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John 2:13 - 2:25



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this analysis of John 2:13-25, Steve Gregg examines the story of Jesus driving out merchants from the temple. He notes that this event is the only one recorded in all four Gospels, although John's account is slightly different from the others. Gregg emphasizes the importance of avoiding hypocritical behavior in religious leaders and cautions against allowing financial interests to interfere with the worship of God. Ultimately, he argues that Jesus' actions were motivated by a desire to uphold the glory of God and promote righteousness, rather than personal anger or self-interest.

Transcript

We know that John is including things that are left out of the other Gospels, and they include things that John leaves out of his, and in the harmonizing of these things, chronologically, it's not always extremely obvious how things fit together, but it does seem that this miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana preceded all the miracles that Jesus did in Galilee. Well, this actually was in Galilee, but it was before his Galilean ministry commenced. Jesus, at this point, was still in the midst of what we would refer to as his year of obscurity.

His year of popularity began when he heard that John the Baptist had been put in prison. This has not yet occurred in the material we're reading, so this is before that. But the Synoptic Gospels tell us that when John the Baptist was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the kingdom of God, working miracles, and so forth, and drew a lot of attention to himself, worked many miracles, but all of those are further ahead into the future from the standpoint of where we're looking right now.

So, as far as we know, the turning of water into wine was the only miracle Jesus has done up to this point. It is referred to as the beginning of signs in verse 11, this beginning of signs Jesus did in Galilee. And so, he is now kind of broken out of his shell, we might say.

He spent 30 years just living like an ordinary man, like a carpenter in Nazareth. Working with wood, probably supporting his mother after his stepfather, or foster father, Joseph, had died. And Jesus has now come out and he's begun to do other things.

We will find by the end of this chapter, he has done more miracles, but we're not told what they are. He still has not begun his Galilean ministry until after chapter 4 of John. But we do see some miracles or signs he does, because it says in verse 23, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did.

And that sets the stage for chapter 3, where Nicodemus comes to him and says in chapter 3 verse 2, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with you. So there are, soon after the wedding feast of Cana, there are to be signs, additional signs, done in Jerusalem. But we have no distinct record of what they were.

But it would appear that Jesus began to publicly do signs in Jerusalem before he began his public ministry in Galilee. Galilee was really his primary ministry. But John, probably writing after the other apostles were all dead, and not wishing to have his memories of his time with Jesus perish with him when he would die as an old man, he's putting down things that were not in the other gospels, and which disappear with him.

Now, one of the things that he includes is a cleansing of the temple by Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Now, in the Synoptic Gospels, all three of them tell us that Jesus cleansed the temple with a whip of small cords, but the difference is that in all of those gospels, it is at the end of Jesus' life. It is in the Passion Week that the other gospels place this cleansing of the temple.

And all three of the other gospels give it. And the scholars sometimes think maybe John has put it out of proper order here. But I think it's more likely that what John has done is told us of an earlier cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

And the Synoptics tell us about a second one at the end of his ministry. It would be like John to tell us something that's supplementary, rather than a duplication of what the other gospels say. There's very little duplication in John.

Actually, the only thing in John's gospel that duplicates the other gospels is the feeding of 5,000 in John 6. And, of course, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. But apart from that, the book is almost entirely unique material that fills in gaps in the other gospels. And so I'm of the opinion that Jesus cleansed the temple twice.

And once was at this very early stage, and once was at the very end of his ministry. Now, why would he have to do it twice? Well, for the same reason he had to do it once. Because the temple was being abused.

And he did not like that, and so he cleansed it. And then, apparently, like three years later, something like that, it had, of course, in the interim, fallen back into abuse, probably the entire time. And so he cleansed it one more time.

At the end of his life. To say these are the same incidents, but just put in a different chronological place in John, would be to ignore many differences between the accounts. Jesus said different things on the two occasions.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record what Jesus said in the cleansing of the temple. And they all agree that he said, My father's house is to be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. In this passage, there is no reference to a den of thieves, more than the fact that the father's house is supposed to be a house of prayer.

Instead, he says, do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. A house of merchandise isn't the same thing as thievery. Any shop is a place of merchandise, but it's not necessarily thievery.

A den of thieves is obviously something much more corrupt. In this occasion, Jesus doesn't raise the same complaint. And the results are different.

In this case, we're going to find that after Jesus has done this, he has a conversation with the people in power there, who ask him to give them a sign how he is able to do what he's doing or claimed to do. In the other cases, in the Psalm to the Gospels, after he cleansed the temple, it says they were afraid to do anything to him, but they wanted to kill him. And so, it's really a different story.

The only thing in common is in both cases, Jesus goes in with a whip and drives out the many changers and the animals from the temple. We read of it in the beginning of verse 13. Now, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now, up from Capernaum, actually, because after he had turned the water into wine in Cana, which is in Galilee, he, in verse 12, went with his mother, his brothers, and whatever disciples were already with him, to Capernaum. And he was there for a little while, not many days, it says. And from there, he went up to Jerusalem.

Now, up to Jerusalem is actually south of Galilee. When we speak of going south, we usually say down. And when we say north, we mean up.

But, of course, there's no reason why ancient societies or other cultures should use our convention of speech that way. When they speak of up, they think of elevation. And Jerusalem was on a hill.

What's more, any approach to Jerusalem from any direction was up, because they think of it as an elevated place in more than a geographical sense, or a topographical sense. It is an elevated place spiritually. The temple was there, and so it's always, in a sense, when you approach the temple.

And so the Bible always speaks about going up to Jerusalem, no matter what direction you're coming from. They have been in Capernaum. We have no record of anything they

did in Capernaum in these not many days, it says at the end of verse 12.

They say they're not many days. But we do know that on a later occasion, Capernaum became his headquarters of ministry. In fact, it was the place where, at a later time, he would call the fishermen to follow him from their nets.

Whom he had met earlier, in chapter 1, but had not called to follow him. So, the fishermen had met him at another location. They may have seen him during these few days at Capernaum also, though again, we don't find him calling them to follow him until later, once he begins his Galilean campaign.

But from Galilee, from Capernaum, he goes up to Jerusalem, because it says the Passover was near. Now, the Passover was one of three feasts in the Jewish calendar that all adult male Jews, if possible, were supposed to recognize by going to Jerusalem. Passover was a week long.

Actually, the Passover itself was a single day, but there was a seven days following, where the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the whole week was considered to be the Passover season. And then, 50 days after Passover, was Pentecost. That also was a week long celebration.

And then, later on, at the end of the summer, there was the Feast of Tabernacles. That was also a week long. And obviously, it would not be practical for Jews of the Diaspora, all over the Mediterranean world, to come make a trip like that three times a year.

But anyone who could, who was a Jew above 12 years of age, was supposed to do so if they were male. The women could stay home with the littler children, if they wished, or the whole family could come. But the men were supposed to do it if they could.

Obviously, there was no penalty for missing it. And it's probable that many, many Jews could only come very rarely because if they were poor and lived far away, that kind of trip. However, Palestinian Jews, like Jesus' disciples who lived in the country, could rather easily walk there.

From Capernaum to Jerusalem is probably close to a week's walk. But they were used to that kind of thing. They didn't get places quickly.

Walking about the country, a small country like Israel, was something. And so Jesus' disciples, no doubt, walked to Jerusalem every time there was one of these feasts. We don't have record of all the feasts, but one thing is important.

This is a Passover, and there are two other Passovers named in the ministry of Jesus. And it's from these Passovers that we sort of deduce the overall length of his ministry. We usually hear that Jesus' ministry was three and a half years long.

It may have been, but it may have been two and a half years long. No one really knows for sure because there are three Passovers. This one is very early in his ministry, obviously before his Galilean campaign.

In fact, we might say before he had any public ministry going on at all, was this early Passover. He also died at a Passover. So the beginning and end of his public ministry were at Passovers.

And these happen once a year, of course. There is one other Passover named in the middle, or somewhere in the midst of his ministry. It is in John chapter 6, and that is the occasion when he fed the multitudes with the five loaves and two fishes.

So there are three named Passovers. His ministry began around the time of the first of them and ended at the third. And there is one in the middle, that would make a total of two years of ministry.

And obviously, this Passover is not the very first thing he did because he turned water to wine before this, and he had called some disciples before this. So it would be at least two years, inclusive of these three Passovers, and something. Two years and some change, you know, a few months maybe.

And so it would be possibly two and a half years. But, traditionally it is thought to be three and a half years, and that is because there is another feast mentioned in John 5.1. Which says, after this there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now it could be any feast of the Jews.

It could have been Passover, it could have been Pentecost, it could have been a tabernacle. But many scholars believe this feast was also a Passover. If it was, then there are not three, but four Passovers in the ministry years of Jesus.

That would make his ministry have a Passover at the beginning, a Passover at the end, and two in the middle. That would be inclusive of three years. And as I said, prior to John 2.13 there has been some activity.

So his ministry activity, perhaps from his baptism to his crucifixion, could be three and a half years. Or, if there were only three Passovers instead of four, then two and a half. No one knows for sure.

Certainly there is nothing in John 5.1 to let us know that it was a Passover. But the assumption that it was is the basis for thinking that Jesus' ministry was three and a half years long. There may be another reason too.

There was a parable Jesus told about a fig tree that wasn't producing fruit. And the gardener said, or the owner said to the gardener, this tree is not bearing fruit, it's just burning the ground, let's cut it down, we don't have any use for it. And the gardener

said, well let's just do it one more year and see if it produces fruit.

And if it doesn't, we'll cut it down. And of course the most likely meaning of that parable is that Israel was that fig tree. And the three years he mentioned that they had been waiting for fruit was trying to cultivate it in this past year of opportunity.

Anyway, it's not essential that we know how many years Jesus' ministry was, but some of you might know the basis for the claim that his ministry was three and a half years, this is it. Which is itself not certain, but we have one that's certain. It's nailed down in black and white.

This was a Passover of the Jews. And Jesus and his disciples probably went to Jerusalem every time there was one of these annual feasts where it was expected. However, it was not a given that he would go.

Because in chapter 7, his brothers urged him to go down to Jerusalem to the feast as if maybe they weren't sure he was going. And later on, I think it's in chapter 10 if I'm not mistaken, people are looking for Jesus and they're saying, do you think he'll come to the feast? Do you think he'll come to the feast? Like maybe he would. It's not a given that every Jew is going to go to these feasts, although the law required it.

It was kind of quasi-optional. Obviously some people's schedule and family obligations and work obligations were free. But Jesus being a nomadic kind of itinerant preacher, more often than not would be free to make that trip.

And he did on this occasion. It says in verse 14, and he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. Now, oxen and sheep and doves would be those animals that were most often offered as sacrifices.

Goats also could be offered, and maybe they were there too, but just not mentioned. The thing is that certain sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus required oxen to be offered. And some required oxen and lambs, or merely lambs.

And the poor were allowed to offer birds, because a poor person could not always afford an ox, or a sheep even to offer. If they're very poor, they can hardly put food on their table. And so they were still supposed to offer sacrifices, but they could offer birds if there was special provision made for the poor.

And so all these animals were available on sale in the temple. Now that was not something that God arranged for in the Old Testament. There was not a marketplace court of the temple.

There was a court of the Gentiles, a court of women, there was a court of the Jews, and so forth. And yet there was not a court of the merchants. And Jesus found business going on in the temple, selling these things.

Now, ostensibly this was a service provided for the pilgrims who came from other areas. If you wanted to come from Rome or Greece to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices, you might prefer not to bring your cow on the ship with you, or walk all around the Mediterranean leading a cow and some sheep with you. You might instead wish to buy them once you got there.

Just bring your money with you, and you can buy an animal in Jerusalem and offer it. However, the law was very explicit that the animals offered had to be without any blemishes, without any flaws. You couldn't have a spot, even a freckle on the inner part of the lip.

The priest would reject an animal like that. It had to be absolutely flawless. Well, it was no doubt the case that people would sometimes bring their own animals, and the priest could easily find some little speck on it somewhere and say, Oh, sorry, you can't do that.

You have to buy one of ours. You have to pay us. So that they began to prey upon the worshippers.

So that the people would begin to look at their temple's worship with anger and with disdain. They would resent having to go, because they'd realize that, we're going to have to buy one of their animals at inflated prices there, when our animals should be good enough that they'll find some fault with it, so they're just going to soak us for money. And people would become cynical about this, and not look forward to coming to worship God.

Just another chance for them to get soaked and victimized. So, in other words, these merchants had turned the worship of God into something that the worshippers did not like, did not look forward to. I mean, not that they didn't love God, it's just the money, the extra money that they're being charged for things they do toward worship.

Just as in our own time, there are people who have a cynical attitude toward church, because it seems to them, or toward Christian media ministries, because it seems to them that they're always just asking for money. That's what you hear a lot, you know. Now, churches have become sensitized to that more in modern times.

People feel that way, and so a lot of the churches, the ones that tend to be more popular, really play that down, and they don't seem to beg for money an awful lot. You'll still hear it, though, in some of the smaller supporting movements. But people have sometimes gotten the impression that churches are people who... And so they don't... When you go to church, you're supposed to go there to enjoy God, to enjoy worshipping God.

But when there's this monetary... that people resent, then the worship of God seems odious to them. And that's what was true, I believe, in the case with Eli's sons. Eli's sons

were praises, and they abused their position in a big way.

Eli's sons, I think, actually slept with the women who came to worship there and took some of the portion of the meat for themselves that was supposed to be burned and given to God. And it says that the worship of God became odious in the sight of the people. People didn't want to worship God because the priests were taking advantage of them when they'd go.

And they didn't have any choice, they couldn't elect their son, their grandson, the one before that. So, those who sort of oversee the worship of God, the public worship of God, whether they're the priests in the temple or pastors and elders of the church, they need to be careful that they're not using their position in a way that will simply further their own financial interests and make people not want to worship God because they see it through... they see there's something corrupt about it. And, of course, we know that many media ministries, especially Christian TV, have been exposed because they soak widows.

Like the Pharisees, they rob widows' houses for a pretense to make long prayers. Many of the people who support media ministries are widows, on fixed incomes and so forth. And a lot of men who are on these expensive TV ministries and are trying to soak people, they know it's coming from women on fixed incomes.

They know it's coming from widows. And then these guys get caught either absconding or wasting or using too much of the money for the wrong things and it just makes people have a sour taste in their mouth about Christianity in general. And that is something that ministers can ruin people's love for God, in a way, or at least their desire to worship him in any public way.

And that's what was going on in the temple here. Jesus came there and he saw all this business going on in the temple. Now, by the way, a lot of churches now have businesses set up.

The really big churches, the really big secret sensitive churches, they might have bookstores, which is convenient actually for the parishioners if people want to buy Christian books. It's more convenient to do it right while they're in church. They might even have a coffee shop.

They're commenting on whether a church building should have more parts of it that offer different things besides a sanctuary because church buildings aren't spiritual anyway. I mean, if you're going to have a church building, I don't know that... But it can be so that the church becomes a place where some people seek to make money off of the other people who come there. I know there, for a fact, because I've met them, there are people who make their living in sales, maybe insurance salesmen or people like that, who go to church for no other reason than to develop relationships with potential

customers.

And they turn the church of God, the temple of God, into a house of merchandise. That's all they're there for is to further their business and not to worship God. So there's many ways in which what these money changers were doing might be duplicated, even though they weren't doing anything criminal.

But they were just doing the wrong thing and turning temple worship into something that was a lucrative business for them rather than just something where God is glorified and God is loved and God is worshipped by people who just aren't like David did. Remember David said in his day, One thing I desire of the Lord, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, in the case of a tabernacle, that I might meditate in his temple, that I might behold the beauty of the Lord. That's the ideal.

People, when they come to public worship, they come to meditate and to behold the beauty of the Lord and not ever want to leave that place. But public worship can be turned into something else by those who manage it. The handlers.

And the temple handlers had allowed that to happen at the temple. And by the way, there wasn't another denomination down the street people could go to if they didn't like the priests at this temple. There weren't two temples.

There was one in the whole world, and it was the one they had to go to. So it's not even as if, you know, I don't like the way this preacher does things, so I'm going to go down to this next church. They had to go to this one.

And so it was definitely, it was the only game in town. If somebody wanted to worship God. So when Jesus had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables and said to those who sold doves, take these things away, do not make my father's house a house of merchandise.

Then his disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house has eaten me up. Now, Jesus making a whip and driving them out has sometimes been interpreted as Jesus actually whipping the merchants themselves. And with this picture in mind, many people bring up this incident, or else the other one at the end of Jesus' ministry, which was similar, as examples of Jesus favoring violence.

When you actually take Jesus' words seriously about turning the other cheek, and having a gentle response to those who are your enemies, and things like that, loving your enemies, blessing those. People often point to this incident, or this kind of activity of Jesus, since he did it twice, and they say, see, well Jesus even drove the money changers out of the temple. Actually, even if you talk about the subject of Christian participation in war, which is ethically ambiguous, definitely.

I mean, many people feel it's biblically defensible, and many people feel like it's not. But if you happen to take the side toward pacifism, or non-participation of Christians in warfare, certainly the other side, I know, I've heard it all the time, they continuously say, ah, but Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. Well, I don't know that we can really, with any simplicity, and with any brevity of discussion, settle the matter for whether war is always ethical or unethical for Christians.

But it certainly is irrelevant to say, well Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. There's nothing comparable to war. For one thing, war, when it is objected to, is usually objected to on the basis of killing people.

It's usually because you're shedding human blood that people raise questions about its ethical nature. Jesus didn't kill anyone. Furthermore, Jesus did not, as far as we know, strike anyone.

The Bible says in all the accounts that he took a whip and drove them out and their animals. And as far as we know, he whipped the animals to get them stampeding. And, you know, animal lovers might say, well that's not very nice of him to whip the animals.

That's how you get animals to move. I mean, there's these oxen, they're big animals. You have to whip them and then they start moving to get away from the whip.

It probably doesn't hurt very much, but even if it did, they're just animals. There's no reason to believe that Jesus whipped people, though frankly if he had, I wouldn't have minded, you know, to forcibly drive people out of his father's house. It's just like if you came home to your parents' house and it was also your home and you came there and found people doing things there, having a big party there, doing things your parents wouldn't approve of, you know, getting drunk and watching, you know, porn and things like that, and you've got godly parents and some of these people come into their house and defiling it.

Jesus had every right to do that. It was just being done there. But I don't think he had to do that.

I think what he did is he drove the animals out and he knocked over the tables with their coins and, you know, where the man's money is, he's going to go after it. So Jesus has to just get the merchandise out of there and then the merchants will go after it unless they lose all their stuff. So there's never any place in the Bible that indicates that Jesus whipped a person.

He may have, but there's no reason to believe that he did. He didn't need to in order to accomplish what he did and the Bible doesn't ever say that he did. But he did drive them out and apparently in acts that would have appeared violent, I'm trying to remember, I'm sure that every dramatization of this in Christian movies and even in our minds, pictures

are rather, you know, perturbed, angry, shouting kind of Jesus and that may be exactly what he was.

Although it doesn't necessarily say he was shouting. He could have driven the cattle out without doing that. But getting angry, and this doesn't say he got angry, it certainly looks like he got angry, is not always a sin.

Anger is often a sin and when you get angry and the Bible often speaks of it as something that we should not have, but Jesus did get angry. If not here, we know that this is rather a place where the Bible specifically says it. Over in the Gospel of Mark.

I think it's fair enough to say that Jesus was angry on this occasion. Although zeal is the word that is used in describing his attitude. But zeal for a good thing can be anger at a bad thing.

But to say that Jesus was sometimes angry, we can't say that he was angry and we can be sure of that because in chapter 3 of Mark we read this. There was a Jesus in the synagogue on a Sabbath day and there was a man there with a withered hand. And it says in Mark chapter 3 verse 2 and they watched him, that is his enemies watched him to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath because that was considered to be not okay to heal on the Sabbath.

So they wanted to see if they could catch him and nail him for that. And it says in verse 3 and he said to the man who had the withered hand step forward. Now he knew very well these people were watching him so he was going to give them something to see.

And he said to them is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil to save life or to kill? But they kept silent. Why? Why didn't they answer? Because they were looking for something to accuse him of. Is it lawful to do good or evil? Which one is lawful to do on the Sabbath? Well no one is going to say it is lawful to do evil on the Sabbath because it is never lawful to do evil.

They couldn't say that. The only thing they could answer is well I guess good. But then they would be giving permission to heal because that is arguably good.

I mean they don't want to give him permission to do anything. But he gets them in a position where they are like I said on the horns of a rhetorical dilemma. Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath? Well no one is going to say it is lawful So they kept silent.

And when he had looked around at them with anger being grieved by the hardness of their hearts he said to the man stretch out your hand. So it says that Jesus had anger toward them. And we see anger probably I mean it doesn't use the word angry it needs to be anger.

Anything Jesus does is not a sin. Now we might say well Jesus being God has every right

to be angry we don't and therefore it is a sin for us to be angry but not for him. Yet Jesus though we do believe Jesus is God he also is the model man.

He also is the example. It is in the gospel of John that he says to his disciples in chapter 13 in that case he was talking about washing their feet but in general his life was an example for them to follow when he cleansed the temple as when he washed his feet the way a godly man should act. And therefore we have to say it is not necessarily wrong in every case to be angry it depends on a number of things.

There is a difference between sinful anger and godly anger. One of the primary differences would be a sinful man is usually angry on his own behalf. He gets angry at the people who wrong him and who injure him.

Whereas a Christian is supposed to not be angry at that they are supposed to forgive. If somebody spitefully uses you turn the other cheek when they strike you. You can absorb injuries if you have the spirit of Christ.

He did. He wasn't angry at people on this occasion because they did anything to him. It was his father's house that he was concerned and Jesus was zealous for God.

That is what it says. The disciples remember the scripture that said Jesus was filled with enthusiasm over God's reputation. The zeal for God's house was what was motivating him.

And in this case apparently made him angry but anger is not a sin necessarily if you are angry on behalf of disinterested anger. Disinterested means you have nothing to gain from it. It is not your issue personally.

When you hear of injustices done on the other side of the world to people you don't even know it has nothing to do with you personally but you just are angry because there is something to be angry about and any righteous person would be angry about it. There are things that are so worthy of our anger that we would be remiss to not be angry with them. If you hear of horrendous evil done to innocent victims then that is not spiritual that is apathy.

There are such awful crimes done to innocent people that if we don't get angry about it we are just going to become numb to moral issues altogether. Anger is the right response to certain things but the thing is when you are the victim although it is equally wrong for you to be victimized by people as anyone else you should have enough of the spirit of Christ and enough love even for your enemy that you can absorb the injury without responding in hatred and anger and the need to get revenge. Jesus said when someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to the other also it is you in this case not your wife, your children your neighbor who is getting attacked it is you but what if it is somebody else who is being attacked then that is obviously a different scenario and

different motivation.

Some people when I advocate turn to the other cheek and say what would you do if someone was going to you don't have to think of my wife think of anyone's wife or anyone's children or any innocent victim it is not just my family I am concerned about it is not just me and my interests if it is then it is still all about me and my anger is just a selfish anger if it is that I am angry at all those who would afflict all victims who are innocent then my anger is that injustice in the abstract it might even be that I have some measure of compassion toward the person who is perpetrator but I am still angry at the injustice of it that is not sinful to be angry at injustice or angry at sacrilege you still have to be in some sense at some level loving toward the person even who is committing it because God loves them God loves his enemies God loves sinners and so should we but he is also angry at sinners everyday or father when your children are you know they do the wrong thing if they have been told the right thing you get exasperated now if you get exasperated just because you are impatient then that is your bad you know but if it is because you love them and you are concerned about them learning the lessons that they need to learn for their good in life there is a different answer because you love them not because you don't and you know when people do things that endanger themselves and they are not wise enough to heed counsel or instruction so that you know they are going to hurt themselves it is easy to get angry at somebody for that because you care about them not because you don't and so the motivation of anger whether it is a self centering thing whether it is just another manifestation of my focus on myself and my rights and my injuries and me if it is focused and motivated that way it is part of the flesh it is part of the sinfulness it is part of my tendency to put myself at the center of the universe and expect the universe to cater to me that is what we do by nature from birth conversion refocuses re-centers that thing so that God's concerns and the concerns of others are more important than our own and then there are things to get angry about that is not wrong to be angry about when Jesus was angry in the synagogue with the men who were not willing to answer him honestly when he said is it lawful to do good or evil he was angry because they were more concerned about their religious rules enough so even to not even be honest enough to give the answer they knew was right because they would have to lose a point in this in this tension between him and them they didn't want to lose any position of theirs and for that they would be willing to let this man who lived with a lifelong injury to his arm to be crippled rather than give in and say you know you're right Jesus it is lawful to do good please heal that man their religious attitudes victimized people and prevented them from being helped and Jesus was more if you come to the synagogue to worship God but you don't love your brother you might as well not even come and they were there with an attitude to find fault to criticize to keep Jesus from doing good things that made him angry not because they were plotting against him when they finally caught him and put him on a cross he said father forget them they don't know what they're doing let them kill him that won't make him angry but let them victimize people in the name of God that made his blood boil for the victim's

sake and for God's sake that religious leaders would so misrepresent God's interest that the people who were getting their concepts of God from these leaders would misinterpret what God even is about and this made him angry and I really think that there's problems like that throughout church history that there are many people who want nothing to do with the church so much and we can easily we who are of the Protestant stream can easily look back at the middle ages when it was just the Roman Catholic church and all the abuse there all the bilking of the poor to build big cathedrals and all the corrupt bishops and popes and all the use of fear and terror to keep people in line to make them angry and give people the impression that if they give them enough money they'll get people out of purgatory and all this perversion of the gospel just makes God out to be a totally different kind of being than he is but coming out of the Roman Catholic thing and the Reformation hasn't even in Protestant circles it's very common to give people the impression that God is easily angered when the Bible says he's slow to anger and plentiful mercy that God will take pleasure well the Bible says he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked much less the torture of them the character of God is so misrepresented by the leaders of Christianity that people who would really love God if they encountered him often are driven away from him they're turned off by the name of Jesus because they think he is what represented him as and sometimes it's been a misrepresentation that makes Jesus angry at them when people who would love God if they saw him as he is are driven away from him because he's misrepresented by his spokespersons that makes him angry remember what he did to Moses he said, Moses, go speak to the rock and tell it to give water Moses was angry, God wasn't and Moses goes out there God's representative he's angry at the people and says, you rebels must I strike this rock to give you water well God had told him to speak to it and he struck the rock and God graciously gave water but then God took Moses' side and said, that's not what I told you to do that did not represent me correctly you did not say it therefore it's going to cost you you cannot go into the promised land Moses who had suffered so much for God's sake Moses who had been so obedient for 120 years now he can't and Moses complained to God about that many times God said, don't bring that up again you're not going in because you did not sanctify me before the people wow because he gave the impression that God was angry when he wasn't he gave the impression that God was had a short fuse when God does not it was Moses that had the fuse that was short by this time I'd say Moses had a short fuse he took a lot of gut before he ever got that angry but his fuse ran out before God's did and he gave the impression that God was at the end of his patience and he wasn't and that cost Moses because you have to represent God rightly if you're the spokesman for God you can't tell people that God is a certain way because then the people who who wouldn't really be turned off by God are turned off by the God you present you almost have to wonder sometimes about the people who are not Christians in our society what about those who have never heard about Jesus sometimes when we think about the unreached peoples well maybe God has a special dispensation of mercy for those who are innocently ignorant never have heard if they respond to the light they have maybe he'll give them mercy but those in America

those in the west who have heard the gospel no excuse for them I wonder if the Jesus they've heard of is the Jesus of the television evangelist the Jesus of the word of faith movement or the Jesus of some other misrepresentation of what Jesus is like maybe they haven't rejected Jesus maybe they haven't even heard about him they've heard of another Jesus you know Paul told the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 3 that he was afraid that if someone preached another Jesus to them they might accept it in 2nd Corinthians 3 no it's not 2nd Corinthians 11 2nd Corinthians 11 and it is actually verse 4 for if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached or if you receive a different spirit which you've not received or a different gospel which you've not accepted you might well put up with it he's concerned about that I'm afraid you might actually accept another Jesus that someone would preach in other words it's a virtuous thing to reject the wrong Jesus and it's possible that there's many people in this country who say well they've got no excuse they've got religious television they've got religious books they've got churches everywhere if they reject Jesus they're rejecting life well maybe what they're rejecting is actually dark maybe the Jesus that was presented to them maybe by the church or maybe their parents frankly a lot of people are raised in Christian homes but where the parents are abusive or all kinds of things and a child grows up and says ok so that's what a Christian is that's what Jesus stands for they get the impression Jesus is not real and it's not really that the child is rejecting the real Jesus they have not seen or heard of the real Jesus they've heard of someone called Jesus who is represented by this kind of representation what they reject may well be another Jesus not the real Jesus and who knows how God will judge those and I remember all the years I knew him in my youth he was concerned about his mother who was praying for her she was in a church and regular there but she was not an evangelical and she didn't know the Lord and I remember seeing him after some years of not seeing him and asking him how's your mother doing he said well she's still about the same no better and they said but I'm not sure who's at fault for that maybe she's not so much closed down to God as is failing to present and you might say well she'd go to another church well she could but lots of people don't know that Jesus is presented differently in different churches they think it's in the Bible and it is so important for Christians to correctly represent Jesus especially those who are in pulpits and those who speak for him because if Jesus is misrepresented then he may be rejected by people who don't really want to reject him and what they're rejecting might be something he himself would reject you know he himself may be glad they're rejecting what they're rejecting because it isn't really him so that's not answering the question I can't answer the question of what will God do in judging people in that situation what I'm saying is that it does underscore the tremendous responsibility of our spokesman for God and it made Jesus mad so that's one thing that makes anger righteous as opposed to carnal is that you're concerned for the glory of God you're concerned for the people of God you're concerned about their being victimized worst of all if they're being victimized by a religious establishment that's corrupt it's bad enough when they're victimized by con men and criminals and other wrongdoers but when the wrongdoers are the ones who are the public representatives of

God that's worse yet to not be angry at that is to be it's almost like not being on God's side let me show you something interesting about this I know I get off on tangents but this is relevant to knowing what God is like Psalm 139 Psalm 139 verse 21 and 22 David says Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred I count them my enemies now that doesn't sound very pure in heart and yet look at his very next words Search me, O God, and know my heart Try me and know my anxieties See if there's any wicked way in me And lead me in the way of blessing David says I don't know of any wicked way in me but let me know God search my heart and see well isn't it kind of on the surface there I hate those people I think David felt why? I mean Jesus tells us to love our enemies well David wasn't talking about his enemies he was talking about God's enemies he said I count them my enemies not because they are but because they're your enemies and I'm on your side, God those who anger you well, I'm taking your side against them by the way when we read about hatred in the Old Testament even though the Old Testament says seven things God hates or six things God hates seven are abomination to him but many of those things are people he hates him that sows discord among brethren that's a person God hates that person what does it mean God hates them doesn't the Bible say God loves sinners well he does and I think this is something that confuses people but it's quite easily cleared up the word hatred or the word hate obviously in different usages can mean the opposite of love or it can be the opposite of liking those are two very different things you can love somebody but not like very much about them you don't like their life you don't like their values you don't like what they're thinking you don't like the things they say because they're wicked and evil or foolish things you don't like them liking has to do with enjoyment of something do you like sauerkraut well some people do some don't that means they enjoy it or they don't enjoy it liking has to do with your tastes it has to do with what you enjoy or don't enjoy there's no obligation to enjoy anything in particular about someone you're not required to like you are required to love them and we think of love as more of an intense form of liking like I like this person I really like that one a lot I'm going to say I love that person because we think of love we think of loving as simply the more intensified phenomenon of liking but love in the bible is not related to liking you can love the person that you don't like at all you don't enjoy anything about them nothing about them is pleasant they may hate you they may persecute you they may not have one enjoyable thing about them but you're to love them what does that mean it means you put their interests on the level that your own interests are you consider their as valuable in the sight of God as you are they're valuable they're made in the image of God just like you are you care about their soul as you care about your own soul you would not wish them ill you'd wish them well you'd hope they'd come to Christ this is what loving someone means it means that you are committed to their well-being and to their good you might not like them at all it's possible not to like brussels sprouts but go ahead and eat them because it's your duty to do so and it's possible not to like a certain kind of person and you're not required to like them but you are required to go ahead and love them lay your life down for them serve

them when they're hungry feed them and so forth that's what it says not only in Proverbs but Paul quotes this proverb in Romans 12 at the end of Romans 12 he says therefore if your enemy hungers feed him if he thirsts give him drink if your enemy is hungry feed him he's your enemy you're not going to enjoy having an enemy but if he's in need love will care about his needs you'll feed him love is proactively seeking his good and his well-being that's what love is even at the sacrifice of your own self greater love has no one than this that they lay down his life for his friend so God loves everybody but doesn't like everybody there are things that disgust him and when we say I love you or when I say I hate you it might mean I don't love you because hate is a word that can be used as the opposite of love but sometimes and very often hate is simply I don't like anything about you I love you and I will lay my life down for you but I don't like you nothing about you pleases me but I'm not going to require you to please me before I love you I will love you whether you please me or not and liking is a word that can be used liking is being pleased by and enjoying something or someone God is not pleased by does not enjoy does not like people who do certain things he loves them because he sent his son to change them and to save them from that but he doesn't like it and he dislikes it so much he loathes it and that's what David says there in Psalm 139 verse 29 do I not hate them O Lord who hate you I rise up against you I find them disgusting I find them repugnant if you say I hate such and such a food because it doesn't meet with your tastes you don't mean you hate it like you hate certain people that you wish evil upon and there shouldn't be people you wish evil upon because that kind of hatred is a sin there is nobody that God wishes evil on ultimately there are people that God wants to discipline with what is hard and painful to them but it's always with the mind if possible to restore them he's never vindicated he never just gets so upset with people that he's just going to take pleasure in torturing them he doesn't like that he has no pleasure in that so God loves people but he doesn't like everybody David says I'm on your side if somebody doesn't like you I don't like them but I will loathe them if somebody has set themselves against you I will be on your side instead of their side and he says I count them my enemies they have not postured themselves against me they have not attacked me they hate you God and I will call them my enemies because I'm on your side and they're your enemies and so to take God's side and be angry at what God's angry at is legitimate Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 be angry but do not sin in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 26 Paul says be angry and do not sin then he says do not let the sun go down on your wrath well doesn't the Bible say we shouldn't be angry well it does actually if you look a few verses further down in Ephesians 4 in Ephesians 4 verse 31 he says let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and people speaking be put away from you put that away from you that's how you be angry and do not sin you put it away you get angry at the right things but you don't hang on to it you don't let the sun go down on it you don't make that the defining mood of your personality you get angry appropriately and then you put it away it's not sinful to feel it it is sinful to hang on to it and it's dangerous to sleep on it and so there is anger that is righteous and there is anger that is not righteous anger by the way is a it's a proper reflex like when the doctor

hits you in the right spot on the knee it's a little hammer for your knee to go up there are things, there are certain moods even fear is healthy of a sort the Bible continually says don't fear, don't fear, don't fear and yet it doesn't mean feeling fear initially is a bad thing anger and fear are both emotions that are very natural and appropriate responses to certain things if the tiger walked in the back of the room and we realized it had gotten out of the zoo and we knew some of us are going to get eaten to have a sensation of alarm and fear would be not a sin in fact God gives those emotions to animals to get them away from predators too you know, animals don't sin it's not a moral issue it's almost an instinct of self-preservation that God has put in everyone so they don't stupidly do things that are going to destroy their lives they avoid danger out of fear of it that's right when we are told not to be afraid it's when we have a duty to do something that might be scary to do but we are supposed to ignore the fear and do it anyway there is no sin in feeling fear if there is something that inspires fear legitimately but we are told not to allow fear in any sense to dictate our behavior we do the right thing even when it's scary same thing with anger there is an appropriate feeling of anger it's a natural response to injustice but if it's injustice against us we must put that away and say ok, that did make me angry but I will forgive I will put that away I will not go to bed angry about that I can absorb that graciously I don't have to let that ruin my spirit and corrupt my spirit now Jesus was angry at least on the occasion that we read of in Mark chapter 4 and it looks like he was angry on this occasion but here it is described as zeal for God's house it was not a personal vendetta it was not a response to personal attack against him in fact they probably didn't even know he was there until he showed up with a whip no one was saying anything against him on that occasion he had not even become controversial in fact this is one of the things that first caused him to be controversial gave him some visibility he got angry not when he was doing anything or saying anything about him but when his father's house was being abused and this was compromising people's love for God and worship of God it said in verse 18 so the Jews answered and said to him what sign do you show us since you do these things now you don't usually just walk into a public place and act like you own it and drive people out if you walked into a mall everyone out of here get out of here you have 5 minutes everyone out why should we do what you're telling us to do what authority do you have to drive us out of this place that's ordinarily ok for us to be who gave you the badge well that's what they're saying to the Jews this is a public place what authority do you have what sign can you give us that tells us you really can do this and that we have to pay attention to what you're saying and Jesus said destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up well because of their misunderstanding they thought they only confirmed that he was a madman because they said in response to him it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in 3 days now those 46 years were the years that Herod had been refurbishing the temple the temple had been erected on that spot in the days of Zerubbabel about 4,000 years ago about 520 B.C. after the Babylonian captivity ended and the remnant of Israel came back to Judah the Babylonians had burned down earlier and that temple stood from the time of Zerubbabel up until 70 A.D. but in the

approximate half century before Jesus began his ministry Herod had put a lot of money and labor and expense into making the temple more it it was rather tawdry, it was rather cheap in the days of Zerubbabel because they had a limited budget and they didn't have all the materials that Solomon had earlier when he built the original temple and so they made sort of a scaled down less impressive version in the days of Zerubbabel and Herod in order to ingratiate himself with the Jews made it one of his major building blocks and he put a lot of money into making the temple a beautiful structure one of the seven wonders of the world and so that had been going on for 46 years at the time that Jesus made this statement it's taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days now they obviously thought he was nuts but he let them think that he didn't say well I realize that sounds kind of crazy but let me explain what I'm talking about here of course if he had explained what he was talking about he'd sound even more nuts because he meant he would have said from the dead in three days and they would have thought that's even more crazy so Jesus just spoke the truth and let the chips fall and we're told he was speaking of the temple of his body therefore when he had risen from the dead his disciples remembered that he had said this to them and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said so apparently this must be what he said this temple he rose on the third day he raised the temple he is the temple he is the house of God he is the place where the word who was God tabernacled among us God's presence dwelt and manifested among his people in Jesus as in the temple as the glory of the Lord had filled the temple in Solomon's day so the glory of the Lord was now seen in Jesus as the manifestation of God on earth now what the bible teaches in the afterword parts of the sequel after Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven and poured out his spirit the bible says that we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit we are the body of Jesus the body of Jesus and temple are interchangeable concepts his body was the temple that he was talking about now his body is corporate made up of many members Peter said in 1 Peter 2.5 that we are like living stones built up together into a spiritual house 1 Peter 2.5 there are actually a number of places we don't have time to look at in the new testament that identify the church today as the temple of God the temple of the Holy Spirit the body of Christ these ideas of body of Jesus temple of the Holy Spirit the body of Christ was not yet corporate his disciples did not yet have the spirit they were not yet the habitation of God they would be as he told them in the last supper he told them that the Holy Spirit would come to them and they would be inhabited by him too but at this point in time Jesus was the sole member of the body of Christ and the sole stone of the temple he said you destroy this temple disciples didn't understand that any more than the Pharisees but they remembered it later when they knew he had risen from the dead it made sense and then the last three verses of this chapter now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did but Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew all men and had no need that anyone should testify of man for he knew what was in man our man made the authors of the Bible didn't divide their work into chapters and verses these divisions were made later and therefore they are subject to error and I think that it was a mistake

it seems like verse 22 should have been the last verse of chapter 2 and the reason I say that is because verse 23 obviously starts a new direction and that new direction leads up to Nicodemus coming to him because it says in verse 23 they saw the signs he did one of those was Nicodemus who came to him and said we know you are from God so it's like a turn in the story after verse 22 in fact although we have read these verses I think I am going to hold off on them speaking about them until next time so we can take them along with the story of Nicodemus because they really are the run up to that conversation so we will stop at this point and take those last verses of chapter 2