



Jesus as Servant and Disruptor

Debra J. Dean

The overarching purpose of John's Gospel is found in verse 20:31. Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, Christ, Deity, and in believing that, you will have eternal life. Quite simply, when distilling work down to an overall purpose, each human is called to love God and love others (Matt. 22:36–40), honoring and glorifying God in all that is done (1 Cor. 10:31). Therefore, one's career path and life legacy is not about who we want to be when we grow up or a glorious job title with a handsome salary and benefit package. It is not about who you are, but whose you are (Tebow, 2016). It is about the legacy one leaves behind with regard to an eternal impact. This was clearly demonstrated in John 2:13–25 as Jesus cleared the Temple courts because they were conducting an irreverent, blasphemous, and greedy religious scam.

Research of this pericope revealed several themes. First, John 2:13–25 continues with the overall theme of contrast (Houdmann, n.d.). In John 2, the first historical event is about a wedding in Cana, which is joyful and quiet. The second event is the cleansing of the Temple, which

D. J. Dean (✉)
Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, USA
e-mail: debrdea@regent.edu

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2021

J. D. Henson (ed.), *Biblical Organizational Leadership*,
Christian Faith Perspectives in Leadership and Business,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69929-1_2

is scolding and public. This contrasting theme is seen throughout the pericope. Another example was described by Flattery (n.d.) as “a sharp contrast between ‘My Father’s House’ and a house of merchandise.” Thomas (1930) calls it a double effect instead of contrast and said, “The disciples are helped, the traders are angered” (p. 573).

A second theme is replacement; whereby Lin (n.d.) notes that “At this Passover [John 2:13–25], Jesus performs a sign that points to his death and reveals his replacement of the Temple, thereby implying the fulfillment of the redemption of God that Passover itself represents.” Ruiz (2014) notes that Jesus’ body is the “new Temple that has come to replace the old one.” Brown and Soards (2016) explain that this pericope is “Jesus’ attitude toward the Temple,” and the theme is replacement (p. 120).

Taking the idea of attitude and moving forward with a theme offers two sides to consider. One is the attitude of Jesus, and the other is the attitude of everyone else, including the religious and government officials, the marketplace vendors, and all of the people in attendance. Flattery (n.d.) wrote that the attitude was “Who are you to do this” and “What authority do you have” as the Jews asked Jesus, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this” in John 2:18. Muncherian (2014) explained that “God deals with reality” and “God isn’t fooled by our actions and attitudes.” Steadman (1983) demonstrated that many Christians act like the Pharisees and make themselves look good; however, they continue to allow sinful habits to hide in their lives such as “pornography; a bitter, unforgiving spirit towards another; an evil lustful habit; a private indulgence; a compromise with expediency in business.” Stedman clarified that when this happens, God is jealous, angry, “no longer tolerant, understanding, and patient.” Swindoll (2018) explained that “those in the Temple had a standard roach letter attitude before the Man of zeal entered the Temple and woke them up.” A standard roach letter means “just going through the motions, lacking passion, being distracted, being unconcerned and indifferent to God and neighbor.”

The themes discussed throughout this pericope are (a) contrast, (b) replacement, and (c) attitude. Perhaps, the takeaway from this pericope in the twenty-first century is the examination of Christ-followers and their perception and treatment of the Temple, Jesus Christ. In other words, would Jesus be angry with Christians today based on the way they conduct their daily business? To understand this pericope in greater detail

and to comprehend how it relates to modern-day servant leaders, the socio-rhetorical critical approach to textual analysis is used to examine the (a) inner texture analysis, (b) intertexture analysis, (c) social and cultural texture analysis, (d) ideological texture analysis, and (e) sacred texture analysis (Robbins, 1996).

Inner texture analysis examines the linguistic dynamics of the text by detecting devices, patterns, repetitions, and structures used within the written content. Intertexture analysis explores how the written content interacts with the outside world. Social and cultural texture analysis describes how the written content supports social changes by reviewing customs and social norms during the time period of the original manuscript. Ideological texture analysis outlines how the written content positions itself compared to others through the mapping of obvious ideological beliefs and values. Sacred texture analysis observes how God is portrayed in the text.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To understand the pericope of John 2:13–25, it is necessary to understand the historical context of the scripture. This includes who it was written to, why it was written, and what the historical events were prior to the pericope. The Jewish Passover, *Pesach* in Hebrew, was a festival with much familiarity to Jesus and the thousands, possibly millions that arrived in Jerusalem each year. The first Passover likely took place in 1528 or 1451 BC, as recorded in Exodus 12. The first event took place as a promise from God to Moses and Aaron that the Israelites would no longer be enslaved. The famous text, “Let my people go,” was said by Moses to Pharaoh in Exod. 5:1. Instead of releasing the Israelites, Pharaoh resisted, and God sent a series of ten plagues to persuade Pharaoh to change his mind. The final plague was a promise from God to kill the firstborn son of each Egyptian family (Exod. 11:4–6). To save the Israelites, God instructed Moses and Aaron to sacrifice a lamb and use the blood on the doorposts, marking the Israelite families so the angel of death would pass their homes and leave their children unharmed (Exod. 12).

Ainsworth (1843, p. 83) explains that the Israelites were in exile for a total of 430 years. Abram (now Abraham) and Sarai (now Sarah) were lone outcasts from Egypt for the first 30 years. The remaining 400 years included their offspring as refugees. The isolation started when the couple lied about their identity to Pharaoh. Genesis 12:10 explains that Abram

and Sarai went to Egypt to avoid the famine. Because of her beauty, Abram asked his wife to tell others that she was his sister. In return, Pharaoh initially treated Abram and Sarai quite well, and she became Pharaoh's wife. However, God afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, which revealed the truth that Sarai was not the sister of Abram, but his wife. Pharaoh sent them away from Egypt and into Negeb. In Genesis 15, Abram speaks of being childless, without an heir, and God promises Abram that he will have as many offspring as there are stars in the sky. In Genesis 15:13, God speaks to Abram, saying, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years."

Shortly after that, an impatient Abram and Sarai agree that their Egyptian servant Hagar should bear their first child. At 86 years old, Abram named his firstborn Ishmael (Gen. 16). As explained, the penance for Abraham and Sarah began 30 years earlier than their descendants when they lied to Pharaoh and were forced out of Egypt. However, the bondage continued for the descendants of Abraham and Sarah another 400 years after Isaac was born and Ishmael laughed [mocked and persecuted] at Isaac (Gen. 21:9). Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

As described, the Passover is a sacred festival celebrating the release of the Israelites from bondage for 430 years. It is a festival that many Jews and Gentiles continue to celebrate. And it has many sacred rituals. To properly celebrate Passover, Jewish families meticulously go through their home to remove any yeast or substance that could cause fermentation. Many also make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. According to Avey (2020), Passover food will include *beitzah* (a hard-boiled egg, symbolizing new life), *charoset* (a paste of fruit and nuts, symbolizing mortar the slaves used to build the Egyptian pyramids), *karpas* (lettuce symbolizing hope and redemption), *maror* (bitter herbs, symbolizing the bitterness of bondage), saltwater (symbolizing the tears of the slaves), and *zeroah* (a shank bone, symbolizing the sacrificial lamb). During the Passover dinner, also known as the Passover Seder, guests "sat on sofas around a low table, dining at leisure" and each participant was expected to "make a clever speech on a chosen topic and offer a toast" (Wyllen, 1995, p. 101). This banquet style is referred to as a symposium.

All of the Passover events were historically held at the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was the focal point for the entire memorial. To think of a holiday with such deeply rooted tradition as Passover, which has

existed for more than 3000 years, the significance of the Temple is monumental. Sacred text refers to the Temple many times, and it is evident that the Temple is a holy place to be treated with utmost honor and reverence. This backstory helps one to understand the reason Jesus would be so upset with the situation he witnessed as he made his way into Jerusalem for the Passover festival.

THE EARTHLY TEMPLE AS A FOCAL POINT

The physical Temple in Jerusalem was considered sacred. Commonplace Jews were only permitted to approach as far as the outer edge of the Temple courtyard (Wyllen, 1995, p. 84). It was considered an honor to “set the wicks in the lamp or shovel the ashes from the altar” (pp. 84–85). While in exile, God commanded Moses and the Israelites to build The Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25), which contained the shards of the first Ten Commandments and the second set of Ten Commandments, Aaron’s staff (Num. 17: 6–26), a jar of manna (Exod. 16:33–34), and a scroll Moses wrote before his death (Deut. 31:26). The Israelites carried the Ark with them for 40 years as they wandered in the desert. King David took the Ark to Jerusalem, and his son Solomon installed it in the first Temple, which he constructed on Mount Moriah between 833 and 827 BC (Kazen, 2004). It is said to have been in the Holy of Holies (the inner sanctuary where God’s presence appeared).

King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first Temple in 586 BC. The second Temple was erected around 515 BC at the same location as the first (Pioske, n.d.). When Jesus died on the cross, the ornate veil, which was decorated blue, purple, and scarlet (Exod. 26:31) was torn in the second Temple (Matthew 27:51). In 70 AD, the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans (Wyllen, 1995, p. 100). The earthly Temple was an important place. It was one that deserved the utmost honor, respect, and respect, especially to the Jews.

Papaioannou (2015) explains that “most Temple references in John refer to the Temple in Jerusalem.” The most commonly used word for Temple in the Book of John is *hieron*, used 11 times. The word *hieron* “carries a nuance of sacredness and holiness” and simply means “most wonderful” (Papaioannou). The Temple is the focal point for this pericope. It is also the focal point for Jesus as he knows the transformation from earthly Temple (a building of spiritual significance in Jerusalem) to Holy Temple (Jesus’ body) is soon to take place. In this regard, authentic

leadership theory is mentioned as a practical tip for leaders to remain true to themselves (authentic) and visionary as they cultivate strategic plans for the future. Spiritual leadership is another theory that reflects on the inner life of the leader. Leaders with authenticity and inner-life reflection will know who they are, who they are not, and will have the ability clearly articulate right from wrong as they reflect on the past and prepare for the future.

Jesus and the Temple: During Jesus' Childhood

It is clear that Jesus was accustomed to the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. John references three or possibly four Passover's during Jesus' ministry (Lin, n.d). It is possible, however, that he may have made the journey each of his earthly years with his family. It would take many days to walk the 70 miles from Galilee to Jerusalem. In one historical account, Jesus was 12 years old when he went missing from the caravan returning from their Passover festivities. Luke 2:41–52 describes the search conducted by his parents. It took three days to find him. He was in the “Temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). When questioned why he stayed behind, obviously causing his earthly parents to worry, he answered, “Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s House” (Luke 2:49). At such a young age, Jesus already knew that he was different than other children his age. Had this situation taken place with a child in the twenty-first century, parents may not be as understanding about such defiance. However, Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was God’s son, and while such an answer may hurt the heart of any parent, they would have understood that their son was obeying God’s plan for his life.

Jesus and the Temple: At the Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

In 28 AD, Jesus was at the beginning of his ministry. His impending crucifixion at the age of 33 was fast approaching, and Jesus was entirely focused on the mission at hand. At 28 years old, he had not performed a public miracle to date and had not yet formed his group of 12 disciples entirely. Jesus, as with all of his previous years, returned to Jerusalem for Passover. His family accompanied him as well as his shortlist of disciples. Carson (1991, p. 176) notes that the disciples were probably Andrew, James, John, Nathanael, Peter, and Philip, as described in John 1.

For a sense of travel distance, Jesus was at a wedding in Cana before the Passover. It would take about 18 miles to travel from Cana to their hometown of Capernaum (Whitacre, 1999). Capernaum to Jerusalem was another 85-mile journey (Barnes, n.d.). This itinerary was no small act, especially with their typical mode of transportation. The Passover festival was of utmost importance. Since walking was the most common form of transportation at this time, it would have taken about five days to make the trip, assuming they walked about 20 miles per day, as noted in the Book of Acts, where Peter walked from Joppa to Caesarea in two days.

Jesus Approaches the Temple with Holy Anger and Divine Fury

John showed the miracle of conversion while Jesus was in Cana (changing water into wine) and then cleansing in Jerusalem (cleansing the Temple). This symbolizes how God works to first change the heart of a person and then cleanse their soul. Brown and Soards (2016) explain that Cana was the first of Jesus' signs, thus revealing his glory. The initial Cana miracle was where Jesus replaced water with wine, "a wine so good that the headwaiter wonders why the best has been kept until last" (p. 120).

John commonly used contrast. In this section of the Bible, he presents the first historical event that is joyful and quiet and then presents the second historical event that is scolding and public. One can imagine the emotional feelings of Jesus, those that witnessed his first miracle in Cana, and those that followed him to Jerusalem for the Passover. It must have been an emotional high with some realizing he is unique, set apart, different, and has supernatural powers. Therefore, to walk from the highest of highs in the land of Cana to the lowest of lows in sight of the Temple, Jesus' roller coaster of emotions encourages leaders today in that they too have good days and bad. Sometimes leaders and their teams have incredible wins, and other times they have failures. It is often in those moments of fantastic failure that one can learn the best lesson.

Henry explains that "the first public work in which we find Christ engaged, was driving from the Temple the traders whom the covetous priests and rulers encouraged to make a marketplace of its courts" (1997, p. 982). The miracle in Cana was more private than public. Carson writes, "Jesus' cleansing of the Temple testifies to his concern for pure worship, a right relationship with God at the place supremely designated to serve as the focal point of the relationship between God and man" (p. 180). Jesus' actions at the Temple were actions of purification and removing

distractions. He was vindicating the honor of the Temple, His Father's House.

Henry and Manser (2010) wrote that Jesus went into Jerusalem, and "He first cleansed what was wrong and then taught them to do what was right" (p. 1735). His holy anger and divine fury festered as he saw the people selling animals in the Temple with approval by the chief priests for dishonest gain. Henry and Manser explained that "great corruption in the church owes its rise to the love of money" (p. 1735). With each turn, Jesus confronted sin on his own without complaining to the government or religious officials since he knew they supported the corruption. Alone, Jesus drove out the animals and their handlers using a whip of small cords, the same instrument used by the merchants to move the animals into the Temple. Henry and Manser explain that "sinners themselves prepare the scourges with which they will be driven out of the Temple of the Lord" (p. 1735).

As the money changers are scandalous, Henry and Manser explain that in scattering the money, Jesus showed his contempt and displeasure toward those who make religion a matter of worldly gain. And, Jesus had every right to be upset. He had authority as the Son of God entering His Father's House. Henry & Manser wrote that defiling the Temple was "sacrilege, robbing God"; it was "making common what was solemn and should inspire awe," and Jesus could not bear to see the Temple defiled and his father dishonored (p. 1735). Whitacre (1999) explains that this is the first use of the term *Father* in Johannine literature. While it reveals Jesus' identity and authority, it also gives reason to his zealousness and defends his audacious activity. In comparison with Psalm 69, the zeal Jesus had for His Father's house consumed him. Before the crucifixion, the disciples would have understood the word consume (*kataphagetai*) as the extent of Jesus' zeal; however, after the crucifixion, it would have been interpreted as death itself (Whitacre).

Jesus' zeal to clean His Father's House was without resistance from any of his enemies. Henry and Manser state that a "divine power was displayed in this cleansing, a power over human spirits"; a zeal without consideration for one's "own reputation, comfort, and security"; a zeal that carries "our souls along so far and so fast as we do our duty that our bodies cannot keep up" (p. 1735). There is no rational human explanation of what happened as Jesus drove them all out of the Temple.

MacArthur explained that the Temple was a well-secured place and probably had 270–300 police on patrol. They also had built Fort Antonia

next to the holy site to keep watch on the area and protect the Temple. Wyles (1995, p. 98) explained that “Romans always brought soldiers into Jerusalem to control the mob,” and the Caesarea governor would attend to keep watch.

One can only imagine the divine rage in Jesus as he approached the Temple to find unholy marketplace activities taking place within the Temple walls, the holiest of all places. Imagine the noise and smell that preceded his visual confirmation of the clutter and confusion in His Father’s House. When a person has an intruder in their home, they may feel victimized. They may feel as though their safe place has been penetrated. They may view darkness and filth. For an average person, had they walked into a situation where their own home or the home of their parents was taken over by squatters and reeked of animals, they would probably be upset. They might gather reinforcements such as the police or friends to confront the trespassers. Or, they might bravely or foolishly approach all alone. Either way, few people would turn and walk away and leave something they cherished and valued to be taken over by heathens and looters.

FIRM FOUNDATION

To know what is wrong, one must know what is right. Having a firm foundation built on God’s holy word is essential for Christians to discern right from wrong. Titus 2:10–15 reminds of many rebellious people in the world, full of meaningless talk and deception. Paul, the author of the Book of Titus, explains that “They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things that ought not to teach” (v. 11). The debate between man’s worldview and God’s worldview is ongoing, especially as governments legalize activities such as abortion and homosexuality that are clearly against God’s plan. Paul’s letter to Titus continues in saying, “teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith love, and in endurance.” He continues in saying, “teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.” Younger women are instructed to “love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure... so that no one will malign the word of God.” Young men are called to be “self controlled.” Paul teaches to “say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.” He closes his

thought by writing, “encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you” (Tit. 2:1–15).

Ham (2015) wrote about moral relativism and the “idea that there is not an absolute standard for right and wrong” in the world today saying, this idea has “created a generation that is morally sick” because there is “no agreed-upon standard to follow.” Judges 21:25 records how relativism is when “everyone did as they saw fit.” In other words, this generation has replaced God’s word with man’s word. To return to the basics and nourish the soil for a firm foundation rooted in Christ, we must return to the Bible, God’s word.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:2)

Lisle (2008) confirms that to have a correct foundation for an accurate worldview, it must be built upon the inspired word of God, the Bible. To commence, the next five statements begin the narrative for all decision making. This practical exercise is helpful to Christian servant leaders as they reflect on their inner life and are reminded of whose they are and who they are authentically.

- First, I exist because God made me (Ps. 139:14).
- Second, there is a reality because God created it (Genesis 1:1).
- Third, God created my senses so that I might be able to probe and master the reality He created (Psalm 94:9, Genesis 1:26–28).
- Fourth, there are laws of logic which we can use (Isaiah 1:18).
- Fifth, because these laws of logic were used by Jesus Christ (Luke 24:39).

Further foundation building will enable one to make wise decisions based on a firm foundation rooted in a Biblical Worldview.

In John 2:13–25, Jesus stood out as Holy, set apart. Jesus was angry at all the right things. He did not harm people; He attacked the system. Jesus is the perfect example of a person with a firm foundation. Tebow (2016) encourages others to be different, stand out for the right reason. He inspires others to be bold, brave, and courageous, standing up for what is right. As a servant leader, character traits of authenticity, belief, Holy, loyal, obedience, and trust reinforce the concept of firm foundation.

Having a firm foundation is necessary for authentic, servant, and spiritual leaders.

Principle One: This first of three concepts in this chapter is Firm Foundation. Followers of Christ are called to have a firm foundation so they know who they are and can discern right from wrong behavior. Character traits of this first principle include authenticity, belief, Holy, loyal, obedience, and trust.

HOLY DISRUPTION

“Christ’s purging of the Temple thus may just be reckoned among his wonderful works” (Henry, 1810, p. 87). He did so without the assistance of any friends. He, by himself, was able to remove the den of robbers (Matthew 21:13). In an organized and somewhat peaceful fashion, Jesus was righting the wrong that was taking place. Had he been loud, obstinate, and outlandish with his actions, Jesus would have been confronted by all of the security. Instead, He was able to purge the perverted Temple with love and compassion in a somewhat orderly fashion. This was indeed a miracle that Jesus did all that he did without an army of local enforcers. Carson explained that “this early [or first] Temple cleansing does not issue immediately in a conspiracy by the authorities to have him arrested and killed” (1991, p. 178). Jesus was armed with divine power and commission in that He purged the Temple by Himself, without an army or the help of others. As a servant leader, character traits of defend, discernment, duty, honor, jealous, judgment, veneration, vision, and zeal reinforce the concept of holy disruption. While some of these character traits such as discernment (De Pree, 1992) and vision (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005) are discussed with servant leadership theory, most of these traits have not previously emerged in empirical articles.

Principle Two: This second of three concepts in this chapter is Holy Disruption. Followers of Christ are empowered to disrupt when necessary so as to maintain a holy temple. Their actions are to focus on the system and not the people because God calls us to love all people. Additionally, they are required to maintain actions that are in accordance with the Bible. In other words, God owns, and we are called to manage his business. As Christ followers know they are working for God [and not for man or woman], it will help them to take proper action when necessary. Character traits of this second principle include defend, discernment, duty, honor, jealous, judgment, veneration, vision, and zeal.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

“Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:5–6). It is difficult to allow another person to criticize one’s actions or behavior without taking offense. Such interactions must take place; however, to hold a person accountable and redirect them to stay on the narrow path (Matthew 7:13–14). Many recommend a trust circle or personal board of directors of such confidants that are permitted to speak critically when needed.

In John 2:13–25, Jesus demonstrated servant leadership while using Courageous Conversations with a Holy Disruption. He spoke truth with love and compassion. He demonstrated how the Temple was set apart for the worship of God and how He was set apart to defend God’s glory. To know that the Temple was being used inappropriately, Jesus was educated on the discernment of what is right and wrong; He had a firm foundation. Modern-day servant leaders have just as much right to speak up and take action when they know something is not right. As a servant leader, character traits of assertiveness, courage, self-control, and service reinforce the concept of courageous conversation. To date, such character traits have not emerged in empirical articles other than courage (De Pree, 1992) and service (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

On the Receiving End

Tebow (2016) speaks of criticism and notes that it hurts. As a person on the receiving end of Jesus’ rage, they could have been offended or confused by his actions, after all, they had approval from the government to sell their goods in the marketplace. However, there are times a person needs to pay attention to their actions and listen to others that can help identify blind spots. When a person with sincerity and love confronts someone with good intentions of discernment, they offer genuine support by telling the truth in love. Such truth, hard truth, needs to be shared with others lovingly and compassionately. Tebow calls this Courageous Conversations. He said, “We must let our love for others be the reason they listen, and the truth be the reason they change” (p. 74). Servant leadership theory places the focal point on serving others. This service must include courageous conversations.

On the Giving End

As the person on the giving end, in this case, Jesus, it takes firm conviction, courage, passion, and boldness to speak up when something is not right. The easy thing to do would be to go along with the activity or walk away quietly. But, to speak up takes courage, tact, and vulnerability. Jesus' veneration for the Temple could have turned out very different on both sides had God not taken the lead. With this example in mind, it should always remind servant leaders to put God first and pray for divine wisdom, especially when faced with a difficult situation.

Principle Three: This final of the three concepts is Courageous Conversation. Followers of Christ are permitted to speak the truth and hold their fellow brothers and sisters accountable. Likewise, Christians are to humble themselves and seek wisdom from another Bible-believing Christian's. Their words should be truthful, uplifting, supportive, and encouraging while critically evaluating the issue with a Biblical worldview. Character traits of this third principle include assertiveness, courage, self-control, and service.

THE PROBLEM AT THE TEMPLE

The problem at the Temple likely did not happen overnight; similarly, to problems of unethical behavior at work, immoral behavior in a marriage, or unscrupulous behavior of a nation. To understand the problem, it is necessary to get to the root of the problem. Plato (375 BC) said, "necessity is the mother of invention." The first problem to solve was that millions of people were walking for days to the Temple for the festival of Passover. To properly offer their sacrifices, each family needed a lamb or goat. It had to be a male. And, it had to be without blemish. The sacrifice was to take place in the courtyard of the Temple on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan. Josephus notes a sacrificial need for 256,500 animals for around 2,700,200 pure and holy people (Josephus et al., 1999, p. 906). During the Passover festival, other people may have also attended; however, if they were polluted with leprosy, gonorrhea, or other issues they were not permitted to participate. Foreigners could also not participate, nor could women on their monthly period.

If a family brought their animal to the festival, it needed to receive approval by the High Priest. Unfortunately, the priests rejected most animals brought, causing a need for millions of people to purchase a sacrificial lamb or goat while at the Temple; they must have a unique

coin to buy their sacrifice. Imagine that the Temple was set up as a modern-day church carnival. In one line, every person paid the money changer for their special currency or token since the foreign currency was not accepted, likely due to the image on the coin considered idolatry. In another line, people waited to buy a goat or lamb. John 2:13–25 records that people were selling cattle, doves, and sheep within the Temple courts. Wylen (2016, p. 85) notes that in addition to lamb, “there were offerings of grain, wine, and oil” (p. 85). Those that could not afford a lamb could substitute with pigeons or doves. There would have been many lines of people, tired and hungry from their walk, standing in very long lines waiting. Once they received what they wanted from one line, they would have to go and wait in another.

To add an extra layer of wait time and confusion to the festival, Jewish males over the age of 20 had to pay a tax using Tyrian coinage. The tax was generally half-shekel paid annually and gave each Jew an equal share to the daily offerings by the priest in the Temple (Wylen, 1995, p. 85). Carson explained that Tyrian coinage was considered pure because of its silver content (1991, p. 178). In addition to the tax, a service fee was charged for the tax collectors service. Many believe the prices for all of these services included exorbitant pricing of 10–12% more than usual, thus referring to the racketeers as schemers, swindlers, and thieves. MacArthur (1983) said the Jews were being extorted, fleeced, and taken by robbers. Steadman (1983) confirms that Jesus was primarily angry at the “extortion and racketeering that was going on.”

Government and religious officials gave their approval for the merchants to set up their shops in the Temple. Since Jerusalem was not located on a trade route, the income for the entire city depended greatly on religious festivals. In previous years, the craftspeople and shopkeepers “set up their stalls across the Kidron Valley on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, but at this point they were in the Temple courts, doubtless in the Court of the Gentiles” (Carson, 1991, p. 178). Carson explains that “Jesus’ complaint is not that they are guilty of sharp business practices and should therefore reform their ethical life, but that they should not be in the Temple at all” (p. 179).

CLEAN YOUR TEMPLE

Overall, cleansing your Temple refers to cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem, purifying the home Temple in preparation of Passover, and examining the personal Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) cleansing from

sin and removing every speck of unclean. One examination of cleansing your Temple is the traditional preparation for Passover. It is similar to spring cleaning and requires a person to clean their home and purge certain impurities from their environment. To properly celebrate Passover, Jewish families had to meticulously go through their home to remove any yeast or substance that could cause fermentation. This ceremonial cleansing is a purification rite and cleansing of sin that symbolically represents cleaning your Temple.

A second examination of cleansing your Temple is a reflection of one's inner self. In John 2:13–25, we see that the event itself was not bad, but the greed and selfishness that covered the land showed of darkness, sin, and temptation. This pericope is a solid reminder for examination of oneself. While it is possible that many begin a task with a good heart and the mission to serve God, they can find themselves conducting their work in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27, 31). As a question for self-reflection one can ask how holy are my dreams, integrity, money, and relationships. More than likely, the marketplace merchants did not begin their work in prior years with the goal of cheating, robbing, and stealing from fellow believers. However, years of working in an environment where one or more colleagues begin to cloud the lines between right and wrong can often lead a good person to stray. While we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23), we can strive to do better. As a practical tip for servant leaders, annual performance reviews to measure such matters of the heart are recommended to identify when employees begin to fall off course so that courageous conversations can take place to get them back on the narrow path before a major derailing takes place. The Fruit of the Spirit scale was used by Dean (2019) to measure the relationships between love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control with desired workplace outcomes of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. It is believed that such a review on a routine basis will help employers identify unworthy behavior or ethical issues sooner rather than later.

Henry and Manser explained that because Jesus knew all men (their names and faces), he also knew their “nature, characters, attitudes, and intentions;” he also “knows their integrity and their weaknesses too” (2010, p. 1736). Henry wrote the following text in describing the deceitful heart of man (1997, p. 983):

Our Lord knew all men, their nature, dispositions, affections, designs as we do not know any man, not even ourselves. He knows his crafty enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters. He knows who are truly his, knows their uprightness, and knows their weaknesses. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, he tries the heart. Beware of a dead faith, or a formal profession: carnal, empty professors are not to be trusted, and however men deceive others or themselves, they cannot deceive the heart-searching God.

Without God and a firm foundation of His word, one cannot discern what is right or wrong. Thomas examines the scripture as Jesus' "indignant outcry against the desecration" (1930, p. 572). In the case of the Jewish Passover, the government gave permission for such heresy to take place; however, it was irreverent and disrespectful of God. Just because it is legal does not mean it is the right thing to do. Thomas explains that the "traders had paid the Sadducees and Pharisees in the Sanhedrin for the concession as traffickers... they were within their technical rights" (p. 574).

THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE AS A FOCAL POINT

When Jesus replaced the earthly Temple as the heavenly Temple, he became the new focal point. Jesus declared that he would destroy the Temple and raise it up in three days (John 2:19, Mark 14:58, Matt. 26:61). This assertion was taken literally by those in attendance of the Passover Festival in 28 AD and would be used at Jesus trial before his crucifixion in 33 AD (Matt. 26:61). The Jews responded saying the Temple took 46 years to complete (John 2:20), not understanding that Jesus' statement had much more meaning.

The Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD (Wynen, 1995, p. 100). Josephus (p. 888) proclaimed that the Roman General, Titus did not want to destroy the Temple saying,

I also appeal to my own army, and to those Jews that are now with me, and even to yourselves that I do not force you to defile this your sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not.

The Siege of Jerusalem was a result of the first Jewish revolt and a four-year campaign to take hold of Jewish insurgency in Judea. The pericope of Matthew 24 is titled “The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times.” At the Mount of Olives, Jesus affirms, “Not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

After Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, he replaced the sacrificial lamb leaving no reason at all for animal sacrifices. The Gospel of John, according to Wylen (1995, p. 102), presents the Last Supper as an ordinary meal as Jesus was crucified on the following day, the eve of Passover and he died at the exact hour when the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed in the Temple. Servant leaders and all Christians are encouraged to keep Jesus as the focal point all the days of their lives (Ps. 23:6).

SUMMARY

Calvin (2002) notes that “whatever deceptions Satan may employ, let us know that any departure—however small—from the command of God is wicked.” The pericope of John 2:13–25 reveals that servant leaders should stand up for what is right and offers the example where Jesus purged sin from the Temple by disassembling the system, not hurting the people. This exegetical examination calls for servant leaders to have a firm foundation and prepare for holy disruption and courageous conversation when the time is needed. In examination, a servant leader reviews their environment and relationships to determine if there needs to be separation from sin such as unethical behavior. Reflection by the servant leader can consider if their personal and career goals and dreams are focused on God or self. And, Matthew 6:24 reminds servant leaders to reflect on their money or any other idol that replaces God as the master in their life. Some servant leaders may think that their sin is not that bad. Conceivably they have done it for years and no one has noticed or said anything about it. Perhaps they have become numb to the moral corruption of the world around them. Stedman (1983) clarified that God “is not going to settle for clutter, compromise, extortion and racket, whatever may be defiling and corrupting the Temple courts.” Stedman continued, “He may leave you alone for a while” but, “if we mistake that delay for acceptance, we are in for a surprise.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would Jesus be angry with Christians today based on the way they conduct their daily business? Explain.
2. How often do you reflect on your worldview and the impact it has on your daily life?
3. Do you have a firm foundation? If not, what can be done to strengthen it so it can withstand temptation, trials, and tribulations?
4. Have you witnessed a business practice in need of a holy disruption? If so, what do you plan to do?
5. Are you aware of a courageous conversation that needs to take place? If so, when are you going to have the conversation and what will you say?
6. Do you have a personal board of advisors or a circle of trust? How often do you invite these people to have courageous conversations with you? Would this strategy benefit your future as a Christian business leader? Explain.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, H. (1843). *Annotations on the Pentateuch or the five books of Moses; the Psalms of David and the song of Solomon* (p. 83). Glasgow, Scotland: Blackie & Son.
- Avey, T. (2020). *What is passover?—Learn all about the passover holiday*. <https://toriavey.com/what-is-passover/>.
- Barnes, D. (n.d.). *Distances from Jerusalem*. Retrieved February 16, 2020, from <http://www.biblecharts.org/biblelandnotes/DistancesFromJerusalem.pdf>.
- Brown, R. E., & Soards, M. L. (2016). *An introduction to the New Testament / edited and abridged by Marion L. Soards*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Carson, J. (2002). *Christian classics ethereal library*. United States. [Archived Web Site] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0004026/>.
- Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. Nottingham: Apollos.
- De Pree, M. (1992). *Leadership Jazz*. New York, NY: Dell.
- Dean, D. (2019). Integration of Christian values in the workplace. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 9(1), 35–55. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol9no1/Vol9Iss1_JBPL_3_Dean.pdf.

- Dennis, R. S., & Bocarnea, M. (2005). Development of the servant leadership assessment instrument. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 26(8), 600–615. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730510633692>.
- Flattery, G. (n.d.). *John 2:13–25—The temple merchants*. <https://globalchristiancenter.com/sermons/dr-g-flattery-sermons-on-what-jesus-said/26112-the-Temple-merchants>.
- Ham, K. (2015). *Moral relativism-who decides?* <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2015/04/07/moral-relativism-who-decides/>.
- Henry, M. (1810). *An exposition of all the books of the Old and New Testaments in five volumes. Wherein each chapter is summed up in its contents: The sacred text inserted at large in distinct paragraphs, each paragraph reduced to its proper heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated with practical remarks and observations*. London: W. Gracie.
- Henry, M. (1997). *Matthew Henry's concise commentary on the whole Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Henry, M., & Manser, M. H. (2010). *The new Matthew Henry commentary: The classic work with updated language*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Houdmann, M. (n.d.). *What does John 2 mean?* Retrieved February 16, 2020, from <https://www.bibleref.com/John/2/John-chapter-2.html>.
- Josephus, F., Whiston, W., & Maier, P. L. (1999). *The new complete works of Josephus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.
- Kazen, R. (2004, June 29). *The destruction of the first holy temple*. Retrieved from https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/144569/jewish/The-First-Temple.htm.
- Lin, T. (n.d.). *The glory begins to be revealed*. Retrieved February 16, 2020, from <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/John/Glory-Begins-Be-Revealed>.
- Lisle, J. (2008, April 10). *War of the worldviews*. Retrieved from <https://answeringenesis.org/worldview/war-of-the-worldviews/>.
- MacArthur, J. (1983). *Purging the perverted temple*. Retrieved from <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2351/purging-the-perverted-Temple>.
- Muncherian, S. (2014). *The cleansing of the temple*. Retrieved from <http://www.muncherian.com/s-jon2v13.html>.
- Papaioannou, K. (2015). *The heavenly temple in the Gospel of John*. Retrieved February 16, 2020, from <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2015/04/the-heavenly-Temple-in-the-gospel-of-john>.
- Pioske, D. (n.d.). *First temple*. <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/main-articles/first-Temple>.
- Plato. (1943). *Plato's the republic*. New York, NY: Books.
- Robbins, V. K. (1996). *The tapestry of early Christian discourse: Rhetoric, society and ideology*. London: Routledge.

- Ruiz, G. (2014). *Commentary on John 2:13–25 by Gilberto Ruiz*. https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1918.
- Shaich, R. (2018). *The founder of Panera Bread: 'I wish i'd fired more people'*. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/308427>.
- Steadman, R. (1983). *Message: The temple cleanser (John 2:12–25)*. <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/john/the-Temple-cleanser>.
- Swindoll, C. (2018). *Holy Zeal*. <https://idcraleigh.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/John-2.12-25B.pdf>.
- Tebow, T. (2016). *Shaken: Discovering your true identity in the midst of lifes storms*. Crown Publishing Group.
- Thomas, A. (1930). *Word pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Whitacre, R. A. (1999). *John: The IVP New Testament commentary series* (Vol. 4). Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Wynlen, S. M. (1995). *The Jews in the time of Jesus: An introduction*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.