

## Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 2:12-25 (May 3, 2026)

Opening Question: *What comes to mind when you think of “worship”?*

John’s purpose (20:31): “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Today’s lesson follows Trey’s sermon on 2:1-11, the Wedding at Cana

### I. Background & Setting (12-13)

A. Transition to Capernaum: Jesus, His mother, brothers, and disciples travel together; last mention of family traveling as a unit; Joseph likely deceased; brothers are most likely biological brothers

B. Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover

- Required feast for Jewish males
- Jerusalem was the spiritual center of the nation
- Jesus is acting in obedience to the Law but also preparing to confront corruption.

### II. One Cleansing or Two?

A. Although both John and the three other gospel writers tell of Jesus toppling the tables of the money-changers, only Mark writes about how Jesus stopped the carrying of goods through the Temple courts that we read about in the other gospels.

B. Only John tells us that sheep, oxen, and pigeons were being sold on the Temple grounds, while Matthew and Mark mention only the sale of pigeons.

- C. Only John tells us that Jesus used a whip to drive out the animals
- D. The other gospel writers record a different rebuke from Jesus, made up of quotes from Isaiah and Jeremiah. Mark records Jesus saying, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers.”
- E. John recalls Psalm 69:9, verse nine
- F. In John’s gospel, Jesus speaks of the Temple as “My Father’s house,” and Mark records Him calling it “a house of prayer for all the nations”
- G. In John, Jesus condemns the profane use of the Temple while, in the other gospels, Jesus condemns the dishonesty of the process
- H. In John’s gospel, Jesus was confronted by the Jews. In the other gospels, we don’t read that the Jewish leaders said anything to Jesus (Luke 19:47)

### III. The Problem in the Temple (14)

- A. What Jesus Found: sellers of oxen, sheep, pigeons; and moneychangers
- B. Where This Occurred: Court of the Gentiles
- C. “My Father’s House”: intended for prayer, but turned into a marketplace

Discussion Question: *When does something “helpful” become harmful in worship?*

### IV. The Cleansing of the Temple (15–17)

- A. Jesus’ Actions: made a whip, drove out animals, overturned tables
- B. Jesus’ Authority Declared: “My Father’s house”--a direct claim of divine Sonship
- C. Fulfillment of Scripture: Psalm 69:9: “Zeal for your house will consume me”

Application: God cares deeply about how He is worshiped

## V. The Challenge to His Authority (18–22)

A. Religious Leaders Demand a Sign: “What authority do you have?”

B. Jesus’ Response: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”

C. They misunderstand: think physical temple

D. Jesus speaks of His body

- Refers to His death and resurrection

- Disciples understand later

Key Insight: The resurrection is the ultimate proof of Jesus’ authority

Discussion Question: *Why do people often miss spiritual truth even when it’s clearly presented?*

## VI. The response: Superficial vs. Genuine Faith (23–25)

A. Many “Believed,” based on miracles (signs)

B. Jesus’ Response: He did not entrust Himself to them because He knew their hearts

C. Nature of False Faith: Intellectual, not transformational; based on signs, not surrender

Teaching Point: Not everything that looks like faith is saving faith

## VII. Major Lessons and Application

1. God Demands Purity in Worship

2. Jesus has absolute authority over the temple and over our lives

3. True Faith Goes Beyond Signs: not just believing about Jesus, but trusting in Jesus

4. The body of a genuine believer is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

## VIII. Discussion & Reflection

- A. What “distractions” can creep into our worship today?
- B. How can we guard against superficial faith?
- C. What does it look like to honor God in everyday life?

## IX. Conclusion

- Jesus cleansed the Temple because He was zealous for the proper worship of God
- He validates His authority by pointing forward to the cross and His resurrection
- He calls us to pure worship, genuine faith and holy living

X. Closing Question: *If Jesus walked into your life today, what would He drive out or overturn?*

Sunday School Lesson for May 3, 2026  
John 2:12-25

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallahassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this first Sunday in May, we've begun a new series of lessons, turning our attention to the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Following Pastor Trey's sermon on the first half of the second chapter where we learn of Jesus' first miracle--that of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana--the second half of this chapter and the focus of our study today deals with John's record of the Lord's first cleansing of the Temple found in verses 12 through 25.

If you're not familiar with this event in John's gospel, you might be asking yourself, "I thought Jesus cleansed the Temple after He entered Jerusalem at the end of His ministry?" And He did. So let's see what John has to say.

He concludes his report about the wedding in Cana by saying in verse eleven, "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him." Remember from our introduction, that John is writing his record of the life and ministry of Jesus so that we would believe, just as the disciples' belief was being strengthened as they saw how Jesus had been revealed as the Son of God through the miracle of changing water to wine.

In the next verse, John tells us, "After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days." You can see Cana and Capernaum identified on the map behind me.

There are two important things to note about this verse. First, it's the last time we read about the family traveling together. We know that Jesus' mother was at the wedding in Cana, and now John tells us that Mary, Jesus and His brothers--Matthew, in chapter thirteen, verse 55, names them as James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas--Mary and her children make their way to Capernaum. Capernaum would later become the home-base, if you will, for Jesus. Why they went to Capernaum, we don't know. The best guess is that they were to meet up with a caravan of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Before we leave Capernaum, however, we do need to touch on the question of Jesus' brothers, what one writer calls, "one of the most perplexing points in the evangelic history." There are three possibilities. First, the brothers are what we would think of when we hear the word "brothers"--the other sons of Mary. Matthew, chapter one, verse 25 and Luke, chapter two, verse seven, leave us with the likelihood that Mary had other children. To challenge this assumption, the question is asked, "As Jesus hung on the cross, why did He entrust His mother to John instead of to her other sons?" A possible answer is that the other sons did not yet believe Jesus was the Son of God and would not until after the resurrection, and John, likely being a near relative--if, indeed, Mary and Salome (John's mother) were sisters--John would have been the better choice.

The second possibility is that these "brothers" were actually cousins. I'll spare you the rather difficult explanation here that Mary had a sister--perhaps a half-sister--named Mary--who was the wife of Cleopas, or how the word "cousins" somehow came to mean the same thing as "brothers."

The third possibility is that these children were Joseph's from a previous marriage, also to a woman named "Mary," and therefore stepsons of Mary, the mother of Jesus. There's no hint of this in the gospels, and the resulting confusion through the duplication of names makes this difficult to believe. However, for those who ascribe to the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of

Mary, it's the best possibility. But the most likely option of these three is, of course, the first--that the brothers of Jesus were His brothers, all born to the one Mary. Just in case you wondered ....

Back to the second important thing to note about verse twelve: Mary's husband--Joseph--isn't mentioned--most likely--scholars say--because Joseph has now passed away.

With verse thirteen, John begins the second main division of his gospel that deals with Christ's revelation to the world. We've been introduced to the Person of Jesus, John the Baptist and the disciples have testified in His behalf, and He has given the first sign of who He really is. John now begins to describe the work that Jesus was sent to do among the Jews, the Samaritans, the Galileans, and, finally, among the mixed multitudes. After this stay in Capernaum, John tells us in verse thirteen that "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

In accordance with the Law of Moses, every able-bodied, adult, Jewish male, was required to attend three annual festivals that were celebrated in Jerusalem. The other two were the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Pentecost. Passover, because of its great importance in the life of Israel, was the best attended. In obedience to the Law and, in order that all righteousness would be fulfilled, Jesus attended this feast, the first of four Passovers recorded in the gospels.

Note that John tells us that it's the Passover "of the Jews" that was the reason for Jesus' going to Jerusalem. His emphasis on the fact that the Passover was a Jewish feast seems to indicate that John wrote his gospel to a primarily non-Jewish audience, and, since he's writing in the last decade of the first century, Jerusalem has been destroyed, the Temple demolished, and the celebration of Passover as a national event has ended.

Now's a good time to revisit our earlier question about the timing of the cleansing of the Temple. First, it's important to note the differences between

the two accounts. Although both John and the three other gospel writers tell of Jesus toppling the tables of the money-changers, only Mark writes about how Jesus stopped the carrying of goods through the Temple courts that we read about in the other gospels. Because of the location and sheer size of the Temple complex, it had become common for tradesmen to take a short-cut from the city to the Mount of Olives through the Temple grounds.

Only John tells us that sheep, oxen, and pigeons were being sold on the Temple grounds, while Matthew and Mark mention only the sale of pigeons. Only John tells us that Jesus used a whip to drive out the animals, ordering their owners to take the pigeons away, with the rebuke, “Make not my Father’s house a house of business.”

The other gospel writers record a different rebuke from Jesus, made up of quotes from Isaiah, chapter 56, verse seven, and Jeremiah, chapter seven, verse eleven. Mark records Jesus saying, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers.”

The scripture that the burning fervor of Jesus led John to recall is from Psalm 69, verse nine, that begins, “For zeal for your house has consumed me.” In these verses from John and Mark, you’ll also notice that, in John’s gospel, Jesus speaks of the Temple as “My Father’s house” at the beginning of His ministry, and Mark records Him calling it “a house of prayer for all the nations” near the end of His ministry.

In the event recorded for us by John, Jesus condemns the profane use of the Temple through the sale of animals while, in the other gospels, Jesus condemns the dishonesty of the process by which the animals were sold and money was exchanged.

Perhaps most significant is the fact that, in John’s gospel, Jesus was confronted by the Jews who demanded He tell them by what authority He did these things, and He answered them as we’ll see shortly. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we don’t read that the Jewish leaders said anything to Jesus, in fact,

Luke tells us in chapter nineteen, verse 47, “The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.”

Although a few commentators doubt that Jesus would have attempted to cleanse the Temple more than once, the differences in the accounts between John and the other gospel writers lead most others to conclude that there were two, different and distinct incidents, which, in my mind, seems the more likely.

With all this by way of background, we come to this very familiar story about Jesus in the Temple to find that the holiness of God demands purity in our corporate and personal worship. Beginning in verse fourteen, we read, “In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, ‘Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.’”

As the Lord Jesus entered the Temple, he found “those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons.” That area of the Temple grounds where the animals to be offered as sacrifices were sold would have been the Court of the Gentiles. This court had an area of about fourteen acres and was separated from the inner court by a wall with signs posted that forbade the entrance of Gentiles on pain of death. Around this outer court ran marble colonnades supported by four rows of pillars, richly ornamented, and roofed with cedar, providing plenty of shade for the traders.

As worshipers came from the farthest reaches of the world of that day, they found it more convenient to buy animals for sacrifice there in Jerusalem. Those who brought animals from home, based on the recommendation of their

local priest, still had to get approval from the officiating examiner of the sacrificial animals.

You can see how lucrative this monopoly could become, given the requirement of an unblemished, spotless sacrifice and the ease by which the animal you brought could have been found unacceptable while a perfectly suitable animal was offered for sale right there on the premises. One commentator writes of an incident where a grandson of the great Jewish scholar, Hillel, brought down the price of a pair of doves from a gold denar to half a silver denar, a discount of about 98 percent.

This monopoly and the tyranny of the sellers of the sacrifices naturally tended to make the Temple worship hateful to the people, and, as one commentator writes, “the old charm of sacrifice, the free offering by a penitent of what he knew and cherished, the animal that he valued because he had watched it from its birth, and had tested its value in the farm work--all this was abolished by this ... abuse [shrouded in the guise of ‘convenience’]. ... It was not the presence of oxen and sheep which was offensive, for such animals [had to] pass into the Temple .... But it was an aggravation to have these standing all day in the Temple, and to have the haggling and [bartering] of a cattle market mingling with the sounds of prayer. But especially was it offensive to make the Temple service a hardship and an offence to the people of God.”

The other group of people that Jesus found working in the Court of the Gentiles was the moneychangers. Those who came to Jerusalem for Passover were not only required to offer a sacrifice. They were also required to pay the Temple tax. One of the annual requirements levied upon the people of Israel, based upon God’s instructions found in Exodus, chapter thirty, was the payment of what became known as the Temple tax in the amount of a half shekel. What made it difficult for Jews living outside of Israel to pay this tax was that the payment had to be made in Jewish coinage--in half shekels. Not only was that clearly spelled out in the Law of Moses, it would be

blasphemous to allow coins with the image of a foreign king--particularly one who claimed to be god--to find their way into the Temple treasury.

Although currency was regulated throughout the Roman Empire, there was a variety of coins made of various metals. For example, there were the Aureus and Quinarius made of gold; the Denarius and Quinarius made of silver; the Sestertius, Dupondius, Quadrans, and Sextans made of bronze, brass, or copper; in addition to various provincial and local coins. The city of Sardis where one of the seven churches that received a letter from the Lord in The Revelation was located was where coins were first minted. Those who came with Roman or local currency had to exchange it for half shekels in order to pay the Temple tax.

Here again was an opportunity for the most extreme abuse, for if the half-shekel coin were tightly controlled by a few shrewd and underhanded individuals, they could charge exorbitant rates for the precious coin required for the Temple tax--and it seems they did. You could easily imagine the scene around the table of one of the moneychangers--the weighing of the coins; deductions for loss of weight or the source of the foreign coins; arguing, disputing, bargaining. Even for the residents of Jerusalem, it seems that these moneychangers would receive a commission for giving two half-shekels in exchange for a single shekel.

In verse sixteen, the Lord continued His call to purge the Temple of every defilement: "And he told those who sold the pigeons, 'Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.'" The pigeons, of course, being kept in baskets, couldn't be driven away like the cattle and sheep, but His order to remove them carries the same authority as His previous demands. One commentator suggests that Jesus dealt more kindly with these merchants because the doves were bought by the poor. And the reason for His demands were clear: they had made His Father's house a house of trade, a marketplace, a place of business.

And notice that Jesus doesn't say, "Do not make **our** Father's house a place of business," but He says, "Do not make **my** Father's house a place of business."

Between the extremely dishonest practice of selling of animals and the deceitful exchange of coinage, the magnificent Temple that had been built to provide a place for the presence of God to dwell had been violated, denigrated, and blasphemed--transformed from a place of national, public worship and communion with God into a common marketplace run by scoundrels.

This is the second time that Jesus identifies the Temple as "My Father's house." The first was when He was twelve years old and had remained in Jerusalem after Passover. When Mary and Joseph found Him after looking for Him for three days, He asked them--Luke, chapter two, verse 49--,"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" His declaration here in verse sixteen is an unmistakable assertion that He is the Son of God, even as Nathanel had already claimed Him to be. And we'll hear more about Jesus' relationship with His Father as we continue our study of John's gospel.

So the Lord Jesus steps into this profane and corrupt scene in the temple courts with the sounds of traders peddling their animals, the noise of sheep and oxen, the shouts of the moneychangers competing for business from the throngs that had come to fulfill their annual duty according to the Law of Moses. The Son of God beholds what has become of His Father's house, and he's enraged. Zeal for the honor of His Father's house seizes Him. Nowhere can He more appropriately assert His authority as the Messiah. John simply tells us in verse fifteen: "And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables."

Perhaps picking up pieces of cord and rope from the debris that may have littered the ground, He weaves together a fearsome whip and proceeds, single-

handedly, to drive out traders, cattle, sheep, and moneychangers. We can only imagine the chaos that resulted--animals scattering everywhere, the owners trying desperately to recapture and control their livestock, the moneychangers scurrying about trying to pick up every coin that's been tossed on the ground. And He's got a whip, either to drive the animals away or warn the dealers to leave with what they could, // or maybe He didn't use it at all. Never on any other occasion did our Lord use violence.

You might be wondering why the sacrifice-sellers and moneychangers fled the Temple grounds. We're not told, but we can be certain that, when they were confronted by the sacrilegious nature of their business, they had no excuse--no defense; they knew they were in the wrong. One commentator suggests that, because the people generally had a profound respect for a prophet, and Jesus had so powerfully presented Himself as a prophet as He soundly and scripturally indicted these merchants, they were led to believe that He **was** a prophet and were afraid to oppose Him. There was also, of course, His compelling personality that naturally caused many to heed His words.

So chaotic and violent was this scene that the disciples were certainly shocked until they remembered right then and there and not afterwards that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me," as John records for us in verse seventeen. The quote comes from Psalm 69, verse nine. As one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament passages in the New Testament, the Jews understood this psalm as prophetically foretelling the actions and activity of God's Promised Savior.

The zeal that this Psalm of David speaks of // engaged or seized the Lord's attention to the point that it surpassed any and all other feelings He might have had. He couldn't stand idly by and wash His hands of the sins of others. He had to act. The disciples and those more thoroughly trained in their faith might have even recalled the words of Malachi in the opening words of the third chapter: "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; .... But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand

when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ....”

One commentator writes that “The audacity of the act has few parallels. To interfere in the very Temple with any of its recognized customs was in itself a claim to be King in Israel. ... the action of Christ awakening conscience in the men themselves was enough to quell resistance.”

No doubt Jesus began His work at the house of God because He knew that the Temple was the real heart of the nation; that it was belief in God that was their strength and hope, and that, if that belief were to be lost, replaced by the irreverence and worldliness that He beheld in that moment, the nation would soon be consumed by sin and lost forever. If the people had really believed God was present in the Temple, the degradation and disgrace He found there would never have been tolerated.

Tragically, the evils that permeated the Temple would return, and Jesus would, once again, seek to purge the Temple, not only of the peddlers of sacrifices and coins, but also of the underlying thievery that motivated those who returned.

Naturally, the commotion drew the attention of the religious leaders. “So,” verse eighteen, “the Jews said to him, ‘What sign do you show us for doing these things?’” “What proof do you have for the authority to waltz right into the Court of the Gentiles and disrupt the established customs and practices to assume the role of a public reformer? You’ve taken upon Yourself the right to drive out the sellers of the sacrificial animals and overturn the tables of the moneychangers--people who are simply providing a service to those who have come to worship at the temple; where do you get that right? By whose or what authority have you done this and give us proof that you have this authority? Show us your credentials.” You would have thought that the reaction of the crowd itself would have been enough for them to recognize the power and

effectiveness of His authority. And they bypass completely Jesus' statement about the Temple being His Father's house.

The Jewish leaders certainly had a right to ask the question about His authority, but their continuous demand for visible, verifiable signs is one of the obvious features of their challenges to His authority. How many times did Matthew record for us the familiar refrain: "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."

The Old Testament prophets had given signs to authenticate their authority, so why not Jesus? Samuel had caused it to thunder--First Samuel, chapter twelve, verse seventeen: "'I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king.' So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel."

Isaiah had caused the shadow to go back ten degrees to validate his message about the healing of Hezekiah--chapter 38, verse eight; and Moses--so the people thought--sent manna from heaven--John, chapter six, verse 31. The religious leaders demanded that Jesus offer some miraculous wonder to prove He had the right to do what He did, just like the prophets had done.

One commentator addresses their search for a sign by saying, "It was to ask for a light to see light with a sign of a sign. His zeal for God that carried the crowd before it, and swept God's house clean of the profane, was the best proof of His authority and Messiahship."

But because He knew their hearts--as we'll see in just a moment--He didn't give them the kind of sign they were looking for, and, I'm quite sure He knew it wouldn't do any good. Still, He gives them something to think about--verse nineteen: "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'"

There are a couple of things here that don't translate well into English that will help us understand this conversation. First, the word translated "temple" John used in verse fourteen when he said, "In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons," refers to the entire Temple complex, while the word we have translated "temple" here in verse nineteen and following refers only to the Holy Place where the presence of God dwelt in the Holy of Holies. Second, the word we have translated as "raise up" wasn't used to refer to building a building, but to arouse from sleep, to cause to appear--as appearing in public--, to incite, to cause to be born, or ... to awaken from death.

Now, their brains are starting to spin as they try to figure out just what He means by that, and it wasn't the religious leaders alone who were confused--it would take some time before the disciples themselves broke the code. The religious leaders' first conclusion was the obvious one--verse twenty: "The Jews then said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?'" They also use the same word for "temple" that Jesus used, referring to the Holy Place.

The original Temple, built by Solomon, had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. When the exiles returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 538 B.C., they built a new Temple, completing it in 516 B.C. Soon after Herod was appointed king of Judea, he began a massive reconstruction and expansion effort in 19 or 20 B.C., significantly enlarging the Temple grounds and elaborately adorning the Temple itself with white marble and gold. As the religious leaders said, it took 46 years to complete the work thus far of what was a truly magnificent place of worship.

So, when they asked, "will you raise it up in three days?," it wasn't an expression of surprise, but a declaration of contempt. Herod, with all his wealth and power, had been working on the Temple for nearly half a century. Could He--Jesus--, an obscure, unknown Galilean, do in three days what it took Herod 46 years to accomplish? Such a suggestion--in their eyes--was

ridiculous, and it only reinforced their opinion that He had no authority to do what He had just done in the temple.

For Jesus to invite them to destroy the Temple and then He would rebuild it in three days was impossible for the Jewish leaders to comprehend, yet this inability to understand persisted through the time after His arrest when a false witness stood before the Sanhedrin and twisted Jesus' words--Matthew, chapter 26, verse 61: "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" But that's not what Jesus said.

One commentator tells us that "The immediate reference of the words to the building before them was only one of a thousand misapplications of the words of Jesus." But it wasn't the physical Temple atop Mount Moriah that Jesus was talking about. In spite of their very literal interpretation of His words, it was quite common to speak of one's body as a temple as we find in such places as First Corinthians, chapter six, verse nineteen, where Paul asks, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you." **Like** the Temple on Mount Moriah that was intended to be and believed to be the dwelling place of God, The Lord Jesus' body was, in fact, the Temple where the Spirit of God truly dwelt. Not only did John see the Holy Spirit "remain" on Jesus at His baptism--as we saw last week--Paul tells the followers of Christ in Colossae--chapter two, verse nine--that in Christ "the whole fullness of deity dwells in bodily form."

As a sign to those who could understand a sign, Jesus told them, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up." Jesus didn't say "I will" destroy this Temple Myself and rebuild it, He said "you go ahead and destroy it," essentially giving them permission to destroy the Temple that was His body. Later, Jesus predicted the destruction of the physical Temple that the Jews thought He was speaking about, but here He mentions nothing about rebuilding it Himself. For those who had ears to hear, it should have been clear that Jesus was speaking of a Temple other than the one that stood before them surrounded by the Court of the Gentiles.

Especially when He told them, “In three days.” This was, of course, a reference to His resurrection--we know that now, but they didn't. Once again, the Jews clearly failed to understand the meaning of His message. They had asked for a miracle as proof of His authority. He enigmatically tells them that the full and decisive proof of His authority would be His resurrection from the dead. Even at this very early point in His ministry, He's talking about His death and resurrection; after all, He knew about everything that was to take place.

This knowledge clearly shows that He came from heaven, and it also reveals the extent of His love--that He was willing to do what had to be done to make our salvation possible, even at the cost of His life. One commentator writes, “Had he come ‘without’ such an expectation of suffering, his love might have been far less; but when he fully knew all that was before him, when he saw that it would involve him in contempt and death, it shows compassion ‘worthy of ... God’ that he was willing to endure the load of all our sorrows, and die to save us from death everlasting.”

When Jesus says, “I will raise it up,” it's proof, also, of His divine power. No mere “man” could say this // or could have such power over His body to bring Himself back to life again; so there must have been in the Person of Jesus a nature and a power superior to that of simple humans to which the term “I” could be applied and that had power to raise the dead.

Why didn't Jesus correct their misunderstanding? Why didn't He just say, “I speak not of that Temple, but of My flesh?” Why did He keep silent? Most likely because they wouldn't have received His word. If not even the disciples were able to understand what He was saying, how could the multitudes? And there's another reason we'll see shortly.

We might be left with this misunderstanding were it not for John's clarification beginning in verse 21: “He was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered

that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” John will make it clear throughout his gospel that faith in Christ is the key to understanding the Old Testament, as we see in such places as John, chapter seven, verse 38: Jesus is participating in the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and He addressed the crowds, saying, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” After the resurrection--particularly as we see in the experience of the two on the road to Emmaus--the disciples began to decipher what Jesus really meant by all of the things He said and did--in light of everything the Old Testament said the Messiah would say and do. It all made perfect sense! But not quite yet.

Still, people were beginning to believe that He was the Messiah--even there in Jerusalem for the Passover--verse 23: “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.” Here again, John is using that word, “sign,” to identify the miracles that Jesus was doing because they all pointed to Him as the Messiah.

What these particular signs were, we don’t know, but they produced at least three important effects. First, people started coming to Him in ever-increasing numbers. John the Baptist’s disciples report this to him in verse 26 of the next chapter. Second, in the opening words of the very next chapter, we read about one of the Pharisees who came to Jesus by night, almost certainly inspired or intrigued by these very miracles.

Third, even though many, as John says, “believed in His name,” Jesus did not return that trust--verse 24: “Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” Even though many believed in His name, they did so as a result of seeing the miracles that He did. It was what we might call an intellectual assent--they saw miracles; they expected the Messiah to perform miracles; therefore, it logically follows that Jesus must be the Messiah, and the fanaticism that surrounded Him only reinforced this.

They accepted on easy terms their first impression of Him when they saw the signs, but, as of yet, there was no trust and commitment that validated their approval of Him.

As he does many times throughout his gospel, John uses a play on words to speak of this belief. “Many believed,” John writes, but Jesus didn’t believe in their believing. The word we have translated as “commit,” “trust,” or “entrust” in verse 24 is the same word translated “believe” in verse 23. In other words, Jesus had no faith in their faith. He understood it for what it was and so He acted cautiously and carefully.

After all, “he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” He is the Word Who is with God and Who is God--John 1:1--and “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made”--John 1:3--including our hearts and our minds. To search the heart is the prerogative of God alone--so Jeremiah tells us in chapter seventeen, verse ten--, we’ve already seen this in the Lord’s conversation with Nathanael, and we’ll see it again throughout John’s gospel.

Our Lord wasn’t misled by the appearance of faith. Because their faith was not built on a lasting foundation, He would not reveal to them a sign of His authority to cast the sacrifice sellers and moneychangers out of the Temple, He would not yet tell them Who He was, why He had come, or any of the other mysteries that He explained to those who truly placed their faith in Him.

In His cleansing of the Temple, Jesus condemned the methods and the manner of the Jewish worship as it was being practiced and gave the first hint of how He would be the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. It also shows us what God expects of our worship--not just on Sundays, but how we live our daily lives--for He is seeking today those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and, if you’re a genuine follower of Jesus Christ, “your

body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God. You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Thank you for being a part of our study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him. Next week, following Trey’s message from the first part of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in chapter three, we’ll take a close look at the second part of that conversation in verses sixteen through 21.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

The resources for this lesson include Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834), text courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive; The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor’s Bible, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; The Expositor’s Greek Testament - Nicoll, Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill (1746-63), text courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive; ICC New Testament commentary on selected books, Text Courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical (John Peter Lange) text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; Expositions Of Holy Scripture, Alexander MacLaren, text courtesy of BibleSupport.com; and The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010 by BibleSoft, inc.