



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 2:13-25 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 2:13) When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

After Jesus' first sign in Cana of Galilee, He went to Capernaum and then to Jerusalem with His disciples. This was the first Passover that Jesus attended with His disciples. At the Passover, He could teach many who came to Jerusalem for the feast; people He might not meet going from town to town and teaching in synagogues, on hillsides, or in homes. He was arrested two or three years later at the last Passover that He celebrated with His disciples, after He cleansed the temple once again. Jerusalem was considered the center of the universe, so the Jews always went "up" to Jerusalem; much as people today speak of going up to a larger city from a small town regardless of geographical elevation.

(John 2:14) In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

The area in the Temple where the selling for sacrifices was taking place was reserved for worshipping God. God could not be worshiped rightly and

reverently while buying and selling was taking place. The religious leaders sold offerings and exchanged foreign coins as a method to make money for themselves. Those bringing money from their home countries needed to change them into Temple shekels, and the religious leaders and moneychangers reaped a tremendous profit from the business. Many Roman coins had the face of the Roman emperor engraved upon it, and that type of coin was considered idolatrous and could not be offered in Temple worship. It had to be changed! The priests determined what animals and coins were acceptable for gifts according to their laws and traditions. People who traveled from far away to worship would wait to buy their sacrifices and exchange their coins at the Temple, and then give their gifts. However, animals to be sacrificed had to be without blemish, and the priests in the Temple could easily reject a sacrifice brought to the Temple; therefore, the moneychangers could sell an already approved animal in the Temple at a higher price. Though wealthy pilgrims might be cheated in the currency exchange and the cost of the animals; it was probably more convenient for them to buy their animals in Jerusalem rather than travel a long distance with them. On the other hand, poverty-stricken worshipers would suffer the most, for without the required offerings many would not be allowed to worship in the Temple. Temple offerings were important to the economy of Jerusalem, but they were not designed to make the chief priests and Levites wealthy. But even today some people become religious leaders for the wrong reasons.

(John 2:15) 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.

A whip would probably be needed because the sellers of animals and the moneychangers would not have left easily in response to a simple request from Jesus (or they did not leave after He requested them to leave—we are not told all the details.) Of course, Jesus could have simply moved them all out by the power of his voice, even as He commanded a storm to be still or cast demons out of a person, but He chose a means more adapted to His purpose. He demonstrated true righteous anger, the anger of our God. You might imagine the moneychangers crawling around on the floor for their

spilled coins; therefore, Jesus had to drive them out with a whip to get them to leave. Sometimes our conscience, the truth of the Bible, and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit are all three needed to drive us away from our sinful practices and toward obedient faith in Jesus Christ.

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

The doves were sold to the poorest people for them to sacrifice. Doves are often a sign of peace. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove on Jesus when He was baptized. Jesus’ concern for justice for all people is apparent, plus His concern that His Father’s house was being desecrated. The Temple was His Father’s house, literally HIS Father’s house. The LORD wanted the Temple built for people to learn of God and worship God. Jesus’ body was also the Temple of God, and His heavenly Father intended for people to learn about God and Jesus, the Son of God, from Jesus’ teaching and example. Since our bodies are the Temple of God, God expects us to use our bodies rightly as an example and for teaching about Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God will discipline us when we refuse to use our bodies as His Holy Temple. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, the Apostle Paul wrote: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”

(John 2:17) His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

Jesus first cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His ministry. Then, finding things back the way they were three years later when He went to His last Passover with His disciples—seeing that the evil religious leaders were again desecrating His Father’s house—He drove them out again. The Holy Spirit reminded the disciples of this prophecy in Psalms 69:9: “It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” This verse was interpreted as a Messianic prophecy, which Jesus fulfilled when He cleansed the Temple. Jesus did have a fiery zeal for the honor of His Father in heaven, and He demanded that those who represented His Father truly represent His Father by leading people to

worship God in spirit and in truth (see John 4:23). The priests and moneychangers insulted God by their behavior in the Temple, and they also insulted Jesus during His ministry and eventually used the Roman authorities to murder Him. Jesus made judgments that required the use of force sometimes to enforce the proper worship of God. The evil religious leaders in Jerusalem would not respond to reason, to the Scriptures, or to Jesus' divine authority; so, for the sake of the true worshipers who came to the Temple, Jesus used force to drive out the moneychangers, the sheep, the cattle, and the doves that made His Father's House anything but a House of Prayer. As our Savior from sin and condemnation, who chose to die sacrificially on the cross for us, Jesus chose to use no force against those who arrested, tried, and crucified Him. About forty years later, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and killed more than a million people, including many of the religious leaders. Thus, Jesus' words to the Samaritan women were fulfilled: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him" (John 4:23).

(John 2:18) The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

When John wrote about "the Jews," he usually meant the religious leaders. Jesus and His disciples were also Jews. Rather than seeing and doing what was right because it was right or according to the true meaning of the revealed Law of God in their scriptures, these religious leaders wanted some sign that Jesus had the authority to force them to do what was right according to the Law of God. They wanted to maintain their authority to take advantage of others, and Jesus' actions threatened their power and wealth—they worshiped money instead of God. Some people will only do what is right when forced to by a higher authority or higher power or a person stronger than themselves. For some, might makes right; they will only bow to someone mightier than themselves. These religious leaders wanted some sign that Jesus was of greater authority and had more power than they did; for they would only stop insulting God if someone could make them stop. As Jesus foretold; eventually, the Romans stopped them.

(John 2:19) Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

Because these leaders had no interest in doing what was right or honoring to God, Jesus refused to say anything that would lead them into more wrongdoing—attack or stone Him, for example—it was not His time to die. In addition, He needed to teach His disciples and other followers many more truths, and He did not want them scared away by these religious leaders before He completed His teaching. He knew that the Holy Spirit would remind His disciples of His words and interpret their true meaning for them.

(John 2:20) They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

The Jewish leaders misinterpreted Jesus, as He intended. At the same time, He wanted to plant a seed of truth in the minds of His disciples, a truth that the Holy Spirit would help them recall later after His death and resurrection. The Jews thought of Herod’s Temple (the temple Herod had begun to rebuild). Jesus spoke of His human body as the Temple of God. The bodies of all those who love and follow Jesus are also Temples of God.

(John 2:21) But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

Note: in John 2:19, Jesus said, “I will raise it up.” By killing Jesus’ body on the cross, Jesus, the Son of God, was not killed as Spirit or as God. Within three days, He himself raised up His human body from the dead. His body would be glorified, a glorified human body, able to appear inside locked rooms or create and cook fish around a campfire. Only God, the Son of God, could raise himself up from the dead. When believers die, they will need God to raise them from the dead; they will not be able to do that for themselves as Jesus could do that for himself. Jesus will raise from the dead all those who love and trust Him as Lord and Savior.

(John 2:22) 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.

Those who refuse to do the right things and reverence God will not understand the Scriptures rightly, just as the religious leaders did not understand Jesus' meaning in this situation. But after Jesus was raised from the dead, the Holy Spirit helped His disciples to remember (see John 14:26). The disciples believed the Scripture they had at that time (the Old Testament) and the words Jesus spoke. He proved He spoke the truth when He raised himself from the dead. Today, the Holy Spirit still helps believers understand and properly apply the Bible's teachings.

(John 2:23) Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

Jesus is the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Perhaps no greater proof of Jesus' divine nature is needed, but of course there are greater proofs, than the realization that the Temple guards did not rush into the Temple immediately during Jesus' cleansing of the Temple to arrest Him and have Him tried and executed for what they would have considered an attack on their place of worship. Jesus could pass through hostile crowds set on His murder and Jesus could still raging storms on the sea with a word (see Luke 4:16-30 & Mark 4:37-41). Jesus had no problem protecting himself from arrest without visibly saying or doing anything. Rather than Jesus being arrested and put on trial, for His hour had not yet come, Jesus performed many signs in Jerusalem during the Passover festival. John called the miracles of Jesus "signs." As signs, they amazed people and always met people's real needs. Jesus did not do miracles as a magician to attract followers, as Simon the magician did in Samaria (see Acts 8:9-24). As signs, Jesus' miracles revealed the true nature and character of Jesus as the Son of God, who showed forth God's love, mercy, compassion, the motivation to help and save others, and the power of God. As John shows and tells us more signs of Jesus, we will learn more about Jesus and worship Him.

(John 2:24) But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.

Because of Jesus' miracles and cleansing of the Temple, thus saving people from extortion when they went to worship the LORD, the people would have publicly proclaimed Jesus as Messiah and would have tried to make Him a political king over Jerusalem and Judea, which would have led to war with Rome. But Jesus did not come into the world to set himself up as a political leader. Instead, Jesus came to teach people the truth about God and reality, to save people from their sins and grant them eternal life, to die on the cross, ascend into heaven, sit at the right hand of God the Father, and do even more after He comes again.

(John 2:25) He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

As the Son of God, Jesus knew the moral character, the motivations, and the thoughts of everyone. No one surprised Jesus by what they said or did. He knew He came to save sinners, and He knew not to entrust himself to the desires of sinners. Jesus knew that if He allowed the people to try to make Him into the political messiah that they envisioned that the more He taught them the truth and explained the purposes of His mission on earth the more they would turn from following Him, eventually leading them to reject Him (which indeed happened when His hour came). Jesus had much more to teach and show His disciples. He would not allow the crowds to do with Him as they wished or determine His destiny.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. When Jesus began His ministry in Jerusalem, He found people selling animals for sacrifices in the temple, which He had seen every time He visited Jerusalem from the time He was a child growing up into manhood. How might He have felt during all those years prior to cleansing the temple?
2. Why do you think Jesus began His ministry in Jerusalem by first cleansing the temple?
3. How might the selling of animals for sacrifices have begun with good intentions and then eventually become corrupted?

4. Today, in what ways might a church become a marketplace and have an adverse effect upon the worship and service of God?
5. Why do you think Jesus purposely gave the temple authorities an obscure answer about the temple and His body?

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