

First Public Passover – The Temple

JCV Integrated Text: **John 2:13-17**

Now the Jewish Passover was at hand, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found sellers of cattle, sheep and pigeons in the Temple, and the money-changers installed.

He made a rope scourge and drove everything, both sheep and cattle out of the Temple. And He spilled the coin-traders cash even turning the tables over. And He said to the pigeon sellers "Take them away! Don't make my Father's House a traders-emporium." His disciple reflected that it was written "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Introduction

In the previous section, **John 2:1-12**, Jesus went to the wedding at Cana, then on to Capernaum for a few days and presumably then goes back to Nazareth at some point.

John's Gospel was written around 64-67 AD - before the destruction of the Temple but probably after the death of Peter and possibly Paul ([see LTL 2 The Ministry Years 0.01](#) for the historical evidence).

John's perspective on Jesus' story compliments that given to us by **Matthew**, **Mark** and **Luke**. Matthew has recorded events that the 12 have been witness to in some way or another. They begin when Jesus makes his base in Capernaum and starts his public ministry whereas **John** takes a broader view and covers events before Jesus' public ministry is fully underway. Here we are at a transition point where, although Jesus has done one public miracle, He has not yet established his public ministry base in Capernaum.

John also provides a Jerusalem focus to the story which will later help to explain some of the events in Jesus' last week on earth. If we look at the locations of Jesus' public impact events before His intentional move to Capernaum as recorded by **John**, they are:

- The Wedding at Cana Galilee (Cana)
- Cleansing the Temple Jerusalem
- Debating with Nicodemus Jerusalem
- Baptising near Jerusalem Jerusalem
- Samaritan ministry Jerusalem
- Healing of the Royal Official's Son Galilee (Cana)

John records Jesus turning over the money tables at the Temple both here and in Jesus' last week. They are two separate events – the reactions and the people who react are different. These two events frame Jesus' ministry and **John** wants to draw out a thematic link between the two – that Jesus Himself will become the replacement for the Temple as the sign of God's presence and the gathering point for God's people for worship and sacrifice...

Jesus goes to the Passover in Jerusalem - April 7th 30AD

This event can be dated precisely! Jesus goes up to Jerusalem probably with His disciples and some of His family.

There is no instruction in the Old Testament that animals should be bought at the Temple for sacrifice – just that the animals should be of good quality. The Temple markets were run under the authority of the High Priest Annas who benefited unfairly from the sale of sacrificial animals as only animals bought from the market were deemed by the authorities to be acceptable for a sacrifice. They were often sold at 10 times the normal rate! In addition, the money changers were 'installed' or 'sitting'. They had an established paid-for pitch in the Temple and pilgrims were charged extortionate foreign-exchange fees with no choice but to pay.

Jesus was not unique in causing trouble at the markets. There was rising unrest which would culminate later according to the Talmudic writings in the destruction of the Temple as exhibiting God's displeasure at the commercialisation of the Temple sacrifices.

As **John** reports on Jesus' actions, he quotes in **verse 17** the words of **Psalm 69**, 'Zeal for your house will consume me'. Notice also in the same verse that the disciples 'reflected' - as they look back on the event, probably after the resurrection (when the second cleansing had also happened), they see the significance of the two events and are beginning to see the beginnings of the replacement of the Temple by Jesus.

The Bazaars of the sons of Annas.

Joseph ben Caiaphas (14BC-46AD) is the officiating High Priest at this time. However the real power behind him was Annas (Ananus ben Seth) who was High Priest earlier (6-15AD). Annas was appointed High Priest by Quirinius before being deposed by the Roman procurator Gratus. However, the Old Testament texts say that a High Priest remains High Priest until death so Annas remained the spiritual force behind the High Priesthood while Caiaphas carried out the functional/officiating role.

In fact, there were a run of family related High Priests after the time that Annas was deposed by the Romans in 15AD.

- Eleazar (son) 16-17AD
- Caiaphas (son-in-law) 18-36AD
- Jonathon (son) 36-37AD
- Theophilus (son) 37-41AD
- Jonathon (again) 44AD
- Annas (son) 63AD

These High Priests continued in the same vein as Annas developing the trading activities and structures in the Temple. In the Rabbinic writings the Temple Markets are referred to as 'The Bazaars of the Sons of Annas' (**Chanuyoth beney Chanan**).

Towards the period of the revolt that led to the destruction of the temple (AD 66-70) the **Babylonian Talmud** records:

Four cries did the Temple Court cry out. The first: 'Depart hence, ye children of Eli,' for they defiled the Temple of the Lord...

This draws from the story of Samuel, who is called from outside the tribe of Levi to be made a priest, and who himself wrote about the sons of Eli:

The sons of Eli were wicked men...they did not know YHWH... **1 Samuel 2:12**

And God says to Eli :

...you make yourself fat with choice cuts of every offering from my people... Your house will die...But I will raise up for myself a faithful Priest... **1 Samuel 2:29-35**

Prophetically we can see a foreshadowing of Jesus' future supplanting of the Temple in the incident in our passage in **John**; Jesus is in conflict with the system where the Talmudic Rabbis are referring to the sons of Annas as being like the sons of Eli who were themselves supplanted by a priest from outside their tribe.

Samuel described what was happening in Eli's day

they would say '**hand over some meat for the Priest...**'. They treated the Lord's offering with contempt **1 Samuel 2:12-17**

The officiating priest would often properly keep some portion of the sacrifice as payment for his time but here the High Priests (sons of Eli) are adding additional illicit layers by demanding their own cut from this portion.

The **Talmuds** highlight the similarity between Annas' family (the Sadducees) and the sons of Eli ...

Yet the chief priests still seized (them) [*i.e. the skins of the sacrifices which normally belonged to the officiating priest*] by force... For they are High Priests and their sons are Temple treasurers and their sons-in-law are trustees and their servants beat the people with staves!

...as they had built this system where the High Priests were taking the wealth from the thousands of lower level officiating priests. (Probably Jesus, being seen as a Galilean hothead, was also ejected from the Temple 'with staves' on this occasion.)

Additionally, not only were animals priced at 10x their value but they also demanded that payments by pilgrims were made with Temple money which could only be exchanged at an exorbitant rate in the court of the Gentiles.

Eventually, around 67 AD, the markets were shut down by the masses who hated them and writers blamed the corruption of the markets as the reason for the destruction of the Temple.

Temple trade, or the lack of it, is actually a part of the prophetic context of Zechariah's day of the Lord. In the end:

On that day there will no longer be a trader (or Canaanite) in the house of the LORD who rules over all. **Zechariah 14:20b-21**

So by driving out the traders Jesus is prophetically modelling what His life and ministry are going to achieve.

On this occasion, Jesus' disciples see a fulfilment with **Psalm 69:9**, 'For the zeal of your house consumes me'. Ultimately, the **Psalm** is an ecstatic prophecy of the Cross, for example 'For my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink', **Psalm 69:21**, is quoted by Jesus on the cross (**John 19:28-29**).

See my book [Jesus in Worship and Wonder](#) for more about ecstatic prophecy in the Old Testament and seeing Jesus in the Psalms.

©Christen Forster, 2020. These notes are provided for personal and group use. Please do not distribute or reproduce them without permission. Thank you.

Psalm 69 also contains a prayer from the Psalmist to the name 'Jesus' translated as 'Salvation':

Let your **Jesus**[Salvation] protect me God, I will praise the **name** of God with a song, and will magnify **Him** with thanksgiving. **It** will please YHWH better than an ox, or a bull that has horns and hoofs. **Psalm 69:29-31**

Conclusion

So we see in these few verses in **John** about the first cleaning of the Temple, that the Temple is key because Jesus' ministry will remove all the functions which naturally belong to the Temple to find fulfilment in His own body.