

John 2:12-25 Manuscript

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In today's passage, Jesus demonstrates "Zeal for God", it's worth noting this idea is also played out in Numbers 25 when Phineas brings the people back into right relationship through His actions of killing a sinner. The image of Jesus walking around being nice to everyone doesn't stack up. Jesus was a political hot potato who shook people from their comfortable religion; he showed many who were in power, who had the privilege, who had organised things to suit them, that this situation if based on a premise which did not reflect the character of the Father had to change. It's also worth noting that Jesus was never zealous about himself, only about the Father.

We start with a small verse; it sits between changing water to wine and clearing a temple. Jesus is sitting at home.

We might miss it, or pass over it, think it not necessary between such great actions, yet in the quiet, and we hear the voice of God.

What did his brother and sisters think when their Eldest brother, Jesus arrived with disciples? To be a Rabbi, one would study long and hard, under another Rabbi. To be sure Jesus questioned the religious leaders of his day, the gospels record such actions, yet he never formally studied as culture dictated, he was, in fact, an anomaly. We know his knowledge came through the Holy Spirit from the Father, others did not. Here he is, with at least five disciples in tow. How did his family react to these new people present in their life, what did it do to their understanding of who God was, to have their brother recognised as a Rabbi, and then to have these followers agree with Jesus claims to be the son of God! Jesus eventually took twelve men, symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel, to form a new nation, Jewish people who were to be faithful in revealing the Kingdom as it was always meant to be. John at this point doesn't highlight the challenge to Jesus family, it comes later in the accounts, but it serves as a timely reminder, never back down from declaring, and never give up hope in seeing a change come to our family of origin that salvation will be available to them.

God's Passover stands as a reminder of his Salvation for the Jewish nation. One to be remembered every year, Deut 16:16 records "Each year every man in Israel must celebrate these three festivals: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. On each of these occasions, all men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he chooses, but they must not appear before the Lord without a gift for him." Jesus attends this festival. While we know from other Gospels that Jesus visited the temple many times, thematically from John's account we have Jesus visiting the Temple for the first time after embarking on the work his Father in heaven had set him. In effect we have "God with Us", returning to the Temple where God was "meant to be worshipped". Many years previous, the glory of God, left the temple Eze 11:23 "Then the cherubim lifted their wings and rose into the air with their wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered above them. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east." Within John's account the life of Christ, the Glory of God returns to survey how his temple is now used. His observations are not pleasing!

The selling of animals and the exchange of money had initially been carried out off site, but over time for convenience, the practice had moved into the outer courts of the temple. The money changers were thought to be a temporary arrangement, put in place for this festival only. People from all over the Roman Empire gathered to Jerusalem for the high festivals, bringing many different coins with them; but the temple tax, to be paid by every conscientious Jewish male of twenty years of age or over, had to be deposited in Tyrian coinage (because of the high purity of its silver). This annual half-shekel (to use the language of the Old Testament) was equal to half a Tyrian stater or tetradrachm, and so two Jews often joined to pay the tax in one coin (cf. Mt. 17:27; NBD, p. 792). The money-changers converted money to the approved currency, charging a percentage for their service. The tables of the money-changers were not set up all year round, but only around the time when they collected the temple tax. In Jerusalem, this was from 25 Adar on (the lunar month before Nisan; cf. Mishnah Shekalim 1:1, 3).¹

In Numbers (read Numbers 25) the account records the seduction of Israel by the Midianite women. God sends a plague to punish his people; stopping the plague in the response of the zeal of Phineas in cleaning the stain of sin from the Israel people. Phineas demonstrated this by killing an Israelite who was sinning blatantly in front of the nation.

We see a similar zeal of Jesus for the name of his Father. It is worth noting that Jesus always responds to insult about the Father, never to insults to himself.

The practice of money changing was not popular, and the system was considered loaded towards those in authority.

This lack of popularity may explain why Jesus had the ability to move the people he did from the temple area. We must realise that Jesus was God incarnate and his presence could be intimidating once revealed. The scriptures record a time when the nations will come in submission before the Israelite people, and in that time, the worship at the temple will be pure. This teaching may pave the way for the actions of Jesus in the minds of at least some of those watching.

Zech 14:21

In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord of Heaven's Armies. All who come to worship will be free to use any of these pots to boil their sacrifices. And on that day there will no longer be traders in the Temple of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

Malachi 3:1-3

"Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

"But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

From the point of the average person, the action by Jesus of this nature could well have been interpreted as a declaration of Messiahship, if still within the image of Messiah the people had created, not the one Jesus was to fulfil.

Psalm 69:9

Passion for your house has consumed me,
and the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

The response of the authorities is interesting. First, despite having temple guards available they choose at this time not to try and arrest Jesus. Instead, they demand a sign to justify his actions. At least in some part of their thought process was the caution to see if this was a person from God, or simply a madman.

"If the authorities had been convinced that Jesus was merely some petty hooligan, or that he was emotionally unstable, there were adequate recourses; that they requested a miraculous sign demonstrates they harboured at least a suspicion that they were dealing with a heaven-sent prophet."²

It is also sad to see that they did not react in any way to WHY he was doing this.

"They display no reflection or self-examination over whether Jesus' cleansing of the temple and related charges were foundational just"³

It, therefore, is worth considering what provoked Jesus action, and why he saw this "trade of convenience" as foundational unjust.

God took a people of slavery, one who had nothing of their own, and in one night brought them into freedom and showered them with gifts from the nation which had held them captive. The remembrance of this action and the expected response of the nation was critical in the identity of what being a Jew, a person of God was. To interrupt this in any way was to disrupt life itself!

Illustration- Person was laughing at the misfortune of others.

The actions taken by those in leadership were making it harder for those that needed to know God actually to find him. The reading of the law establishing provision for the poor those who could only afford little was instructed to sacrifice Doves (Jesus parents were in this classification). This sacrifice was one part of God's provision to allow dignity and justice to meet in his Temple to allow all humanity whatever their economic position, to be reconciled to him and to find their truth worth. The temple leaders had made this process more expensive that needed and placed rules in place to prevent any bypassing of the system which benefitted only those in power.

It is to these people of all those who were present that John records Jesus as addressing! Those tasked with allowing the poorest of this world access to God!

The authorities demand a sign, Jesus responds by a challenge, destroy the temple and see it rebuilt in three days. This claim seemed ludicrous, the temple, started by the hated Idumean, "Herod the Great" to ingratiate himself with Jewish people, was still in the process of being built forty-six years later. To see it destroyed would mean overthrowing the Romans, destroying the power base of the Sadducees, and the established way of things. Any sane person knew these things were not to be.

We see John interpret the words of Jesus in light of the historical facts of his death and resurrection; something grasped only by his disciples at this later date.

Jesus is offering the same challenge he offered early in the chapter at the wedding, move from the old system to that of the new. Seeing the original intention of the Temple fulfilled within its real representation, that of Jesus own body! As one would wait for the high priest to declare the nation pure by the yearly sacrifice of Yom Kippur, so we can see it's ultimate fulfilment within the very body of Jesus. Here the Messiah is calling those that would follow him to put away the signpost's (the temple) and see the thing they pointed to, Jesus. It is a challenge which stands for our generation. We have moved from a point in our life in Australia where everybody "just went to church", to one in which Jesus does not know or accepted. In this strange spiritual vacuum, growth can come, true life can be seen, as people put off the concept of simply doing things because they are told to, and instead replace this with a living faith in the person of Jesus.

The old is being completed before your very eyes, it did what it was meant, it was corrupted, and now it is being replaced, having been fulfilled by my presence, this is the challenge Jesus offers the spiritual leaders. They refuse to take it!

John concludes this section with a strange reference to Jesus and his lack of trust in the human heart. This may seem obvious given the vantage of history, but its inclusion by John is more than clever rhetoric, it is placing front and centre the type of faith that those who "began to trust him" actually had.

Jesus by clearing the temple is challenging those observers as to who or what they will seek for their communion with God. While the building HAD been the key point, it was now to be the Person of Christ, and thus people had now to TRUST in who Jesus was and his actions to come through the cross. This was the challenge, one that he knew, at this pointing time, the people were not ready to accept.

To exercise faith on the grounds of having witnessed miraculous signs is precarious (4:48; cf. Mk. 8:11–13). Although miracles cannot command faith (10:32), it is better to believe on the ground of miracles than not at all (cf. 10:38).

"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)⁴

The sad truth is; "The object of faith must be Jesus Miracles are not automatically a sign

of God. Jesus' works were meant to lead people to faith in Him; often people saw the sign but refused to believe" 5 We see throughout the Bible that trust in God is accompanied by action, "True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by process of discipleship"6

For example, we need to understand forgiveness is a place of being (understanding who we are in light of the cross), and action, based on that reality changing the way we act within our known framework. We must not only know that or sins have been dealt with, but this revelation of truth must change our attitude to the world in which we live, and in our consideration of our purpose within this world, we too like Peter need to become "Fishers of Men." "Biblical faith is both a person and a message! It is evidenced by obedience, love, and perseverance."7

Application

What type of community of faith do we want to be part of, What are Keywords which we are interested in having associated with the name of Altona Baptist!
(Get congregation to list it)

Illustration- Photo with keywords around it

How we imagine ourselves, how we view ourselves. We need to bring out into the open the key desires of our hearts, of what God has laid upon our spirit, to be his people of God in this area.

Illustration- a second life, having a building with a roof on. Even given a clean slate people often stick to safety.

Taking the time to dream, taking the time to share.

What type of things might be preventing the generation of today from approaching God through this type of building, or this type of community? This is a key thing we need to understand, have we at any time fallen to doing things which mean it is harder for those outside the kingdom to come in!

What type of things might be helping towards this same safe goal? We have strengths, and these are God-given, we must celebrate these as well, What are they, What things led you to become a person who worships at Altona Baps.

If we bring people or encourage them to come along, what do we want to bring them to, what constitutes success? We sometimes cannot see the blessing in front of us, what do we desire to see.

Listen to a sermon?, Come to Morning tea? Get involved in a growth group?

What sort of thoughts did people share about what a church should be?

How do we set time aside to create this community, what are we willing to change, alter, ditch, try out.

What are the primary marks of a church?

The Disciplines of;
The Lords Table,
Reconciliation,
Proclaiming the gospel,
Being with the “least of these” ,
Being with Children,
The Fivefold gifting (Eph 4:8, Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers),
Kingdom Prayer

Conclusion

This task may seem daunting, and so it is worth reminding ourselves that Jesus never sets an impossible task, in fact, we know that it is He who seeks and finds the lost, you and I are merely the messenger, and then only on certain occasions. Be assured of this truth; the Kingdom has always come to those who genuinely seek it.

1 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 178.

2 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 181.

3 D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 180–181.

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

5 Robert James Utley, *The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*, vol. Volume 4, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 29.

6 Robert James Utley, *The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*, vol. Volume 4, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 28.

7 Robert James Utley, *The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*, vol. Volume 4, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 29.

