

WORSHIP TO ZEAL

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 2:13-22

CONTEXT

Jesus performed many more miracles than were recorded in the Gospels (John 20:30-31), though Jesus's earthly ministry was more than a series of miraculous signs. Jesus demonstrated He is the Son of God in other ways too, including His driving out the vendors from the temple. John recorded an earlier temple cleansing than the one recorded by the other Gospel writers that took place during the week prior to His crucifixion. In this earlier incident, everyone who witnessed the event recognized that Jesus asserted authority like no other teacher of the law.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus has the authority to purify all things because it all belongs to Him.

As you examine John 2:13-22:

- Recognize that the temple, where God dwelled with His people, had become a place of business and greed as opposed to a place of worship.
- Dwell on the fact that Jesus pointed to His future death and resurrection as a sign of His authority for His actions.



TIMELINE

John Baptizes Jesus
in the Jordan River
(Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him
(John 1:35-51)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Cleanses the Temple
(John 2:13-22)

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness
(Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus Performs His First Miracle at
the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)

Nicodemus Visits Jesus
at Night (John 3:1-21)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: John 2:13-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: John 2:21-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: John 2:16-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: John 2:23-25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: John 2:18-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 69 |



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn more about Christ's zeal for the Lord's house and how it pointed to His messiahship.

JESUS IS ZEALOUS ABOUT HOLINESS AND PURITY (JOHN 2:13-17).

Underline the words describing actions Jesus took in the temple.

13 The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. **15** After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. **16** He told those who were selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" **17** And his disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He found two types of businesses occurring in the temple—almost certainly in the outer court known as the Court of the Gentiles. First, people were selling animals used for sacrifices in worship. Worshipers at the temple were required to bring a sacrifice to the temple three times a year. For worshipers traveling a long distance, purchasing animals at the temple was more convenient to ensure the animals wouldn't get sick or injured along the way.

The second type of business being conducted was money changing. Worshipers came from various regions in the Greco-Roman world, and they needed to pay the temple tax with the appropriate currency. John did not provide any evidence that the business practices occurring were inherently corrupt. Yet Jesus's anger was provoked because the temple, a place of worship, had become a place of business and greed.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Christian churches and chapels, no doubt, are very unlike the Jewish temple. . . . But they are places where God's word is read, and where Christ is specially present. The man who professes to worship in them should surely behave with reverence and respect. The man who brings his worldly matters with him when he professes to worship, is doing that which is evidently most offensive to Christ."¹

—J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)

Key Concept: Jesus has the authority to purify all things because it all belongs to Him.

LEADER NOTE: God demands reverence in worship. To that end, the Lord's people must worship Him in His prescribed way with hearts committed to Him. Aaron's sons burned incense as they wanted rather than as God commanded, so they were consumed by fire (Lev. 10:1-2). Corinthian believers used the Lord's Supper selfishly to satisfy their own appetites, and some of them died as a result (1 Cor. 11:21,30). Jesus's condemnation of the vendors in the temple was consistent with the Bible's teaching on true worship.

What practices help you worship God in a reverent manner?

Making a whip out of cords, Jesus drove the people and animals out of the temple complex. This was no sinful fit of rage—it was righteous indignation that a place intended for the solemn dignity of worship had become focused on commercial gain. These events caused Jesus's disciples to recall Psalm 69:9, in which David wrote, "Zeal for your house has consumed me," which foreshadowed the zeal of Jesus for His Father's worship.

Jesus's foes did not understand His profound zeal to worship the Father. His zeal led Him to call for reform. The word "consume" took on double meaning in John 2:17. Not only did zeal consume Jesus's soul, but Jesus's enemies eventually consumed His life on the cross because they hated His zeal. Part of their testimony against Him related to this episode, though false witnesses distorted His words (see Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:58).

LEADER NOTE: Matthew, Mark, and Luke recounted a temple cleansing by Jesus during the final week before Jesus's crucifixion (Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-46). John may have recorded the one temple cleansing out of chronological order for thematic purposes. But possibly Jesus cleansed the temple twice: once at the beginning of His public ministry, as seen in John, and once at the end, as seen in the other Gospels.

How has Jesus's zeal for worshipers from all nations caused you to adjust your life?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

In purifying the temple, Jesus revealed His authority as well as pointed to His future death and resurrection.

Notes

JESUS'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION WOULD PROVE HIS AUTHORITY (JOHN 2:18-22).

Underline all the statements made and questions asked about the temple in these verses.

18 So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?" **19** Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." **20** Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?" **21** But he was speaking about the temple of his body. **22** So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

The Jews questioned Jesus's authority to call for righteousness. When John referenced "the Jews" here, he was not identifying Jewish people in general. The label signified Jewish leaders, probably the temple authorities or the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. While Jesus wanted people to ask Him questions, their questioning was wrong on at least two levels. First, they seemed unconcerned with whether Jesus's cleansing of the temple was just. They were more concerned that someone might usurp their authority.

Second, they wanted a miracle-on-demand to prove Jesus possessed authority. Time and again in the Gospels, Jesus rebuffed those who demanded supernatural works before they would believe (see Matt. 12:39; 16:4; John 4:48). Ample evidence for faith in Christ was readily available, including His miracles. That evidence is available to us too. We must trust Jesus based on the evidence provided in His Word.

LEADER NOTE: The Jewish leaders had it all wrong when they thought Jesus should satisfy their demand for a miracle. Placing faith in Jesus as Lord generally precedes receiving greater understanding of Jesus. As Paul put it, "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ" (Rom. 10:17). We hear His Word, then believe, then understand with greater depth. Conversely, when people placed shallow faith in Jesus merely because of His miracles, He did not admit them to His circle of disciples (John 2:24).

What has helped you surrender to Jesus's authority in your life?

Key Concept: Jesus has the authority to purify all things because it all belongs to Him.

Notes

The greatest sign of Jesus's authority was yet to come: His death and resurrection. However, the Jewish leaders misunderstood what Jesus said. They thought His reference to "this temple" meant the temple building in Jerusalem, which King Herod the Great had begun renovating forty-six years earlier (vv. 19-20). But Jesus meant "the temple of his body" (v. 21).

Under the old covenant, God manifested His presence to His people in the temple. Jesus inaugurated a new covenant as He was Immanuel, God with us. Jesus's body is the new temple. When the Son of God took on humanity, He "dwelt" (literally, "tabernacled") among us, a reference to the temple's precursor structure (1:14). Through His incarnate glory, Jesus revealed God to us because He is God (v. 18). There is no longer a need for a temple building since Jesus's sacrificial death fulfilled the old system (Heb. 10:12).

LEADER NOTE: The New Testament frequently portrays Jesus's resurrection as the capstone evidence for faith in Him. Paul told the Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14). Seeing the resurrected Christ was what finally drove Thomas to fall at His feet and proclaim, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Likewise for Mary Magdalene, recognizing the risen Jesus was what caused her to cling to Him and bear witness about Him (vv. 16-18). When people ask why they should trust Jesus, among the best reasons we can give is His resurrection from the dead.

How did you become convinced that Jesus truly rose from the dead?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

RESURRECTION: Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

ARRIVAL

SURVEY: Invite the group to share responses to this question: “When, in your experience, has someone you considered to be kind, gentle, laid back, or funny surprised you with a display of firmness or anger? What was your response?”

CONTEXT

TRANSITION: Many people have an idea of laid back, gentle Jesus based on His miracles and teachings on God’s love. Bible stories like this one, where Jesus took an unyielding stance on holiness and worship, might seem out of character for “the Jesus we know.” It important for us not to shy away from the “hard stories.” Instead, we can dig deeper to learn more about our Savior.

SUMMARIZE: Following the first miracle Jesus performed, He spent some days with His mother, brothers, and disciples in Capernaum. Afterward, He wasted no time establishing His authority, not through the awe of miracle making but through His firm, authoritative actions and words. In addition to the compassionate, giving Man who cared about wedding guests, our study today reveals the God-man also was motivated by a fierce zeal for holiness and purity.

RECAP

ASK: From your personal preparation this week, what stood out to you in these short amount of verses? Why do you think Jesus felt compelled to establish His authority over the worship in the temple? Why might Jesus have used this opportunity to testify to His resurrection before it happened?

TRANSITION: Let’s take a deeper look at the significance of Jesus establishing His authority over how we worship God for a better understanding of what authority over God’s house has to do with the physical body, both for Jesus and for His followers.



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Key Concept: Jesus has the authority to purify all things because it all belongs to Him.

GROUP ACTIVITY

COMPARE: Direct the group to the “Establishing Authority” chart in their Personal Study Guide (PSG) on page 102, and duplicate the chart on a board. Explain that they will analyze how Jesus conflicted and confronted people with His claims of divine authority, often producing confusion or consternation in His audience, though many believed.

Establishing Authority
Compare the actions, words, scriptural basis, and sign demonstrated or alluded to by Jesus in these two passages.

JOHN 2:13-22	MATTHEW 12:1-14
ACTIONS	
WORDS	
SCRIPTURAL BASIS	
SIGN	

DESIGNATE: Form two groups. Assign each group one of the Bible passages to read and identify key words or summaries for each of the categories listed. Have each person fill out their own chart and discuss answers with their group.

READ: Coming back to the large group, invite a volunteer to read John 2:13-22.

DESCRIBE: Call on a volunteer from the John group to share the information from their column. Invite the group to characterize the responses of the people at that time, and note them on the board. Encourage the group to share their personal reactions upon reading the story the first time.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 12:1-14.

DESCRIBE: Call on a volunteer from the Matthew group to share the information from their column. Invite the group to characterize these responses, and write them on the board. Encourage the group to share their own impressions of this Bible story.

Notes

	WHY THEY WERE	HOW THEY WERE	HOW THEY WERE
Scribes	One of the most elite and influential groups in the Jewish community. They were responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.
Pharisees	One of the most influential groups in the Jewish community. They were responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.
Sadducees	One of the most influential groups in the Jewish community. They were responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.
Herodians	One of the most influential groups in the Jewish community. They were responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.	They were trained in the Law and the Prophets from a young age. They were also responsible for teaching the Law and the Prophets to the people. They were also responsible for writing and copying the Scriptures.

DELVE: Compare the two stories and how they presented Jesus's authority. Point out that in John, Jesus outlined a very significant sign of His authority, which would come later—His resurrection.

DISCUSS: Why might people struggle to imagine Jesus turning over tables and driving out money changers with a whip?

ANALYZE: Not only was Jesus zealous about holiness and purity of worship, He had the credentials to issue a higher calling. Pass out copies of **Pack Item 13: Jewish Sects in Jesus's Day** and discuss how Jesus challenged the sects and authorities that influenced the Jews (*the Scriptures point to Jesus; Jesus's resurrection confirmed His authority; Jesus exhibited true zeal*). While some will always reject His claims, Jesus painstakingly showed the faithful His authority.

DEBRIEF

When have you seen zeal for God's house lead to reform?


In the management of your own temple—your physical body where the Holy Spirit dwells—are there steps you need to take to keep it holy?

SUMMARIZE


Jesus's resurrection would prove His authority over how worship should be done. His zeal for purity and holiness means that we too must be zealous to protect worship in God's house from being jeopardized by greed, dishonesty, pride, and injustice.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 103). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.

 **HEAD:** The temple's transition from a sanctuary of worship to a center of commerce likely was a gradual one. We too can drift from God's standard of holiness. Before we can correct the drift, our lives must be compared to Jesus's perfect standard—akin to what occurred when Jesus cleansed the temple.

In what areas of life are you most prone to drift from God's standards of holiness?

 **HEART:** The path to restoring our zeal for Christ begins with submitting to His cleansing. Unlike the Jewish leaders, who resisted His authority and demanded He prove His right to purify the temple, we should submit voluntarily to His purifying power. Pray with David, "God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

Key Concept: Jesus has the authority to purify all things because it all belongs to Him.

Notes

What hinders you from confessing to Jesus the areas in which you have drifted and asking Him to restore you?



HANDS: We do not pursue zeal for Christ and holy living to win God's favor. The only way to achieve right standing before God is to place our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then we zealously pursue holy living as an expression of our gratitude and commitment. People in your circle of friends and family need to know these truths.

How will you initiate a conversation this week with someone about their need to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Consider whether you have a zeal for God's house in the manner of Jesus and what you can do personally to maintain its purity.
- Assess your church for impurities through prayer. Determine, also through prayer, how you can help promote holiness and zeal for worship.
- In giving thought to your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, conduct a self-check on how you manage and protect your physical body.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 103 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 69:9-13 with your group. Acknowledge your own zeal for worship and lean into prayer, thanking God for His love.

References

1. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 104.