

Explore the Bible: I Will Raise

December 5, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 18 focuses on John 2:11-25.*

Jesus is on the cusp of his first miracle, his first public revelation of who he is. At his mother's request, he turns water into wine for the wedding guest. The honor of the wedding hostess is intact, the guests are happy, the servants are in awe, and the evening closes with joy for the new couple.

But for Jesus, the curtain has been pulled back. This miracle places him on a path that leads to only one place. Jesus takes a few days to enjoy his earthly family before his steps take him away from his mother, his siblings and his anonymity. Jesus turns his face to Jerusalem, the city that kills its prophets and stones God's messengers.

"Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (2:13). This simple sentence is the magnificent fulfillment of the prophets of old (Malachi 3:1-2). Jesus appears in his temple and his actions point to who he is and what he is here to do.

What Jesus does in Jerusalem

Jesus comes into Jerusalem, the city of God. He enters into the temple of the Most High. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has come to the temple before as a boy. Possibly many times as a young man. But, today is different. Jesus is entering the temple in authority. Jesus is fulfilling the words of Malachi; he comes "like a refiner's fire" (Malachi 3:2)

Jesus acts on his zeal for the Temple

Jesus' actions at the temple are a direct result of what he finds when he

enters the sacred ground. The outer court, which should be reserved for the Gentiles to come near to the Lord, was now teeming with shopkeepers and moneychangers providing sojourners with their Temple provisions. Instead of quiet prayers from Gentiles, he finds money exchangers. Instead of reflective men and women from among the nations, he finds loud peddlers of animals.

With zeal, he chases away the marketeers that encroached upon the worshipers. The zeal of the Lord is so profoundly displayed that day that the disciples reflected upon Jesus' fulfillment of Psalm 69:9 at this moment. John hints at what is becoming more and more obvious to the reader and the Jews: the advent of the Messiah is here.

Jesus' actions at the temple are viewed as scandalous by the Jews. A common theme is introduced to the reader at this point in the narrative. Authority. It is presented in their questions: "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" (John 2:18). Note, the Jews did not question the morality of his actions, but the *source* of his authority to do such an action. In Jesus' zeal for the Lord's house of prayer, he has unveiled a status for himself that is beyond their expectation.

Jesus reveals himself as the Temple

Jesus' response to the request for a sign to prove his authority is profound, "Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19). The Temple where Jesus is standing when he makes this statement is the center of the Jewish sacrificial system. The Temple complex is a magnificent structure that dominated the skyline of Jerusalem as planned and bankrolled by Herod himself. When Jesus says "this temple," the Jews assume he is referencing the Herodian Temple that stood before them.

The pattern of presenting a saying of Jesus, a misunderstanding of it by those around him, and an explanation is common throughout the Gospel of

John. Here Jesus is not talking about the building. Rather, he is talking about himself.

As the manifestation of the Word of God (John 1:14), Jesus is now the fulfillment of the embodiment of the glory of God. The Temple in all its importance and glory is now relegated to a shadow of the real Temple that has now come: Jesus.

Jesus prophesies his resurrection

What sign does Jesus present for his authority? If the Temple is his body, then the statement “I will raise it again” (2:19) is a reference to his bodily resurrection after his crucifixion. John clears up the misunderstanding and explains to the reader what the disciples only understood in light of the resurrection (2:22).

Apparently, the meaning behind his words was misunderstood even by his disciples that day. The resurrection was such a profound experience it clarified all that had been hidden to them prior.

Here at the beginning of John’s Gospel, Jesus is pointing to the profound culmination of his work on earth. He will die and be resurrected on the third day. This will be the only “sign” of his authority the Jews will be granted.

Jesus demonstrates his authority

Jesus continues to perform miracles and demonstrates his authority among the people, and many are drawn to him and are interested in his work. It is clear these beginning interests are not of the most devoted type. Jesus is not deceived by their shallow interest. John points the attention of the reader to one of his God-man traits: Jesus needs no one to tell him the

hearts of men. He knows.

Matt Baird is assistant professor of Christian ministry and director of the graduate program in the School of Christian Studies at East Texas Baptist University.