

Zealous for God's House
John 2:12-25
September 21st, 2025

1. The _____ of Jesus (2:12-17)

2. The _____ of Jesus (2:18-22)

3. The _____ of Jesus (2:23-25)

4. Applying the Word
 - a. _____ in Jesus, the way to God.

 - b. _____ your whole Bible to know your Bible to know Jesus.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 2:12-25

1. Why did Jesus clear the temple in light of the true purpose of the temple? (See the instructions for the tabernacle, the precursor to the temple, in Ex. 25:8, 22) What does this scene teach us about Jesus?

2. How might people inappropriately use the account of Jesus clearing the temple to justify their own sinful anger? How is our sinful anger when it occurs unlike Jesus' righteous anger? (James 1:20; Prov. 10:29; 16:32)

3. How can churches engage in behavior that is similar to the abuses that were occurring in the temple?

4. Why does Jesus use temple language to describe His own body? (v. 21) How is He like and unlike the physical temple in Jerusalem?

5. What does Jesus know about all men that would cause Him not to entrust Himself to them? (vv. 23-25) Note how the same word for "entrust" is used in the following passages: Luke 16:11 and Romans 3:2. Read as much context as is necessary. What would it mean for Jesus to "entrust Himself to them"? (John 2:24)

6. Combined with Jesus' insight and foreknowledge of Nathanael demonstrated in John 1:47-49, what should be our response when we realize that Jesus "knew all men" (2:24) and "knew what was in man" (2:25)? In other words, how should it affect your response to God when you realize that there are no hidden pockets of your inner life?

Note: Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* from Crossway.

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Big idea: Jesus drove out those who made the temple a place of business with an authority that He would prove by His own death and resurrection.

Intro

Anger is a whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against a perceived evil. (Robert Jones)

Think about when you may get angry –

One of your kids snatches a toy from another one of your kids, for the 10th time that day, even though they were uninterested in it when it was just sitting on the ground.

You're pulling on the lawn mower cable and it snaps and your knuckle bangs against the fence.

Your spouse dropped a cutting comment about something you had worked hard on – a meal, a project, your appearance.

The public shooting the previous week of Charlie Kirk.

There's a part of you that says, "this is wrong. This shouldn't happen."

Sometimes our perceptions are inaccurate – we view something as evil when really we are the problem or our we are misunderstanding the situation.

Sometimes we start with a legitimate anger but we act on it in sinful ways.

It's whole-personed because you feel it and express it.

We come to the most famous incident of anger in the life of Jesus recorded in the gospels – in His righteous zeal for God's house, He overturned tables, made a whip, and drove people out of the temple courtyard.

Because He is without sin, His anger is a righteous anger, motivated by an accurate understanding of evil, and expressed in righteous way.

But why did He respond this way? What does it teach us about Jesus?

1. The **zeal** of Jesus (2:12-17)

a. V. 12 is a transition verse as they leave Cana and travel to Capernaum.

i. Capernaum was 20 miles from Cana, located along the sea of Galilee. It's the spring because its almost the Passover. The hills would have been green, they would have see the city nestled between the Sea of Galilee, a large lake, and the snow capped Mt. Hermon in the background.

ii. But they don't stay long. They go up to Jerusalem.

b. There are three Passovers mentioned in John, which if the events are in chronological order, it helps us mark time.

i. John 2, 6, 11 and possibly another in chapter 5.

ii. The synoptic gospels include this at the end of Jesus' 3-year ministry. John includes it at the beginning. There is debate about whether he actually cleansed the temple twice or if John or the other writers placed it thematically rather than chronologically, which was a common practice for ancient biographies and there are other times that is done in the gospels.

iii. I think the best evidence and most straightforward way to read it is that he did it twice, separated by 2-3 years. All the gospels seem to include time indicators that make it more

likely they included it when it happened and it wouldn't be unusual that He had to confront the same problem more than once.

- c. They always described traveling to Jerusalem as going “up” to Jerusalem because it was at a geographic high point and usually involved uphill travel and it was the spiritual high point of the nation, with the temple located in Jerusalem.
- d. Deut. 16 required all males in Israel to travel to Jerusalem 3 times a year for feasts, so Jesus is obeying the OT law and would be traveling with tens and hundreds of thousands of people to Jerusalem.
- e. Deut. 14 gave a provision that if the distance were too far, they could bring money instead of their offering of animals or produce and purchase an offering when they arrived. However, that legitimate need had turned into a whole commercial enterprise that affected the very function and purpose of the temple.
- f. What was the temple like?
 - i. Known as Herod's temple because king Herod had the massive structure built on the site of the original temple built during the time of Solomon. Solomon's temple was destroyed in 587 BC. It was rebuilt on a smaller scale by the exiles who returned from Babylon led by Zerubbabel in about 537 BC. Herod, apparently in an attempt to gain favor with the Jewish people invested a massive amount of money and labor in the temple complex beginning in 19 BC and completing it in AD 64, only a few years before it would be destroyed again.
 - ii. The entire complex was about 35 acres, our developed property with parking lot, building, and back area is about 4 acres. This complex was 10 times as large, perhaps as large as all the alfalfa fields around us added together. It occupied 1/6 of the city of Jerusalem. It was elevated using huge cut stones to make a level platform on top. The largest stones were the size of school buses and weighed 600 tons.
 - iii. Court of the gentiles – beyond which gentiles could not go
 - iv. Court of the women – Beyond which women could not go; this had space for 6,000 worshippers at a time.
 - v. Court of Israel – beyond which laymen could not go
 - vi. Sanctuary – beyond which priest could not go, place where altar was and the sacrifices were made
 - vii. Holy of holies – only the high priest once per year could go
- g. If this is a legitimate need, what were they doing wrong?
 - i. People had to exchange coins for the temple tax, thus the money changers (like the money changing booths at the airport or in major international cities).
 - ii. Animals were needed for sacrifice.
 - iii. The temple was meant to be a reflection of the holiness and greatness of God and to picture the requirements for sinful people to be made right with Him.
 - 1. They turned it into a place for business – maybe charging too high of prices (den of robbers)
 - 2. Turned the focus from God to man.
 - a. The problem was less about what there were doing and more about where they were doing it.

- b. This place was designed for worship. The whole structure of it was to reflect a holy God and the need to approach him with reverence and awe and awareness of your own sin as you bring a sacrifice before Him.
 - iv. Instead, you would have been met with loud shouting, the smell of animals, money changing hands, and some people looking to take advantage of naïve travelers from out of town.
 - 1. Perhaps you've been in an open-air market in another country where you are bombarded with people clamoring for your business and you have to constantly be on guard to make sure if you do purchase something that you are not being taken advantage of.
 - 2. They were robbing people of the opportunity to worship.
 - 3. "stop making my Father's house a place of business"
- h. His actions were bold and necessarily confrontational.
 - i. He made a whip, which would have been necessary to drive out the animals. No indication that he hurt anyone.
 - 1. The charges against him in the following verses were about authority not confronting him for hurting people.
 - ii. He poured out the money and overturned tables.
- i. Informed by the OT as God's Word tightly weaves together our understanding of the Messiah, they remember that David wrote in Psalm 69, "Zeal for your house will consume me."
 - i. His concern is not just for a place but for a people – the worshipers who came to pray and sacrifice would be hindered by the commercialization.
- j. Churches should be careful how they talk about and handle money and giving.
 - i. There's a necessary aspect of it – we need buildings to meet in and electricity to power the lights.
 - ii. There are convictional aspect of it –
 - 1. we want some pastoral staff to have time set aside for ministry rather than juggling shepherding and another job – paying guys not to work another job.
 - 2. We want to send money to missions
 - iii. There are worshipful aspects of – sacrificial giving is a way to honor God with the money He has given to you.
 - iv. But we never want the accumulation of money to be seen as our driving force or that we are trying to manipulate money out of people.
 - v. We make available ways to give online and through donations at the back of the room, but I don't know what anyone gives.
 - vi. We try to minimize requests for special giving.
 - 1. There are exceptions, like the annual Immanuel's Child program.
 - 2. But we don't want people to feel like every time they come to church they are walking through a gauntlet of requests for giving.

2. The **authority** of Jesus (2:18-22)

- a. The Jewish leaders ask a question about authority.
 - i. What gives you the right to do this? By what authority?
 - ii. In a way it makes sense. Imagine you own a business and someone comes in and starts giving instructions to your workers, changing the prices on the menu, moving tables and chairs around, hanging different pictures on the wall. Your question to them would be a question about authority – what makes you think you can make these changes?
- b. His answer is perplexing and puts them in a bind.
 - i. Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it.
 - ii. If they think he is talking about the literal temple (which they do), that's a tall order to give Him a chance to prove His authority – tear it all down.
- c. But John clarifies, as he often does, that Jesus wasn't talking about the temple but His own body – His own death and resurrection.
 - i. Just as “my hour has not yet come” anticipates a time when his hour would come, so this statement anticipates his coming death and resurrection. It hangs over the entirety of his life and ministry. It isn't an accidental or tragic occurrence at the end of a good life. It was divinely planned, foreknown, predicted, certain, substitutionary, efficacious
- d. Why not state that more clearly? Why word it in a way that is open to such misunderstanding?
 - i. The temple was the place where God would dwell with man. It was the place of substitutionary sacrifice for sin. It was the place of access to God.
 - ii. But it was just a foreshadowing of Jesus. And now He's here. He's the true priest and the true sacrifice. He's the true access to God.
 - iii. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
 - iv. So it's appropriate that He would use temple language to describe Himself.
- e. The proof of His authority would come at the resurrection.
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3. The **insight** of Jesus (2:23-25)

- a. Many believed when they observed the signs, but it's clear that there is something lacking.
 - i. There's a play on words here that can get overlooked in the English. The words for “believe” and “entrust” have the same Greek root.
 - 1. The people trusted in His name, but He wasn't entrusting Himself to them.
 - 2. Or you could say, He didn't believe in their belief.
- b. Why? He knew all men and knew what was in man.
 - i. Later Jesus would tell the parable of the four soils in Matt. 13. On each soil the seed fell. The seed represented the gospel. The soils represented the hearts of people. In one soil, the seed doesn't even take root before it is snatched away. But in the next two soils it takes root

and appears to grow but is only temporary and when affliction or persecution come up, he falls away. Or when the cares of this world choke it out. Only the fourth soil bears fruit over time.

- ii. There might be a flurry of spiritual interest, but Jesus knows that for many it will not be lasting.
- c. In a general sense, He knows the fickleness of humanity.
 - i. In a specific sense, He knows what is in every heart. There is no unknown pocket.
 - ii. **Jeremiah 17:10** "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.
 - iii. **1 Chronicles 28:9** "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.
 - iv. We often struggle to even understand ourselves. How good it is that He knows with perfect clarity and He is the good shepherd and overseer of our souls.

4. Applying the Word

- a. **Believe** in Jesus, the way to God.
 - i. At the end of chapter 1, He identified Himself with the ladder to heaven in Jacob's dream.
 - ii. In chapter 2, He identified Himself with the temple that would be torn down and rebuilt in three days, speaking of His death and resurrection. The temple was the unique dwelling place of God, even though He filled heaven and earth. It was where the priests mediated between God and man, but then Jesus fulfilled the function of the temple.
 - iii. In chapter 14, He will be even more clear:
 - 1. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
- b. **Read** your whole Bible to know your Bible to know Jesus.
 - i. We're two chapters into John, and we've seen the OT all over it.
 - ii. Today we saw the disciples recognized the fulfillment of the pattern in David of zeal for the house of God. It took place in the temple, which you can read about in the description of the tabernacle, the portable temple, in Exodus and the construction, destruction, and rebuilding of the temple throughout the OT history. He was there at the Passover, which was instituted in Exodus 13.
 - iii. The disciples "believed the Scripture" and the word which Jesus had spoken.

ZEALOUS FOR GOD

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Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger*

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