to dissolve; break; put an end to; remove.

**Drove . . . out (verse 15)**—Greek: *ekballo* (ek-bal'-lo): threw (cast, put) out; banished; brought forth; produced; "drove . . . from" (NIV).

**Found (verse 14)**—Greek: *heuriskó* (hyoo-ris'-ko): learned, discovered (especially after searching).

**Sign (verse 18)**—Greek: *sémeion* (say-mi'-on): a miracle, indication, mark, token.

**Trading place (verse 16)**—Greek: *emporion* (em-por'-ee-on): a place of traffic; a mart; "market" (NIV); "house of merchandise" (KJV).

**Zeal (verse 17)**—Greek: *zelos* (dzay'-los): ardor; eagerness; enthusiasm; passion; rivalry.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



## The Biblical Context

Tradition attributes authorship of the gospel of John to John, the son of Zebedee and one of Jesus' disciples. John refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and was one of Jesus' closest companions during His earthly ministry. History identifies John's gospel as the fourth one, composed after the three Synoptic Gospels sometime between AD 85 and AD 95. John stated his purpose for writing in John 20:31 (NIV): "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Unlike in the other gospels, John does not present a chronological account of Jesus' life. Instead, he focused on Christ's deity and emphasized that He was fully God and human to dispel false doctrine denying this truth when he penned his gospel. Another unique feature of John's account is his introduction, in which he presents Jesus Christ not from His birth but from the "beginning" before creation and as an active participant in every aspect of it. Commentators vary as to how John's gospel is structured thematically. However, the immediate thematic context of this lesson's focal passage is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He encountered mixed reactions to His message after His first miracle and visited and cleansed the Temple during a Passover feast (see John 2:13-22).

## Introduction

Physical buildings and shelters are crucial needs for humanity. For one thing, they are a source of protection from the natural environment's elements and provide the luxury of creating a comfortable space where interior temperatures can be adjusted and controlled. Buildings are also vital because they provide for humanity's needs for safety and security from natural and humanity-produced disasters. As we are social beings who need human interaction, buildings are constructed and dedicated to fulfill this need in various ways. Depending on their unique purpose, notable buildings are preserved and maintained to ensure their continual use, and in some cases, they are recognized for their aesthetic and historical value. Buildings and altars as sacred spaces constructed and dedicated to God were significant places in which believers could worship Him in the Old Testament.

As He began the process of molding Israel into a peculiar people devoted to Him and His mission in the world, God provided the blueprint for a sacred space to be constructed and dedicated to worshipping Him—the tabernacle (see Exodus 24, 25, 40). Along with this architectural plan, God also gave specific instructions about how this sacred structure should be revered and respected because it represented His presence among His people. Priests and the people were given precise instructions and guidelines regarding how to approach the tabernacle reverently by avoiding any uncleanness, and relaying the kinds of sacrifices that are acceptable and how to present them. Failure

to follow God's expectations could result in the physical death of the worshipper. However, by Jesus' time, reverence for God's sacred space was not prioritized, and an area of it was used by animal merchants and money changers as a "marketplace" instead of a house of prayer. They unscrupulously used the necessary needs of acquiring sacrificial animals and exchanging currency as an opportunity for financial gain. John describes an occasion when Jesus, angered by their disrespect for the Temple, God's sacred space, drove them out—a

demonstration of His desire that God's house be revered and used for its primary purposes: to worship, commune with, and honor God.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Right for the Wrong Reason (*John 2:13-17*)

#### KJV

**13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

**14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:**

**15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;**

**16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.**

**17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.**

#### NIV

**13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

**14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.**

**15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.**

**16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"**

**17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."**

The Passover was one of three major religious festivals that Jewish males were required to attend annually. As a devout Jew, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem, the center of Jewish worship, to observe it (**verse 13**). Before this particular Passover observance began, Jesus came to the Temple, where merchants were selling animals for sacrifices and others were exchanging foreign currency for the Temple currency (**verse 14**). Because people had to travel great distances to offer sacrifices at the Temple, some had to purchase the animals after arriving in Jerusalem. Consequently, merchants, moneychangers, and lenders set up shop inside the Temple grounds. Although their services were "right," their motives were "wrong." They turned an opportunity to assist people in honoring their obligation to God into a way to make a profit. Jesus found them "in the Temple," meaning inside the Temple grounds—thus corrupting its sanctity and making it a noisy marketplace instead of a place of prayer and praise. Ironically, the site they chose was the Court of the Gentiles—an area where the Jews had the opportunity

to witness about their God. The motive driving these businessmen's actions prompted Jesus' deliberate, forceful, and physical response. He made a whip out of cords, drove them and the animals out of the Temple area, poured out the moneychangers' money, overturned their tables, told those selling doves to remove them, and commanded them to stop making His Father's house a marketplace (**verses 15-16**).

Jesus' passionate display of His deep commitment to honoring God and respecting the Temple's sacredness caused His disciples to remember Psalm 69:9 (**verse 17**). The result of their reflection highlights the importance of knowing, meditating on, and memorizing God's Word. This incident also reveals the nation's weakened spiritual condition and its leaders' failure to model and teach genuine worship, respect, and reverence for God and the Temple. Jesus' actions underscore vital principles for believers in their relationship with God and the sacred places where they gather for worship. This includes highlighting the importance of regular worship attendance and active participation in ministries, maintaining appropriate respect for spaces dedicated to God, and avoiding using them for commercial gain. We must address practices that dishonor God's house or take advantage of others' needs and recognize our need to continually examine our lives and remove anything that can hinder worshipping God in spirit and truth.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What behaviors and attitudes reflect a lack of respect and reverence for God's house today?

## The Real Temple (*John 2:18-22*)

### KJV

**18** Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

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

**20** Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

**21** But he spake of the temple of his body.

**22** When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

### NIV

**18** The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

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

**20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”**

**21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.**

**22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.**

The Jewish leaders—scribes, Pharisees, and political figures—immediately questioned Jesus’ authority to disrupt their “temple business” and demanded a miraculous sign to prove His authenticity (**verse 18**). Their request seemed justifiable in this context, as Jesus’ disruptive actions could have incited further demonstration. They also believed that a true prophet could perform miracles. However, their demand was driven by anger and a sense of threat as Jesus challenged their power and position. Instead of complying, Jesus declared that if they destroyed this temple, He would raise it in three days (**verse 19**). His listeners were confused, thinking He referred to the physical temple, which had taken forty-six years to build under Herod the Great’s reconstruction (**verse 20**). John clarifies that Jesus spoke of His body, predicting His death and resurrection (**verse 21**). Even His disciples didn’t understand His meaning until after His resurrection, when they grasped the Scriptures’ prophecies about the Messiah’s suffering and death (**verse 22**).

This exchange highlights spiritual principles applicable to believers today. The religious leaders’ spiritual blindness prevented them from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah and acknowledging His authority. If they believed that miracles validated true prophets, they should have recognized Jesus’ prophetic role and more. Unlike them, believers should strive for spiritual insight to understand and apply the deeper truths of God’s Word. When Jesus referred to Himself as the temple, He proclaimed His divine identity and authority, emphasizing that worship and a relationship with God are centered in Him, not in a physical structure. Thus, believers are reminded of the importance of focusing on a personal relationship with Jesus rather than just religious rituals or buildings.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**How are some believers like the Jews and Jesus’ disciples regarding understanding God’s Word?**

## **A Discerning Savior (*John 2:23-25*)**

### **KJV**

**23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.**

**24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,**

**25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.**



**23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.**

**24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.**

**25 He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.**

The Jews requested a visible sign from Jesus to confirm that He possessed the authority to disrupt their business and prove that He was from God. John informs us that Jesus did perform miracles and signs in Jerusalem during this Passover feast, most likely healings (**verse 23**). As a result, many believed in His name. Yet, Jesus did not place confidence in their responses because He could discern the motives and content of humanity's hearts (**verse 24**). Jesus' omniscient assessment of those who expressed belief in Him because of the signs they witnessed proved to be true in the days ahead when some of them cried out for His crucifixion—because faith based on seeing is shallow and will not last or stand up under testing (**verse 25**). Jesus' knowledge of the human heart should motivate believers to be transparent and seek to develop a deep-rooted faith based on an intimate and obedient relationship with Him. On the other hand, His knowledge and understanding of the heart is a cause for gratitude and assurance. Because He knows us intimately, we can trust Him to understand our needs and to guide and work everything out for our good.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is Jesus' knowledge of the heart good and bad news for believers?

## A Closing Thought

John 2:13-25 describes an account of Jesus' cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem. This act of Jesus set the stage for His ministry and message and offered significant lessons that believers can apply to their lives. Cleansing the Temple demonstrated Jesus' zeal for true worship and maintaining the sanctity of God's house by removing anything that defiled it. Thus, believers must follow His example by ensuring that their physical sacred spaces maintain their purpose as "houses of prayer," not commercial enterprises. Second, Jesus' designation of Himself as the temple and prediction of His death and resurrection should provide hope and assurance for eternal life and confidence in God's presence.

## Your Life

Take time to assess if there are abuses of your congregation's sacred space in the form of envy, jealousy, strife, self-centered worship, and other behaviors that disrespect its sanctity. Then, examine your motives for assembling to worship, ensure that your actions are driven by genuine devotion to God, and remove anything that might distract you from true worship or dishonor God's house and its purpose.

## Your World!

The location of the merchants and moneychangers' business enterprise was the Court of the Gentiles. This area was reserved for non-Jews to come and worship and learn about Israel's God. The area was specifically designated for prayer and teaching about Judaism. Thus, the presence of those Jesus drove out "robbed" them of this evangelistic opportunity. Therefore, the faith community is tasked with ensuring that it is not guilty of "robbing" the lost of the chance to know Christ by any of its religious practices.

## Closing Prayer

Gracious God, forgive us for the abuses of Your temple, dishonoring You and disrespecting its sanctity and purpose. Help us make Your house a place of prayer for all people for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Conclusion

### (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Consider your response to this question as you prepare for next week's lesson: "Are there any certainties pertaining to the end times?" Read Matthew 24:1-8, 15-24.

## Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, July 21	"God Preserves"	(Revelation 11:1-13)
TUESDAY, July 22	"Victory through the Lamb's Blood"	(Revelation 12:1-11)
WEDNESDAY, July 23	"David's Lineage Is Cut Down"	(2 Kings 25:1-7)
THURSDAY, July 24	"The Temple Is Destroyed"	(2 Kings 25:8-21)
FRIDAY, July 25	"The Willfulness of Evil Rulers"	(Daniel 11:21-35)
SATURDAY, July 26	"Lament for the Wicked City"	(Matthew 23:1-12, 37-39)
SUNDAY, July 27	"Don't Be Led Astray"	(Matthew 24:1-8)

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