

Gospel of John Study Session 6

In our last session, John revealed Jesus' first miraculous sign to us - the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. In this account John began to lay out his case that Jesus was both the Messiah and the Son of God who gives eternal life to those who believe in Him. In this session John moves on to lay the foundation of Jesus and His relationship to the Passover as well as Jesus' relationship to the Temple and what that means for us today.

Q: Do you think it is possible to display genuine anger yet not sin? Why or why not?

[Galatians 5:19-21]

Q: Why do you think that "outbursts of anger" is listed as a sin? *(Because it is a trait of the flesh, it is self-seeking, self-glorifying, and self-serving. It is a behavior that is a raw display of an emotion that is not Spirit-led and thus not glorifying to God.)*

As we study the passage of this session, the first thing John shows us is a picture that many have a difficult swallowing because it depicts Jesus being angry which is an oxymoron to them. How can the loving Lord Jesus show this sort of anger when outbursts of anger is clearly an act of the flesh?

[John 2:13-17]

Q: When does this event take place? *(v.13 - During Passover of the Jews)*

Q: What can we glean by the phrase "of the Jews" in this description of the Passover celebration? *(That this book was written to Gentiles as well as Jews who did not live in Palestine. It may also indicate this book was also written after the destruction of the Temple so by designating it "of the Jews" John was informing us of the custom of those who lived in Judea at that time when the Temple was still in tact.)*

Q: What did the Passover celebration commemorate? *(God sending the angel of death as a tenth and final plague on Egypt killing all the first born children and cattle of the Egyptians while passing over the Hebrew families because they smeared the blood of a lamb on their doorposts on the night when this judgment happened. After this Pharaoh released the Hebrews from their captivity. This freedom was the first step in God showing His faithfulness to His people in moving them to take possession of the Promised Land.)*

Before diving too deeply into this account, we need to know something more of Passover. It was one of the annual feasts celebrated each year by the Jewish people to commemorate God's deliverance of His people from slavery. It is celebrated on the 14th of the month of Nisan (which coincides with the full moon at the end of March or beginning of April). It was a very special and important day in the life of an Israelite and in Jesus' day. Every adult male living within 15 miles of Jerusalem was required to attend the Passover celebration. If this male was also over the

age of 19, he was required to go to the Temple first and a temple tax. Many Jews would travel to Jerusalem from places much farther away to participate in the celebration. In fact, they would come from all over the Roman empire to celebrate Passover. Their first destination would be to the Temple to pay the tax and then offer a sacrifice in worship to God. Tax had to be paid in Tyrian coinage due to its high purity of silver used in this coin. In Old Testament vocabulary, this tax was a half-shekel or half a Tyrian stater (in New Testament vocabulary). Since the tax was only half a stater, two men would usually joined together to pay the tax as one stater was sufficient to pay for two men. The issue was that if people were coming from out of Israel, they wouldn't have any local coinage so they would need to convert their money to the local currency before paying the tax or living in the area for any length of time. This would require finding a place to exchange their money. Also, if they came from a distant place, it was hard to manage livestock on such a long trip so they would often just buy an animal suitable for sacrifice near or in Jerusalem.

Q: How did Jesus find the Temple when He arrived for the Passover? *(v. 14 - full of people selling livestock and exchanging money)*

[I Kings 8: 10-13] - This is the account of the first day in the Temple when Solomon, who built it, dedicated it to the Lord.

Q: Why do you think this was a problem for Jesus? As we noted, these were common things done in order to celebrate the Passover if the worshiper came from a distance to be present. *(The Temple was built to honor, worship and bring glory to God. Though God is not confined to the Temple, it was His special place, designated by Him, to meet with Him, worship Him and offer sacrifices to Him. It was a place to seek after God. Instead of a quiet place to offer prayers to God and meditate upon His Word, men are busily and loudly haggling over the price of livestock and exchange rates for money. Instead of the Temple being a place reserved to humble oneself before the Lord and seek His face, now it is a place reserved for men seeking profits for themselves. Instead of a Temple built to glorify the King of Kings and High God of Heaven over all of Creation, it appeared more like a common marketplace - a place of business.)*

Q: Upon seeing this scene described in v.14, what did Jesus do? *(v.15 - He fashioned a scourge of cords)*

Q: What does this tell us about Jesus' final response to His seeing the Temple in this state? *(It took time to fashion the whip/lash so He had time to contemplate His response. This wasn't an outburst at all on Jesus' part. He was angry but He had time to consider exactly what He was going to do and then carry that out. This was not a knee-jerk reaction of a hot-head.)*

Q: What does Jesus do with the whip He had just made? *(v.15 - He drove all the livestock and their owners out of the Temple and He turned over the tables of the money exchangers.)*

Q: What was Jesus' comment to those who were selling doves? *(v.16 - Take those things away, stop making My Father's house a place of business)*

Notice that Jesus's complaint about those conducting business in the Temple is not *how* these businessmen are doing business but rather *where* they are doing business. He is not denouncing them on the manner of how they are doing business or claiming they are acting unethically. Rather Jesus is denouncing them for doing any business in the Temple at all. His words in v.16 are "*How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!*" (In Matthew 21:13, which is another Passover where Jesus cleansed the Temple just before His crucifixion, He called those engaging in business here "robbers". In this text the case could be made that Jesus' complaint was about how they were doing business in addition to them doing business in the Temple at all.)

Q: In v.16, what does the phrase "My Father's house" denote about those Jesus is unleashing His anger upon? (*That the Heavenly Father is not their Father. They don't know God. If they did, they would not have been doing what they were doing to the Temple.*)

God's people worship Him and hold Him in awe. They recognize that coming to God means turning away from self-worship and self-righteousness to true worship. Children of God understand the difference between attempting to satisfy themselves through worship instead of satisfying God through their worship and praise.

When Jesus calls God His Father, He is stressing His unique authority to protect the Temple as He is the Son of God. He's highlighting that He is the Son of God. He is not a child of God by rebirth but rather that is His eternal position and nature.

[Psalm 69:5-9]

This is a psalm of David. He is crying out in despair over those who oppose him. One of the major problems faced by David is the failure of his oppressors to understand his zeal for the house of the Lord, which was the tabernacle at that time. The promised Messiah would be greater than David and so just as David was consumed with a zealous love for God's tabernacle, so would be the promised Messiah who was in the Temple at that moment. So in this Jesus both showed His commitment to His Father, as His Son but also but this same commitment also showed that Jesus was the Messiah, the prophesied offspring of David that was to come from God. (Back to the purpose of the book of John: Jesus is both the Messiah and Son of God.)

Not back to our original question about anger.

Q: How could Jesus go on this rampage and yet it not be an act of sin? How could Jesus, the loving Lord who would give His life for all mankind and be the lamb of God, actually be angry in the first place? (*v.17 is the key. Jesus was zealous for His Father's house.*)

The word "zeal" means to "boil". It is an emotion that is used both positively and negatively in the New Testament. In a negative sense, it can mean jealousy while in a positive sense it means to be extremely passionate and caring for something. The key to understanding Jesus' actions here deal with His love for His Father's house. His anger is a function of His zealous love for God and people to come to know Him in a genuine fashion. Genuine love can

be demonstrated by anger at times. Many times people say that Jesus' anger in this situation was righteous anger. That leads to the question of what is righteous anger? Can my anger be listed as righteous anger or only Jesus' anger? What makes it righteous anger? Here's the deal...

We all know that human trafficking is just nothing other than a form of slavery. It takes individuals and enslaves them to other people for their own uses. It strips people of their freedom and dignity and their humanity and degrades them to the status of an object to be used at the whims of another. Instead of treating another person as also created in the image of God, it treats the person as a lesser creation of God, one which can be dominated by another person. So the author of one of the commentaries I use for this study is well acquainted with a man who is passionate about ending human trafficking throughout the world. He has studied the problem and talked to people who have been on both ends of the issue. He had written about the subject and lectured about it and worked tirelessly to bring light on the subject to government leaders around the world. The author said after you meet this man, there is no doubt in your mind that he is committed to ending this practice. No one doubts his love for those who are in this sort of slavery. At the same time, this man is angry, white hot angry, about the practice and what it does to people. Thus, while he is not a slave or a survivor of human trafficking himself, his love for those caught up in the practice leads him to be angry at the issue itself and the damage this abuse has done to the victims of the trafficking and that anger leads him to further selfless action.

Here's an illustration closer to home. What if you declare your undying love for your wife but then sit back and yawn if someone were to hurt her in some way? Would that be true love or would your love instead be nothing but a mere feeling that you enjoy from time to time? I believe that if anyone here saw his wife being hurt in some way, it would lead us to anger and we would display that anger in a way that sought to protect our wives from further harm. Spineless love is not love.

So then, Jesus' love for His Heavenly Father and the Temple that bears His name and the people coming to the Temple seeking God earnestly fuels His anger at this situation He saw in the Temple when He arrived for the Passover. It is important to remember that Jesus didn't lose His temper, throw a tantrum and was not out of control. He's angry but He's in full control of His behavior. Thus, He is being angry without sin. His anger is an expression of His love.

[Ephesians 4:14-27]

These are all aspects of growing into spiritual maturity. This is a partial description of how the body builds itself up in love and we find in these verses another good description of God's love in action.

Q: According to this passage, how is anger demonstrated through a Christ-centered life? (*Eph. 4:26 - it does not let the sun go down on it - it takes care of the matter in a timely manner, before giving rest to one's body for the sake of loving the other person.*)

So we see in our text in John that Jesus is demonstrating for us what anger looks like and how it is to be displayed in a righteous manner. It should not be self-centered or self-promoting but rather love-centered and God-honoring. Jesus loved His Father and understood that people coming to the Temple were not going to be able to meet with God or worship Him in truth in that

environment.

On a historical note: this would be the first of two Temple cleansings that Jesus would do at the time of the Passover. He conducts another cleansing during the week before His crucifixion. At that time we'll discuss the meaning of how Jesus is the true meaning of the Passover.

Immediately after this incident of Jesus cleansing the Temple, He is confronted by Jewish leaders.

[John 2:18-22]

Think about this. The Jewish leaders are those responsible for keeping the Temple in order and handling everything that happens within it. They are the ones ultimately responsible for the condition it was in when Jesus walked in that day and saw it had devolved into a market. Those Jesus kicked out of the Temple had paid their fees to the Jewish leaders of the Temple in order to set up their stands and stalls for animals. Now this guy shows up and drives them out? What gives? What authority does He have over the Temple and its daily operation create this commotion and attempt to re-order its ways of operating?

Q: What did the Jewish leaders want to know after Jesus' cleansing of the Temple? *(v.18 - They wanted to know who gave Him the authority to do what He just did? As the legal authorities, the Jews had every right to question the credentials of someone who had taken such a bold action in the Temple complex.)*

Their question, however, shows two deficiencies of their hearts.

1) They display no reflection or self-examination over whether the cleansing of the Temple and related charges were foundationally just. Was what Jesus was charging actually correct? They didn't ask this question at all. Thus we can know that they are more concerned about questions of precedent and legal authority instead of questions about pure worship and the right approach to God.

2) If the authorities considered Jesus a mere rogue agent or some mentally or emotionally disturbed person, there were adequate recourses. The fact that they demanded a miraculous sign from Jesus to prove His authority demonstrates that though they didn't know for sure yet who Jesus was, they harbored at least a suspicion that He was a divinely-sent prophet of some sort. Yet, if that were the case, it was still the wrong question to ask. The right question would have been, "Are you a prophet from God?" When would God ever perform a miracle on demand to satisfy the curiosity of man. God cannot be domesticated so that He does the will of man or uses His power for our purposes. The cleansing of the Temple was the sign and if they wanted to know if He were from God, that should have been the question.

Q: How does Jesus respond to their request for a miracle? *(v.19- Jesus told them to tear down the Temple and He's raise it back up in 3 days)*

This response was not really understood at that moment by the Jews or by His own disciples. On the literal level, the Jews were not likely to call Jesus' bluff and tear down the Temple that took them 46 years to build. On the literal level it can be taken to mean, "*Just how badly do you want to see a real miracle? It's going to cost you your precious Temple that you've desecrated to get that miracle.*" However, it would have been a marvelous sign. Anyone who could restore the Temple in just three days after its destruction must also have the authority to regulate its practices. Yet, in typical Jesus fashion, He wasn't speaking literally at all but rather had something else in mind when He made this response - a sign much more significant than rebuilding the Temple. The focus of the Jews was on the material and not the spiritual.

Q: What did Jesus truly mean by His response to the Jews in v.19? *(He was speaking of His own body and how He'd be raised from the dead.)*

Q: From last session, what is a sign? *(It is a miracle done that points to something beyond itself. It's not just a raw display of power but a meaningful event God does in order to point to something He is revealing to mankind.)*

Q: How is a sign interpreted? How does a human understand or come to know what a sign means? *(It is an act of faith - coupling the event with faith in God)*

A sign must be accompanied by faith to understand it. The disciples later remember this verse from Psalms and couple it by faith in what Jesus was truly speaking about - His body - the crucifixion and resurrection. As we peel back this sign we are going to see that it is another example of just how deep John's gospel is. This sign actually goes much deeper than this short account leads us to think.

Q: What is a temple? *(It's a place where people go to worship or meet with a god. It's a place where a deity dwells - in generic sense)*

Q: In v.19, where did Jesus say the Temple was? *(It was His body - not the building)*

Q: How could Jesus call His body the Temple where God dwelt? *(Because He was the Son of God and as He was one with the Father and Holy Spirit)*

In 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and completely leveled the Temple. It was never rebuilt.

Q: Where is the Temple now? *(It's in the body of all believers)*

[I Corinthians 3:16-17]

[I Corinthians 6:19-20]

[II Corinthians 6:14-16]

[Ephesians 2: 19-22] - This passage shows that while we are each individually the temple of God, as the Holy Spirit indwells all believers; it also shows that we are being built up into an ever greater “building” or “temple” and are each a component of that heavenly structure. It shows the interdependence we have upon each other in this life.

[Psalm 51:16-17] - In this passage David gives the details of what God considers appropriate sacrifices to God. Now that Jesus has given Himself as the perfect sacrifice to for all mankind, for all who will believe in Him, there is nothing left to give other than to remember that we didn't save ourselves so humility before God is our proper, reverent attitude before Him.

[Revelation 21:22] - Heaven will have no Temple in it as the Almighty and the Lamb will be its Temple.

God now lives in us through the Holy Spirit. This plan brought about by grace is God's plan for mankind. No one needs to go anywhere to worship God or be with Him. He is always inside the believer, dwelling in him or her. There will never need to be another Temple built ever because Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice for sin once for all.

[Hebrews 9:24-28]

In the end, the Jews did tear down the Temple which was Jesus' body and He raised it back up in three days to fulfill this promise of a sign that proved His authority over the Temple. His resurrection was the ultimate sign that anyone could ever ask to witness.

If another Temple is built, it will be an act of Satan. (While there is absolutely no reason from God's perspective to build another Temple, man will probably build one anyways.) The devil will use it to distract from God's true intention and will of coming to live inside each person through His Holy Spirit in the form of a love relationship made possible through Jesus Christ. He will get mankind to focus on externals and things similar to the ineffective old covenant. Why would God ever want a structure, a symbol of the old covenant, to be built when He now dwells in our hearts. It's not needed as the perfect sacrifice has already been offered and it is certainly not wanted on our parts who understand grace. What a total distraction and spiritual circus it would be to have another temple erected where sacrifices of animals are happening again. Man's gaze would be taken off the work of Christ and be put back on the useless, obsolete practices of the old covenant. We have God dwelling in us.

Q: What are some of the applications we can draw from Jesus' cleansing of the Temple? What does it mean for us today? *(Many possible answers: people can't trust in the external rituals to make one right with God, God desires our hearts to be quiet and humble before Him rather than to be filled with worldliness and busy-ness, we act as a stumbling block to the lost coming to God when we bog down our worship with business, churches don't need coffee shops and bookstores and other mall-type stores in them distracting people from worship and prayer, etc.)*

[John 2:23-25]

Q: While at the Passover, what happened? (*v. 23 - many people observed signs Jesus did and came to believe in His name.*)

Sadly, their faith was spurious. They believed because they saw God at work, not because they understood who Jesus was. Not many of them coupled the sign with faith in Jesus. While Jesus created quite a buzz for Himself at the Passover, as it was towards the beginning of His ministry, He probably didn't see a lot of true converts to Himself yet.

Q: What did John say about Jesus' lack of trust of man at this time? (*vv. 24-5 - He wasn't trusting Himself to man as He knew was truly inside of man.*)

The way this could be translated from the Greek is that the people believed in Jesus' name but Jesus did not entrust Himself to them. On the other hand, Jesus promises to entrust Himself to those who truly trust Him by faith in who He truly is. John's message to us is not that we need to see more miracles to truly believe Jesus but rather see more of who Jesus truly is and that is the greatest miracle we'll ever need.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes, or rebuttals?