



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Saving Belief vs. Nonsaving Belief (John 2:13-25)

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Prayerfully consider the truth in this week's study. There is no topic that is more important. The consequences are eternal.

1) JESUS' ANGER

John 2:13-17— The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Jesus is full of surprises. So far in our study of the book of John, He has given an interesting nickname to Peter, shocked Nathaniel with His omniscience and astounded a wedding party with gallons of excellent wine when they almost ran out. Here, Jesus shows great emotion and, motivated by a desire for God's house to be focused on spiritual activity, does the unexpected again.

If you ask most people what Jesus was about, they usually will say something like love or forgiveness or acceptance. These are all true, but the Scriptures also make it clear that God feels wrath. It is justifiable because He is completely holy and does not acquit or overlook sin. Sin must be punished. But if we see anything from biblical accounts (and our own experience) it is that God is immensely patient and longsuffering. Nine times the Old Testament describes Him as "slow to anger".

Jesus' public display of anger here was not a sinful tantrum, either. The Bible is clear when we read that there is a kind of anger that is appropriate, such as in Ephesians 4:26a ("Be angry and do not sin"). We also know this because we are told

Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Today's text quotes Psalm 69:9 as Jesus' motivation and a Messianic prophecy that came to the disciples' minds as they

witnessed this godly outburst. Zeal for God's revealed desires can generate anger when there is hostility to His plan, especially if that hostility leads others away from God.

Followers of Christ should not be known as angry people, for we are commanded to be slow to anger as well. But there are situations, as Jesus exemplifies, that call for a controlled expression of anger if the true inward motivation is for the glory of God.

2) JESUS' AUTHORITY

John 2:18-22— The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Jesus again surprises His hearers (mostly Jewish religious leaders) in this exchange. His authority is being questioned and His answer sheds light to some (eventually the disciples, for example) and causes confusion for others (the Sanhedrin).

It is clear to us today that He was referring to His future resurrection, which would establish His authority for all time over all things. Again, John takes the opportunity in this short conversation to point out the divinity of Jesus, who clearly refers to God as His Father back in verse 16.

The Jewish leaders wanted a sign, not because they were open to believing Jesus, but because they wanted to discredit Him when He wouldn't perform for them. The pattern follows His answer to Mary earlier in this chapter When He acts on His own timetable.

GOD HAS HIS PLANS AND TIMING, BUT IS NEVER UNDER OBLIGATION TO PROVE HIMSELF AT THE WHIM OF MAN'S DEMANDS OR CURIOSITY.

Why did Jesus answer enigmatically rather than clearly? Why did He not say, Destroy my body, and I will raise it up in three days? Jesus was replying to unbelief the way He often did, in parabolic language. He wanted to hide

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATIVE AIDES (DURING INTERIM): TUESDAYS @ 11:30AM, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING (ROOM 218)

Maryland

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revelation from the unbelieving but to reveal it to believers.¹

Let us affirm again that all authority is Christ's and it is His pleasure to which we submit.

3) JESUS' ALL-KNOWING NATURE

John 2:23-25— Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Another proof of Jesus' deity is presented here (after changing water to wine and His resurrection claim). Just as Jesus had revealed His omniscience to Nathaniel in chapter one, John underscores this divine attribute in Jesus once more.

But we find a disturbing aspect to Christ's knowledge here – He can see into the hearts of people to know their intents and motivations. It says here that crowds were watching Him do the miraculous and believing in Him. Sounds great, right? Why would He not entrust Himself to them?

Earlier in the chapter, in verse 11, didn't Jesus' disciples believe in Him because of what they were witnessing in His ministry? Why would He pour Himself into them and not into these folks in verse 23?

Two major teachings are wrapped up in this verse. First, Jesus saw their hearts. He didn't need anyone to tell Him their intentions or why they believed in Him. He already knew and their reasons for believing weren't right.

Secondly, this verse (among others in the Bible) shows us that there is a type of belief that saves and other types of belief that do not result in salvation. We must balance this next verse with others to fully understand the nature of saving faith:

Romans 10:9 - ... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Consider, though, these verses that take us deeper into understanding how God looks at our belief.

1 Corinthians 15:1, 2 – Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

James 2:19 - You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Matthew 7:21, 22 - Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'

These are sobering verses, but they are explicitly saying that simple intellectual assent that Jesus exists is not saving faith. Nor is it true saving faith if we come to Christ with selfish motives with no regard for living life for His glory. That is why we're told to

2 Corinthians 13:5 – Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?

Jesus cannot be a person of our own making. He reveals Himself in the Scriptures and as we read, we must let Him describe Himself. It is up to us, then to accept or reject Him, but always on His terms, not ours.

Do you believe in Jesus? If yes, has your life been changed to love Him, treasure Him, spend time with Him in His Word and in prayer? Do you want to bring Him glory by serving Him? Is your life characterized by a pattern of obedience to Him? Test yourself to see if this is true of your life.

If you do not believe, I invite you to find out more about who Jesus is from the Bible, not who people tell you He is. Your works will never earn your salvation, only His grace. My contact information is at the top of this sheet if you want to talk more about forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

¹ Tom Constable. (2003; 2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Jn 2:19). Galaxie Software.