

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Revolution or Revelation

John 2:12-17

Intro: At the end of ch1 we see Jesus making disciples by calling individuals to follow Him and **they do!** Six men hear the call and respond to Jesus in faith. Now, while this was certainly part of Jesus' plan, it was by no means the complete fulfillment of His plan. Jesus wanted these men to follow Him, not so He would have an entourage but so that He could progressively **reveal** Himself to them. Jesus begins to do this immediately in ch2. In the 1st section of the chapter, He reveals a little bit of His glory to His disciples by performing a miracle of provision – turning water into wine. Actually, it was a miracle of conversion. This miracle was a sign that pointed to a spiritual reality but it was also an opportunity for Jesus to manifest His glory to His disciples in a limited way.

In today's text, John will show Jesus performing a work of cleansing – cleaning out the temple. The order of these events is interesting because this is always how Jesus works in the lives of His people – conversion then cleansing. But even here, Jesus reveals to His disciples a side of His character they might not have expected to see. (Read)

12-13- It would seem that vs12 is describing more than just a visit to Capernaum but rather a move. It appears that the Lord's entire family (mother & siblings) are leaving Nazareth for Capernaum. Not sure why but we do know that Jesus was headquartered here for the greater part of His Galilean ministry. But in this instance, they didn't stay long.

Why not? Because it was Passover time. Throughout the book, John often refers to certain religious events as being "of the Jews." He does this because he knows that many of his readers will be Gentiles who are unfamiliar with the details of the Jewish religious calendar. John's not casting aspersions on these events, he's merely describing them.

up – Capernaum was north of Jerusalem but John says Jesus went "up" to Jerusalem. Here in America, we tend to associate North as up and South as down (**up North / down South**) but that was never the case For Jerusalem. See, Jerusalem was built on a mountain plateau so no matter where you are

in Israel, you always go **up** to Jerusalem. Ps 120 – 134 are Songs of Ascent; Psalms the pilgrims would sing as they made their way up into the city to worship. Of course, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Passover as He had been raised to do ([Luke 2:41](#)).

14- business – Oxen, sheep and doves were the animals principally used in sacrificial worship at the temple. I'm sure at some point, all this started innocently enough as a convenience for traveling worshippers. Imagine traveling 100, 500 or even 1000 miles dragging a young bull or sheep or even trying to care for a couple of doves on the journey. It would be nearly impossible. In the Philippines, I saw pigs & chickens tied up and transported in many different ways but these animals were meant solely for food. The Jewish pilgrim would need their animal for sacrifice so it couldn't be damaged in any way. Someone came up with the idea of providing suitable sacrificial animals on site and I'm sure it was a great benefit and welcome relief. But then, as usual, someone realized they could make some serious coin off this and it eventually became a requirement. Technically, you could still bring your own animal **but** it had to pass the priestly inspection. You know what happens when the ones doing the inspecting also want to sell you a lamb? That's right – your animal never passes inspection. You always end up having to buy an animal on site and just like at the ball park – the animal you need always cost 10 – 15 times more than the regular market price.

But it gets worse! The common currency of the day was Roman coins but don't think for a minute that you can use Roman coins to buy your sacrificial animal. Roman coins all had a face on them and because of that the Jews saw them to be idols & those pious priests are about to accept idolatrous coinage for the purchase a holy sacrifice! No, you had to exchange your roman coins for Hebrew shekels and then offer that acceptable money to God.

What if I were to declare that we would no longer accept US currency for tithes and offerings here at Grace Chapel? Understand, it was mandatory for the Jews to give – there was never a question whether that would happen or not. Ok, so we're not accepting US currency, we're only accepting Grace Bucks, which we will be happy to exchange for out in the foyer at a 25% exchange rate. What would happen? Find a new church, I hope. What if that wasn't an option? What if Grace Chapel wasn't just the

only church in town but the only church in the whole country? Would you give? You might still do it out of your love for God but you would grind your teeth while doing it. What started out as a convenience for worshippers in due time ceased to be a ministry and became a lucrative business venture.

There were 3 feasts a year that all males Jews were required to attend so if you make a few bucks off of each person attending each feast – that’s a pretty hefty take. In fact, Josephus writes that the temple made what amounts to millions of dollars for each of the required feasts. You wouldn’t believe how many organizations are out there offering their own “business model” for growing a vibrant church. What’s sad is these business models always seem to focus on **numbers** in the pews and **money** in the offerings. In contrast, God’s business model for the church doesn’t seem to involve business at all – it always focuses on **service: serving one another**, having a **servant’s heart**.

When Jesus showed up on the scene, He recognized what the religious rulers were doing and the effect that it had on God’s people: the rulers were making a fortune & the people began to despise what was happening at the temple!

15-16- drove – Is Jesus angry? You bet He is, and rightly so! This “business” wasn’t carried out in the temple itself but rather on the temple grounds, in the court of the Gentiles. This was the place where the Jews should have been meeting the Gentiles and telling them about the one true God. But, any Gentile who came looking for truth was not likely to find it among the religious merchants behind their tables. The court of Gentiles had become a marketplace with less and less room for worshippers. Jesus saw the reputation that His Father & His Father’s house was getting from all of this and He acted decisively, properly and with authority – He took matters into His own capable hands.

Jesus is angry but He’s not flying off the handle here. He took the time to think carefully about what He should do. Of course, He’s also making a whip but...at least He’s taking His time. I need to point out that anger is a God-given emotion. Sometimes, anger is the proper moral response to certain circumstances. In fact, anger is part of love. If you love the innocence of children & then see someone taking advantage of that or worse, taking it from them; anger is the correct emotional response. Where we, as well meaning humans, often go wrong is when we allow our anger to make us do

some pretty selfish, stupid things. Anger is a God-given emotion; when it bubbles up it should cause us to check our own motives 1st then seek to do what is right for the party being abused – to prevent the abuse from happening again by all legal means available. Not take matters into our own hands but to take the proper steps to rectify the situation. Paul exhorts us to “**be angry ... and do not sin**” (Eph 4:26). **Anger** should prompt us to **action!**

The timing of His action is also telling. The Feast of Passover was a 1 day feast but God had adjoined to it a 7 day feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During that 7 day feast, the Jews were supposed to go thru their entire house and remove any leaven they might find. In the OT, leaven was a picture of sin and so, for this feast, it was to be removed from their dwellings. Now, they weren't just getting rid of the yeast; they were also checking the entire house to see if any corruption had been brought into it over the course of the previous year. God used this feast to cause Israel to stop and consider everything in their house from His perspective at least once a year (good idea). Since everyone else is cleaning their house for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus figures it is only right and religiously proper that He clean out all the corruption from His own Father's house as well.

Now, Jesus always obeyed the statutes of the Law and was always faithful to uphold the Law, but He often went out of His way to deliberately violate the man-made traditions of the religious ruling class. In fact, His actions can be classified as prophetic symbolism. **Malachi 3:1-3** says, “**the Lord...will come suddenly to His temple...He will purify.**”

Jesus was careful not to destroy anyone's property but He made it clear just Who was in charge! The temple was His Father's house and He wasn't going to let the religious leaders pollute it with their money-making enterprise. The condition of the temple was a vivid indication of the spiritual condition of the nation. The Jewish religion was a dull routine, presided over by worldly minded men whose only goal was to exercise authority and gather wealth. Not only had the **wine run out at the wedding feast** but the **glory had departed from the temple!**

17- Zeal – It's not likely that the disciples remember **Ps 69:9** at this time and associated it with Christ's actions here. It's more likely they recalled this after His resurrection when the Messianic tone of the Psalm would be more

readily apparent. I wonder if those 6 disciples began to question what they had actually gotten themselves involved in. I'm sure they were glad to see corruption cleared from the temple grounds but they also realized who toes Jesus was stepping on. There was still a godly remnant in Israel who truly loved God and properly revered His temple but most religious leaders were false shepherds whose only goal was to exploit God's people. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He "declared war" on these hypocritical religious leaders and this would ultimately lead to His death. So the prophecy of **Ps 69:9** was true, His zeal for God's house did eat Him up – in fact, it would be the death of Him!

With His actions in the temple that day, Jesus revealed to His disciples a glimpse of the zeal He had for the things of His Father, the will of His Father. But eventually, He would reveal to them the fullness of His zeal for the will of His Father by giving His life on the cross to pay for the sins of the world and make salvation available for all mankind!

Was Jesus a Revolutionary? No, not in the way most people understand that word. But obviously, He didn't defend the establishment either. No, Jesus actually called men and women to a peaceful revolution that was far more radical and long-term than anything they would have dreamed possible. There were revolutionaries in those days – Zealots, who carried daggers that were frequently used in political assassinations. Some scholars see Jesus in this coloring: His message was similar to theirs (**kingdom of God**); He was critical of Herod (**that fox**); He had a former Zealot as a disciple; some of His disciples carried swords; He cleansed the temple & was executed for alleged Zealot activity.

In contrast, Scripture reveals Jesus to be the opponent of every act of political resistance and all acts of violence: **non-violence** (**Mt 5:39, 26:52**); **love your enemies** (**Mt 5:44**); **peacemakers** (**Mt 5:9**); before Pilate (**Jn 18:36**); also had Matthew, a tax collector, as a disciple. It'd be difficult to find a greater representative of the establishment than that.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, He wasn't trying to **eliminate** temple worship. He was trying to **reform** it. He was working to transform what it was into what it always should have been. Jesus didn't come to overthrow the Romans or change the Jewish religious culture; He came to **change people**. Now, when people change, they will then go out and revolutionize society. They won't overthrow society, but they'll attempt to set the systems

of this world right.

Is Jesus a revolutionary? No, a revolutionary would try to exploit you but Jesus actually wants to run your life. He asks for the right to rule over you! He demands the utmost of involvement, love, and self-sacrifice from His followers. Jesus didn't offer a life of ease to those followers (**Matt 16:24**) He demanded their all! There were few who followed.

Do you dare follow Him? Look at who did follow Him: There were establishment types as well as Zealots, that didn't seem to matter. But there weren't any of the soft, comfortable figures of southern Palestine. There weren't many priests, not many rulers. The ones who followed him were the strong, rough-speaking fishermen types from Galilee. Why? They had **courage** and weren't afraid to be despised for being different. Do you have that courage? Jesus won't ask you to **defend the status quo** or to **overthrow it**. But He will give you a new perspective. He will make you a new creation, capable of radical obedience to the truth of God's Word & the divine call of God's will. 😊