

08-30-20

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Disturbing Behavior in the Temple, part One John 2:11-17.

“No!” Our two-year-old granddaughter says this to us quite often these days. I used to start to get upset when I first heard her say “No!” to us. Then I realized, that with her limited vocabulary, it usually meant “I don’t agree with your decision, grandpa!” And usually, with some explanation to her, she then would then say, “Yes!”

In today’s passage, we clearly see disagreement among those present. In fact, disturbing behavior, is recorded here, in scripture, for all time.

What was going on, and **Why** did these disturbing behaviors happen?

John 2:30-31—**John’s purpose for writing this Gospel:**

30 “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Signs- John refers directly to the death & resurrection of Jesus, and miracles in this book. But ALL parts of John’s gospel help us know and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that we may believe and have life in Jesus’ name.

Jesus is the new kingdom and way of living

Christ- the Messiah, the chosen One, in whom God Himself fulfills all His promises to bring a Son of God- God Himself that came here to earth in the person of Jesus Christ

Life in His Name- life that is radically different than the one we know, that can start now!

John 2:11-17

v. 11 “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in him. v. 12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.”

Background information: v.13 “The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

Passover → this time of year in Jerusalem opens up to us the setting for this incident/ this disturbing behavior in the temple!

All Israelites were required to go to Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival that started the week-long festival of unleavened bread. In fact, 3 times a year there were required festivals. In late March, seven weeks later in late May, & 4 months later in late September. Perhaps over one million people were in Jerusalem and surrounding areas at one time during this Passover. We can imagine it being a reunion for one big extended family, in fact, for the whole nation!

Family reunions? My daughter Jessi’s husband is from Richmond, VA, but has a large extended family in Texas. Some of their family reunions are over 200 people. Perhaps you have warm memories of you family reunions? Here in the valley, are some of your family reunions are quite big??! In the summer, with beautiful clear Oregon summer weather, hot in the sun, with cool shade. So many families, good food, laughing, re-telling of stories, meeting new faces of newborn babies! I imagine it could be so fun and boisterous!!! I would love to hear of your family reunions sometime; it might make it into this message in the future ☺

v.13 “The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

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For Passover, in late March every year, the Jews were required to offer a one-year old unblemished lamb (from sheep or goats), to remember and celebrate God, who miraculously rescued them out of Egypt

God's miraculous rescue of the Hebrews out of Egypt → 1800 years earlier, the Hebrews were slaves in cruel bondage under the strongest kingdom in the world at that time, Egypt! God rescued them miraculously out of Egypt!

God judged all those who did not believe, what He said He would do.

The defining act was this. God instructed the Israelites to take an unblemished, one year old lamb from the sheep or goats, kill it, and take the blood of that lamb and put it on the two door posts, and lintel, the top cross support of the doorway into their home. Then the household was to cook and eat the Passover lamb, the "meal," prepared in the way God instructed them to.

Those households, Hebrew, and non-Hebrew, that believed God's word to them, would be "passed over" by death. Death would "pass over" their household's first-born male, humans and also animals. Those families who did not believe what God said would suffer death of their first-born males, humans and animals. Because of this "Passover," the King of Egypt submitted to God's judgment, and allowed the Hebrews to go out of Egypt. God started His miraculous rescue of the Israelites out of Egypt.

The Passover meal was to be done every year, so that the Hebrew people who were rescued, and all generations after them, would remember and celebrate God, who miraculously rescued them!

This instruction is recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus.

God's rescue of His people is our focus today. Yet the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt is linked forever with two other major Biblical truths. These three truths from God affect our living for Yahweh, the God who rescues, who is, who speaks.

The book of Exodus is about:

1-God's miraculous rescue of the Hebrews out of Egypt → The Hebrews were slaves in bondage by a king & kingdom stronger than they! At that time, Egypt was the strongest kingdom in the world. God miraculously rescued them out of Egypt! The Passover meal was to be observed every year, so that the people who were rescued, and all their descendants after them, would remember and celebrate God's miraculous rescue!

2-God's miraculous presence in their midst → the pillar of smoke by day, pillar of fire by night

3- The giving of the law to the nation, God speaking to the people → God spoke to the people, and gave them the law, starting with the Ten Commandments, and many other instructions, for appropriate everyday living for God's rescued people! → The book of Exodus is all about God. To remember & celebrate God!

God instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb during the Passover, so why do we read here of sellers of sheep and oxen, and money changers?

(Selling of oxen and sheep)

v. 14 "And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*."

Many Jews, since they would be in Jerusalem for the Passover, would have also desired to worship God at the temple with required animal offering sacrifices. Oxen, sheep, and doves are mentioned most in the book of Leviticus. I believe these are mentioned here as representative animals to be sold & used for worship offerings. Perhaps goats and pigeons were also being sold.

One commentator explains the presence of those animals in the temple like this:

“It seems the temple officers, whose responsibility it was to take care of the temple, permitted a market of these animals, and other things necessary for sacrifice, to be kept in the court of the Gentiles, in order that the worshippers might be supplied with the animals used for worship for offerings.”

In vv. 14, 15, John uses the word “temple,” which is used to indicate the whole temple bldg., or specifically the outer courts, open to the gentiles.

With the selling of the animals, surely there would have been the loud voices of sellers and buyers all around, seeking sales and bargains! Noises from the animals that were brought there, letting their owners know they didn’t agree with their decision to be brought there! Smells from the animals, including animal droppings all around! That “market” surely would have displaced the area that families of worshippers would usually be.

Was that “Disturbing Behavior in the Temple?” Try to picture in your mind’s eye the following activity:

“And He, (Jesus), made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.”

Having their animals powerfully driven out of the temple area by Jesus is disturbing enough! Maybe even more disturbing is how would they ever find their lost animals? There were so many animals driven out of the temple grounds into the packed crowds gathered outside, in the streets and marketplaces. How would they ever find their lost animals?

A story about scattered items—me at Disneyland with 13 ten-year old’s, and only one high school girl helper.

One summer while I was in college, I did a summer project with Campus Crusaders for Christ in Los Angeles. We all got summer jobs in West LA, and I got a job at Westside LA YMCA, as a summer program leader. Every day I was responsible for about 11 third & fourth graders. We had daily activities & outings, and every week we had a big outing; one week we went to Disneyland! We had to be very careful because at that time, kidnapping was happening in large parks like Disneyland. But somehow, God gave me the ability to quickly spot where my 11 kids were as we walked around, and even among the crowds of summer visitors, I could always find my 11 children.

In the same way, as I could quickly find and see “my kids” at Disneyland among the summer crowds, I think the sellers of the animals would be able to find and identify their scattered animals outside of the temple area. As for the money changers, surely, they knew quite carefully how much money they had. There was a money changer’s business, to keep track of their own money!

Was this “Disturbing Behavior in the Temple?”

Apparently, this activity was very disturbing to Jesus. Jesus did not agree with their decisions and actions!

The activity of doing business, there, at that specific location, was disturbing to Jesus. There is nothing wrong with doing business itself, done ethically, in a God honoring way, but here, it was the location and occasion that I believe disturbed Jesus.

Notice Jesus’ words:

1—take these things away; 2—stop making my Father’s house a house of business!”

- How did the temple even end up like this?
- Why did those responsible for the temple allow this to happen?
- Why did those sellers participate in such an activity?
- Perhaps their fear and reverence for the LORD and His house had gone cold...
- Perhaps the joy to remember & celebrate God, who rescued them, was replaced by the deceitfulness of riches.

Take these things away; stop making my father’s house a house of business!

→ “was Jesus the only one who even dared to say this?” pause...

→ The use of Jesus’ word “house,” here is important to Jesus. So, it is important to us!

House means a house, dwelling. It also can include the meaning of household, extended family!

As the extended family of God here at EBC, perhaps we should regularly ask ourselves the following questions:

→ has our fear and reverence for the LORD and His house, his extended family, gone cold...?

→ has the joy to remember & celebrate God who rescued us, been replaced by the deceitfulness of riches...? (Are there changes we need to make? What are those changes?)

*I am an outsider to the details and particulars here at EBC, so I want to humbly ask those questions with totally good intentions!

The purpose for Passover→ “Remember and celebrate God, who miraculously rescued you!” Jesus did not want that worship, and worship gathering of God’s family, which included that location, to become a gathering for doing business! It was not an appropriate time & place! And Jesus behaved in a disturbing manner to those around Him.

A side note here. Three years later, just before Jesus was killed on the cross, Jesus again clears out the temple area of sellers and animals. Jesus’ words of rebuke are slightly different there because his focus includes more for that time. That is a different message.

→ “Remember and celebrate God, who miraculously rescued you!”

In closing, I would like to lead us in some moments of gentle worship, to take some time to remember, and celebrate, God, who miraculously rescued us, His extended family.

Sit quietly. Hold out both hands. Open both hands. Place left hand on left leg, still open. Place right hand on right leg, still open.

Now, take a few seconds to REMEMBER specific events/times of God’s miraculous rescue of you personally. Place those memories on your open left hand.

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Remember God's Physical rescue of you. Emotional rescue. Financial rescue. Relational rescue. Perhaps very recently God rescued you. Perhaps there was a life-defining rescue by God. Carefully, remember God's miraculous rescue of you! Place those memories on your open left hand. 1st time—God rescuing you personally; 2nd time—church family rescue

Now, take a few seconds to plan, to imagine, how you might CELEBRATE God, the One who miraculously rescued you, with His household.

Try to visualize, there in your right hand, actual ways how you might celebrate God, celebrating with His household, His extended family.

Where could you celebrate God together?

How would you celebrate God together?

When could you celebrate God together?

Now, let us offer these thoughts of our lives to God, as an act of worship of Him!

Prayer:

We remember you, Father, and celebrate you, Father, who miraculously rescued us, and will miraculously rescue us, for Your glory, for Your Kingdom. Thank you for your love for us, for sending Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, that we might have life in His name!

