

The cleansing of the Temple

Christ Church: 3rd March 2024 10.00 am. & online
John 2:12-25 p1065

Quiz

- 1 How many parables in John's Gospel?
- 2 Does this story fit near the start or near the end of Jesus' ministry?

John's Gospel is different from the other three (known as Synoptics because they are similar). John describes situations and wants us to ponder what he says. He gives Jesus' teaching with hidden purposes and meanings behind what we read.

So, there are no parables as such in John's Gospel, and he puts today's incident early in Jesus' ministry, giving it more detail than the other Gospel writers who place it briefly just before the crucifixion (there may have been two incidents).

To show what is meant by 'hidden purpose', we look at three key words in this passage and see why John is using them.

1: Passover

He wants us to know this episode took place at Passover. He says so in v13 and repeats this in v23. So he lets Jesus go up (literally) to Jerusalem in the hills from Capernaum down on the plain.

Passover for the Jews was the time to remember the Exodus and that fearful night when all the first-born of Egypt were killed but the Children of Israel found salvation and deliverance from captivity (read Exodus ch12). The Passover meal was all about remembering. John hammers this home by adding v17 (the disciples 'remembered' Psalm 69) and v22 (the disciples 'recalled' what Jesus had said).

Passover is full of OT meaning with death and rescue as its key themes. And so here, right at the start of his Gospel, John draws our attention to the coming crucifixion (see also John 13:1). Jesus died as the Lamb of God. Those who receive and believe in him are rescued – see John 1:12.

And so, for **Passover** we have **Jesus' death** for us as what John wants us to see.

2: Authority

A second vital word in this passage is 'authority' in v18. How can we know Jesus has the right to be doing this? Answer: only if we read v19 and get what John is saying in v22. Once the resurrection had taken place the disciples 'got it'. His resurrection was proof of who he was and what he was doing. He indeed had the authority as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The one who had been crucified now has his body raised from the dead. So the disciples believed in his authority and so can we.

And so, for **authority** we have **Jesus' resurrection** for us as what John wants us to see.

3: Temple

John wants us to understand the significance of this taking place in the Temple at Jerusalem (v14 and then vv19-21). Jesus' anger and action take place in the Court of the Gentiles, but his explanation is of the Holy of Holies (John uses a different Greek word for temple).

For the Jews the Temple signified the presence of God on earth. So only the High Priest could go in there (the Holy of Holies) and only once a year. Anyone else would die instantly.

Jesus then has a furious conversation with the Temple officers (it would seem) when they talk at cross-purposes. They mean the building which took 46 years to build (a nice piece of detail in the story-telling) – he means, well, what does he mean?

And this is where John steps in because he thinks we won't get it unless he helps us and so v21. He is referring to his body. Jesus is now where God dwells on earth (and, for us, through his Spirit). This is amazing! Bodies are important! 'This is my body which is given for you.'

And so, for **Temple** we have **Jesus' body** for us as what John wants us to see.

So in this story John is also outlining the Good News of Jesus dying for us and being raised for us, all in his body. Has the penny dropped for us? Do we appreciate what John is getting at here for ourselves? Now do we understand how this story backs up the Christmas reading of John ch1 and the need to be born again in ch3? John 1:12; 2:11; 2:22,23; 3:16+. **Receive him, believe in him.**