

“Scandalous Scene at the Temple” (Jn. 2:13-25)

1. The Occasion (13-14)
 - a. John alluded to Jesus as the “Lamb of God” and Passover was Israel’s great celebration of God’s deliverance of their slavery which required a sacrificial lamb.
 - b. Those in the courtyard were ‘marketing’ necessary items needed for required sacrifices.
 - i. Transactions were made convenient and/or virtually found exclusively there so the marketers would make exuberant profits.
 - ii. The people were being exploited by those in the Temple.
 - iii. Jesus, in essence, was saying this marketing has no business at the Temple. The Temple was an awesome sight – a complex which was 46 years in the making and the epicenter of all Jewish life. This structure stood as a wonder of the world – not just Israel.
2. The Rebuke (15-17)
 - a. Action: Jesus made a whip, drove out men and beasts, poured out the changers’ money, turned over tables, and verbally rebuked the crooked thieves.
 - b. Hypocrisy: The very reason for the sacrifices were to atone for their sins and yet some found a way to exploit those who were less fortunate thereby practicing unrighteousness at the very Temple which required righteousness. 1 Pet. 4:17.
 - c. The Impetus
 - i. It was not out of obligation (religion) that Jesus cleansed the Temple of corruption but out of His zeal for the Father’s house. It was for righteousness sake – to hallow God’s holy name!
 - ii. We have a lot of rebuking and virtue signaling going on out there now but it is holy unrighteous, selfish, egotistical, deceptive, exploitive, hypocritical, and pure evil!
 - d. The Prophecies: Ps. 69:9-10; Mal. 3:1-6.
3. The Result (18-22)
 - a. Their Reply
 - i. Insincerity: They don’t question why He disrupted their business (they knew it was corrupt). Instead, they ask Him for a sign of His authority to do such. In a way it is like saying, unless you are more righteous than we, do not attempt to correct us. Like, “How dare you...?” or “What gives you the right to come in here...?” “Who do you think you are?” “You’d better have some sign of authority to do these things.”
 - ii. Rather than ‘proof’ in terms of the fundamental moral congruence of Jesus’ action with the holy character of God, they request tangible supernatural attestation in a miracle (18). It is a demand for the visible at the expense of the ethical.¹
 - b. Jesus’ Reply
 - i. Analogical
 1. Direct & somewhat cryptic – obviously metaphorical w/regard to the building which wouldn’t be completed until AD 64!
 2. What He predicts is nonetheless astonishing. *[Incidentally the pattern we see in these verses, a saying of Jesus, a complete misunderstanding, and an explanation, recurs in this Gospel (e.g. 3:3ff.; 4:10ff., 32ff.; 6:41ff., 51ff.; 11:11ff.; 14:7ff.). It is not, of course, confined to John (see, for example, Mark

¹ Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (p. 69). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

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7:15ff.; 8:15ff.), and we may see in it one of the ways in which Jesus instructed his hearers.^{2]}

3. “Destroy” is literally “loose.”⁸⁴ The verb is often used of untying and the like. It can refer to the loosing of the component parts from one another and so mean “destroy” (cf. its use for the breaking up of part of a ship, Acts 27:41, and the breaking down of “the dividing wall of hostility,” Eph. 2:14). It can also be used of the dissolution of life, or killing. The imperative here seems equivalent to a conditional, “If you destroy ... I will raise up,”³
4. “For the first time he hints at what he will say explicitly later on (“You are seeking to kill me,” 8:37, 40; compare 7:19–20), and what in fact they will soon begin to do (5:18; compare 7:1, 25; 8:59; 10:31–33; 11:53)”⁴
5. “raise up” (*egeirein*) is more commonly used of raising up persons (whether from sickness, sleep, or death) than buildings.^{45 5}

c. Extraordinary

- i. An Event never forgotten. No one would dare do such a thing. A weak analogy would be a new public servant raiding the Capital Building while congress was in session breaking gavel claiming that congress is a den of thieves and even if they arrest him and try him and find him guilty on phony charges, he will be vindicated and justice will be done.
- ii. Just as there is no legitimacy in taking bribes from lobbyists and exploiting tax paying citizens, there is no place for corruption in God’s house!

d. Exceptional:

- i. Not to be mimicked with method (only Jesus has the prerogative to straighten out the Church) but an example to be holy to promote true worship and condemn religious corruption.
- ii. For Jesus, worship is a matter of the gravest importance and as the messianic King he claims lordship over it. A significant proportion of the Bible is devoted to the regulation of worship and we are sadly misled if we imagine that the quality of what we offer in worship services, or the devotion with which we participate, are matters of peripheral importance. If ‘Jesus is Lord’, he claims the temple as a primary sphere of his rule. Modern-day worship which is irreverent, superficial, distraction-filled, cold, lifeless, sloppy, self-indulgent, hypocritical, ill-prepared or theologically inappropriate will likewise receive his censure, as will worship which detracts from

² Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 176–177). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁸⁴ Λύσατε. Abbott points to Eccl. 11:9 as a parallel construction, for it contains an imperative that implies a threat (2439 [iv]). Temple understands the word as “not an empty challenge, but a judgement on their mentality and policy which will involve the destruction of the Temple.” Christ will then raise up “what shall thereafter be the habitation of God among men, that Risen Body which after the Ascension and Pentecost finds its earthly manifestation in that ‘holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit’ (*Ephesians* 2:21–22).”

³ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 175). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁴ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 167). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁴⁵ While ἐγείρειν is occasionally used of a building in Greek literature (n. 35), all but one of the 144 uses of the verb in the New Testament refer to living entities rather than buildings (the response of “the Jews” in v. 20 being the only exception). It is one of two verbs (along with ἀνίστασθαι) used repeatedly in the New Testament for the resurrection of Jesus.

⁵ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 167). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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the honour and glory of the living God through a concern for performance and self-display on the part of those leading it. ‘Judgment must begin at the House of God’ (1 Pet. 4:17, my translation).⁶

- e. V. 20: Repulsive Response: Their willing disbelief in any authority Jesus had. “Who do you think you are?” See Jn. 8:53b. They have the last words in this exchange but John inserts the last word regarding Jesus authority.
 - f. Truth matters! Their hatred for him blinded them to their only hope of eternal life. Jesus’ action of turning the tables was not a mere expression of outrage but a promise of restitution and demonstration that He was the Temple and would clean it up because righteousness is required.
 - g. This passage serves to encapsulate Jesus’ mission and person in that He is restoring the image of God in the organic tabernacles of people made in His image and who (in Christ) will mirror His glory. See Gen. 1:26ff; Ps. 119:136; 1 Cor. 15.
 - h. V. 21: His person was that to which the Temple pointed. It is interesting that four terms are used regarding the reality of temple i.e. temple (14 place of sacrifice), Father’s house (16 connotes relationship), sanctuary (19 place of safety/peace), and body (21 place of sacrifice, glory, relationship, peace, and signifies those in Christ i.e. church).
 - i. V. 22 His disciples remembered and believed the Scriptures and His words.
4. The Belief & Disbelief (23-25)
- a. **Did not commit** (οὐκ ἐπίστευεν). Rev., *trust*. There is a kind of word-play between this and ἐπίστευσαν, *believed*, in the preceding verse [v. 23]. Wyc. reproduces it: “Jesus himself *believed not himself* to them.” He did not trust His person to them. Tynd., *put not himself in their hands*. “He had no faith in their faith” (Godet)⁷
 - b. **2:24–25**. Sadly, their faith was spurious, and Jesus knew it. Unlike other religious leaders, he cannot be duped by flattery, enticed by praise or caught off-guard in innocence. His knowledge of men’s hearts is profound, and accounts in part for the diversity of his approaches to individuals in the Gospels. He therefore did not *entrust himself* to these spurious converts. (The Greek repeats the verb, but with a slightly different meaning: we might paraphrase, ‘the people *trusted* in his name, but he did not *entrust* himself to them.’) By implication, Jesus wonderfully promises to entrust himself to those who truly trust him (*cf.* 10:14, 15).⁸

⁶ Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (pp. 70–71). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Rev. Revised Version of the New Testament.

Wyc. Wycliffe’s Version of the New Testament.

Tynd. Tyndale’s Version of the New Testament.

⁷ Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 87). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

⁸ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 184). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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Imagine a young public servant barging into the Capital Building while congress was in session, taking and breaking the gavel while accusing congress that they have made a mockery of the US Constitution by exploiting the tax paying citizens. And after they demanded his credentials, he claimed that they would incarcerate him but he would nevertheless be vindicated three days afterward and justice would be done! Would that be scandalous? Or, if his accusations were true, wouldn't *their* actions be scandalous? I fear we are too comfortable in our Western society. We seem to be more concerned with what we are owed (our entitlements) than what we can give (charity). We seem to be more concerned with what we are going to eat than if others have food. We seem to be more concerned with acceptance of the mob culture than proclaim the unpopular truth. As people of God, we must pursue truth, justice, and charity. We must follow our Lord and take up our crosses of preaching, investigating, ministering, sacrificing, praying, and praising the LORD Jesus Christ – no matter the cost! That is why the Temple of God was erected and why Jesus came crashing through it to cleanse it and rebuke corruption therein. He would ultimately die to cleanse and raise on the third day to build a new living Temple of organic stones who would fulfill the roles of God's Temple purposes.