

A Theological Bombshell

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[0:00] You may be seated. And kids, you may not be excused. You are trapped in this room with the adults. As you notice, you have a bulletin.

! 13 through 25, it's on page 1054 of your Pew Bible.

Hear the word of God. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting there.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them out, and brought them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen, and he poured out the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables.

And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away.

Do not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me. So the Jews said to him, What sign do you show us for doing these things?

[1:24] Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple. And in three days, I will raise it up. The Jews then said, It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Now, verse 23, Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

May God bless the hearing of his word. Imagine you and your extended family are at a holiday gathering, a shared meal.

Your Uncle Richie suddenly stands up and announces that he is a she, a woman trapped in a man's body. He goes on to say that he has started hormone therapy two months ago.

[2:37] Furthermore, he has filed divorce from your aunt, your Aunt Peggy of 20 years marriage. And then he says, Oh, by the way, my name's not Richie, it's Rachel. Shocked, you look at your Aunt Peggy, tears streaming down her face.

She quietly gets up and leaves the table. Do you know what you call that? That's called a bombshell. When someone makes this unexpected and disruptive announcement, but not all bombshells are bad.

Your phone buzzes. You don't recognize the phone number. So you ignore it. A minute later, you hear another ding. A voicemail has been left.

And so you listen to the voicemail. Let me get into character. Hello, my name is Terrence Mayhew. I'm the estate attorney of your distant relative, Aunt Edith.

Please call me at your earliest convenience. So you call back. And immediately, you hear from Attorney Mayhew.

[3:50] He informs you that your reclusive Aunt Edith, that you met once, that she had died, and that she had made you the sole beneficiary of her \$27.4 million estate.

Bombshell. Unexpected. Disruptive. As in a \$27.4 million disruption. That's not that bad, is it? This morning, you're going to see Jesus drop a theological bombshell.

A theological bombshell that changes the way we worship. Unexpected. Disruptive. In the best sense. It's good news. And so this is how we're going to proceed this morning. It's outlined in your bulletin. We're going to answer three questions. What happens? What happens in the account? We'll walk through that. We're going to see the temple. We're going to see the whip. We're going to see the bombshell.

And we're going to see the x-ray knowledge. And then we're going to ask, what's the point? What's this getting at? And then we're going to ask, to wrap things up, so what?

[4:59] What difference does this make for us now? So, what's happening in this account? Let's start with the temple.

The backdrop. The first thing you need to notice about this passage is that it starts and ends in verse 13, and then in verse 23, it's framed.

Did you notice that? With a reference to the Passover in Jerusalem in verse 13, and then in verse 23, we have the Passover feast in Jerusalem again. It's framing the passage.

It's the backdrop for what this is happening. The Passover was one of these annual Jewish feasts. It was a high holiday among the Jews, and they would pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

And if you're a little kind of rusty on what the Passover is, in Exodus chapter 12, it's the 10th plague. God makes this decree to Pharaoh, and through Moses, that he is going to send out the angel of death as the 10th plague, the final plague.

[6:13] And what the Jews needed to do at twilight was to sacrifice a lamb. And they were to wipe the blood of that Passover lamb onto their homes, and when the angel of death rolled out to kill the firstborn, it would pass over the firstborn children of Israel.

It was the Passover. And so it became a feast in which the people of Israel would observe every spring, every April, and they would kill a Passover lamb at twilight.

John the Baptist, remember, referenced Jesus in chapter 1 as the Lamb of God. So the Passover's going on. It's a big deal. And it's taking place in Jerusalem.

Zion, the city of David, the central city of Israel. It's where Jewish worship took place, and during the Passover, it would swell from 35 to 50,000 people.

It would swell up to about 150 to 250,000 people. It was a big deal. And so this passage begins and ends with a reference to Passover in Jerusalem.

[7:28] But there's a reason why that we're being shown this. Because the temple is in Jerusalem.

It's the central place of Israel's worship because that's where God dwelt. God would dwell in the temple in the Holy of Holies.

He would be present with His people in the temple. You could say that the whole Bible is a story of God seeking to dwell with His people. Remember back in Genesis, Adam and Eve dwelling with God in the garden?

When Israel was delivered out of Egypt, God dwelt with them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. After the giving of the law at Sinai, they were instructed to build the tabernacle, which was this very elaborate portable tent made of animal skin.

And God would dwell with His people as they wandered. And then there was the building of Solomon's temple in 2 Chronicles 3. And the cloud of God's presence came and dwelt within the temple in 2 Chronicles 6.

[8:42] But that temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon in 586. And then it was rebuilt in 516. And that second temple, which was not as glorious as the first, that second temple was then expanded by Herod the Great in 20 to 18 BC.

It started the kind of expansion and the second temple, the temple of Herod, became this magnificent, very elaborate structure. It was not just the temple, but it had courts and other structures.

It was incredibly impressive. And what was believed is that God dwelt in the temple, in the Holy of Holies.

That temple was central to Jewish worship in Jesus' day. And Jews believed that the temple was the dwelling place of God.

And so the temple is the backdrop of this account, the dwelling place of God. So now we move from the temple, the backdrop, to the whip.

[9:57] In verses 13 and 17, Jesus comes into, not just Jerusalem, but into the temple. You see in verse 14, in the temple, he found those who were selling oxen.

What I want you to see in this little section is that Jesus finds something, and then he makes something, and then he says something. What does he find?

In verse 14, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there. Like, what's the big deal? It's where he found it.

He found, basically, the first century Amazon.com in the temple complex. It'd be fine if it was outside of the temple complex, but it was in the temple complex, where God was to be worshipped. And so the selling of these animals, oxen, sheep, and pigeons, they were animals used for sacrifice. And he also finds money changers sitting at the tables.

[11:02] These money changers had set up shop. They had booths. This was a marketplace. Do you remember why Jesus is there?

He had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. You may be wondering, why are all these animals and money changers in the temple to begin with? Well, remember, this is the Passover.

And it was big business for certain people in Jerusalem because people would make, Jews would make pilgrimage into Jerusalem from all around. And think about it.

I know, isn't it difficult to travel with toddlers? Just give me an amen. Amen. Could you imagine traveling with oxen and sheep and pigeons? That'd be really tough.

And so what pilgrims would do is they would come to Jerusalem and buy their animals to sacrifice in Jerusalem. But the other problem that raises is that they were coming with money from the regions that they dwelt in.

[12:06] And so they needed to exchange money in order to get into the temple currency in order to buy these animals to sacrifice. And so you have money changers who are making a buck by exchanging money from these different regions into temple currency.

And so it's a whole operation. And don't forget, this city swells to a quarter of a million people during the Passover.

This is big business. So this is what Jesus finds. Those making pilgrimage are buying animals and needing to exchange currency in order for them to offer their Passover sacrifice.

How does Jesus respond? He makes something. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned the tables.

Verse 15. A whip of cords. He's using the whip to drive out all of those people who are selling, but he's also using the whip to drive out oxen and sheep.

[13:25] Have you ever tried to push an ox before? The whip is very helpful. And so he is using the whip in order to clear the temple, to clear the temple courts of what is happening.

And he doesn't stop with clearing out the oxen and the sheep. He makes something else. He makes an even bigger scene is what he does.

He pours out the coins of the money changers and he overturns their tables. Jesus isn't being nice. This might be surprising to you. This is more like anger. This is more like being zealous. Like he's saying, this is not right.

This is wrong. Maybe you're not used to seeing Jesus this way. Why is Jesus acting this way? Well, he says so.

[14:30] He explains to us why he's doing this in verse 16. He says to those who are selling the pigeons, take these things away. In the Michael J. Salvati translation, get out of here.

Get these things out of here. And then he tells us why. Do not make my father's house a house of trade. That's the reason.

Do not make my father's house a house of trade. You see, these business people had by their greed, their desire to make up up, but they had repurposed the temple of God.

Instead of worshiping God and praying to him, it became a place to line their pockets. You see, worship is about God, not about us, not about created things.

And so what Jesus does here is he's very purposefully in measured steps clearing the temple because he is jealous for God's glory.

[15:37] He's jealous that God would be worshipped rightly. This is a righteous zeal, a righteous anger in the Son of God.

Jesus is jealous for God to be worshipped rightly. And the disciples see that. And it's not clear whether they remember this after he's been raised from the dead or they think about this on the spot, but we see in verse 17, they remember what it was written in Psalm 69, 9, zeal for your house will consume me.

This is, it's a Psalm of David and Jesus is David's greater son. And David in Psalm 69, he is being ridiculed and he's being scorned because he takes God seriously.

He makes enemies in Psalm 69. And Jesus makes some enemies here. So what we have with the whip, this whole picture in verses 13 through 17 is Jesus finding something, making something, and then saying something.

He is jealous that God would be rightly worshipped, which brings us to the bombshell in verses 18 through 22. And in verses 18, 22, we have a new set of characters that come onto the scene.

[16:59] So the Jews said to him, now you might be thinking, Jews, hold on a second. Weren't all those people in the temple that Jesus kicked out, weren't they all Jews? They were Jews too. These Jews are a different set of Jews.

They are, John uses this phrase, by and large, to describe the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem.

So these are the Jews that Jesus is now talking to. This is a group that's representing the Jewish establishment. And they asked Jesus, hey, what sign do you show us for doing these things?

They're asking him, on what basis, what gives you the right to do this? They're asking for a sign.

You know, when Moses before Pharaoh, the staff, became a snake, serpent, you remember that? That's a sign. I'm not sure if you know this, but Isaiah walked around naked for three years as a sign.

[18:08] Jeremiah wore an ox yoke as a sign. Hosea married a prostitute as a sign. It legitimized that God's stamp of approval was on this prophet, was on this representative of his.

And so they're asking, what's your sign? They're not, are you a Sagittarius? Not that. They're asking, by what authority are you doing this? Are you legitimate? And Jesus answers them.

He's like, you want a sign? And here comes, here comes the bombshell. He says in verse 19, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

That's a theological bombshell. What Jesus is saying there is incredibly profound. He's not talking about the temple of Herod that's behind him, while he's saying this.

He's referring to another temple. In fact, in verse 20, the Jews think that he is speaking of Herod's temple. Look what they say. The Jews said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

[19:26] In other words, wait, wait, wait, wait. You're going to tear down this temple and rebuild it in three days? It's taken almost 50 years to get this temple to where it is right now.

It's all elaborate, magnificent, magnificent. And so they're thinking brick and mortar. They're thinking we worship God in a place.

But that's not what Jesus was talking about. And in verse 21, John tells us what Jesus was referring to. But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Bombshell! That same word for temple being referenced to Jesus' body was being referenced for Herod's temple. What Jesus is doing is he's reclaiming the temple.

He's saying the temple is no longer this magnificent structure. The temple standing before you, the temple of God, God's dwelling place is now a person.

[20:29] In John 1.14, we read, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and tabernacled among us.

And we beheld his glory, glory as of the one and only of the Father, full of grace and truth, full of steadfast love and faithfulness. You see, he is the greater temple.

New and better. This is a gospel bombshell because he describes the gospel in a beautiful way. He describes his temple being destroyed, which is a reference to his being put to death. And then his being raised in three days is talking about his bodily resurrection.

That's at the heart of the gospel. This is a gospel bombshell that is saying, no, it's no longer about gathering to meet God in that place.

[21:35] It's about worshiping God in this person, the person of Jesus Christ. It's a theological bombshell.

After Jesus was raised from the dead, we see this in verse 22. His disciples remember this particular episode, this particular account.

They remember that he said this and they believe the scripture. They're talking about Old Testament, Old Testament prophecies concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

We find things like, regarding the resurrection, in Psalm 16:10, Psalm 22:22, Isaiah 53:10. These are all kind of anticipations of this one who would come, who would die and be raised again.

But not just the scriptures, they see this as fulfillment of what Jesus said. It's the sign that has come true.

[22:40] You want a sign? You want to see a sign that I have the right to cleanse the temple, to purify worship? Here's the sign that I am going to die and be raised on the third day.

Gospel bombshell. He has the authority to cleanse the temple because he is God's temple incarnate.

There's a new temple in town. His name is Jesus. There's the bombshell and now we move to the x-ray knowledge.

This is in 23-25. Again, this is the closing of this account and there's another reference to Jerusalem in verse 23 and the Passover feast.

But what this has all now happened with Jesus making this bombshell claim that there's another temple in town, an incarnate dwelling place of God. God is with us.

[23:46] In verse 23, we are told that many saw. Look at verse 23. Now, when he was in Jerusalem and the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

And so, apparently at this time, Jesus was performing all sorts of different kinds of signs. At the end of John, in John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, John explicitly tells us he didn't write in this gospel all the signs that Jesus did.

He left a bunch out. And so, we can be assured that there's other things that Jesus did and people are saying, we believe in you, Jesus. We will follow you wherever you go.

We'll make you the king. They are responding to him. They are accepting him.

They are embracing him. And you would think that this is a good thing until you reach 24 and 25. But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them.

[24:52] He was being embraced, but he did not embrace them back. Because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

The key word in verses 23, 24, and 25, it's repeated, one word repeated twice. It's the word knew. K-N-E-W. Because he knew all people, verse 24, and at the end of verse 25, for he himself knew what was in man.

The knowledge that's being talked about is an X-ray knowledge. Jesus knew what was going on in the inner workings of the people in Jerusalem at that moment.

He's like, you're not going to get this by me. I know what's going on. I can see into your hearts. This is a divine knowledge. This is the first Samuel 16, six and seven kind of knowledge.

Do you remember that word? God sends Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint the next king. And the first son of Jesse that comes out is this guy, six foot four.

[26:00] He's got 2.0 BMI. Good looking. He's just oozing leadership. Samuel's like, surely, here is God's anointed.

Look at him. And God says to him, no, no, no, no. It's not, it's not my anointed. Where man looks at the appearance, God looks at the heart.

And what's being attributed to Jesus right here is that divine x-ray knowledge that he looks at the heart. Jeremiah 17, 9 says, the heart is desperately wicked.

Who can understand it? Jeremiah 17, 10 says, the Lord searches the hearts. He sees into us. He's got x-ray divine knowledge.

Here's what this means. Jesus knows our hearts right now. Right now, he knows your heart. You can't hide your inner thoughts, your desires, your motivations from him.

[27:10] All eight plus billion people on the earth can't hide what's going on in their hearts from him right now. He knows what you prize. He knows what you buy and sell and the courts of your heart to worship.

You see, it was the sinfulness within the hearts of men and women that caused these buyers and money exchangers to repurpose God's house into a house of trade. Our sinfulness in our hearts has the same effect.

we repurpose created things to take the place and be worshipped instead of God. He knows what's in man.

He knows that we're idolaters. 21st century idolaters. You see, Jesus couldn't be manipulated. He would not allow what people were saying and thinking and trying to get by him and convince him of and give him all sorts of thumbs up.

He knew what was in a man. He knew that these people professing to believe in his name were not to be trusted. This faith, this belief was not genuine.

[28:26] He knows what's in man. He knows what's in us. He knows what are the inner workings of your hearts right now.

And this all took place in the temple. In Jerusalem. During the Passover. There's the temple.

There's the whip. There's the bombshell. And here is the x-ray vision.

You can't fool Jesus. So what's the point? What's the point of these verses? Well, we've already seen it.

It's the bombshell. It's this unexpected and disruptive announcement to show us that Jesus is God's new and better dwelling place, dwelling person with his people, which means God in Christ has provided for us a new and better way to worship him, to relate to him, to come into a relationship with him.

It's new. This bombshell is Jesus saying, I have come to replace that temple of Herod.

[29:44] I have come to replace this brick and mortar temple with a flesh and blood temple. God's dwelling place incarnate.

So worship is no longer at a centralized place, brothers and sisters. We no longer need to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at a building that's been raised and burned.

We worship a centralized person who is alive and reigning today. The implication is that the old way of worshiping has now been made obsolete.

Jesus is God's dwelling with us now, and it's taken place of the old way. In 70 AD, the Romans, they burned and flattened the temple of Herod.

You know why it doesn't really matter to us? Because our identity isn't in a building. Our identity isn't in some kind of brick and mortar structure.

[31:03] We worship a person, not a place. Because Jesus died and was raised, we worship a risen Christ.

The dwelling place of God is with us. It's a new way, and it's a better way. Now, we can gather as a church wherever, whenever, and with whoever.

Because Jesus is the new and better temple, do you know that there are millions of churches worldwide that gather in multiple locations to worship Jesus?

Right now. Do you know that because Jesus is a new and better temple on the Lord's Day, there are brothers and sisters worshiping God for every minute of every hour of this 24-hour period we call the Lord's Day.

It's nonstop worship among the nations around the world. Eric Tully was part of a worship service that probably happened four and a half hours ago, five hours ago in Monrovia.

[32:22] And then there's been worship all around the world. It's a better way to worship because Jesus is the new and better temple.

You don't have to become a Jew in order to worship God. He has millions of church congregations all around the world that are made up of people from all sorts of different tribes and tongues and

nations.

All these Jews and non-Jews, Gentiles, who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. You don't need to become a Jew, but you do need to trust in the one and only Jesus.

You need to believe in him alone for your salvation. You need to put all of your chips by faith onto Jesus in order to be saved.

This is the good news. You see that this new temple, he was destroyed, he died and was raised so that you could enter a relationship, an eternally life-giving relationship with the God of the universe.

[33:34] It's better. More people giving more worship to God. And so the point of this passage is to show us that Jesus is God's new and better way of dwelling, of God dwelling with his people.

We have unlimited access. In fact, at the end of our Bibles, in Revelation chapter 21 verse 22, the new Jerusalem has come down and John shows us the same writer of Revelation wrote this gospel and he shows us, hey, hey, by the way, there's no temple because God is there.

God, our dwelling place with us. So let's apply this. God, so what?

What difference does this make? Well, we have a whole new way of worshipping. Well, let me just point to three things from this passage that may press this truth home.

Jesus has x-ray knowledge, and he has x-ray knowledge of your heart. We saw in verse 25 for he himself knows, knew what was in man.

[34:57] He knows the inner workings of our hearts. There's nothing we can hide from him. That was the case in the first century, and it's the case now in the 21st century.

He sees all. We see from the book of Revelation, he has fire eyes. Jesus is alive, because he's risen from the dead, he sees all now. He sees you, he sees all of you.

He even sees what you can't see or you don't want to see. He sees it all. He sees your heart. And the Bible, time and again, describes the heart as the control center of your life.

And what controls your heart controls your life. You worship from your heart. You worship what you treasure. Does it make any difference to you that right now you are being watched coram deo, before the face of God?

He has a clear line of sight into you. Does that make any difference to you? It should. He knows the depth of your sin.

[36:12] But here's the good news. He loves you still. He sees you as you are and He loves you still. So if you're not a Christian in the room, He sees your sin and He's done something about it.

He gave His life. His temple was destroyed and He raised it up three days later in order for you to have all of your sins forgiven and to come into a relationship with Him.

And if you're a Christian in the room, it's really good news. He loves you. He still sees the sin in your heart. He loves you and He wants to do something about it. He wants to purify your heart.

He wants to make you clean, make you holy because He loves you. people. So this x-ray knowledge of Jesus, it is as true today as it was two millennia ago.

The second thing I want you to note is not only does Jesus know your heart, x-ray vision, Jesus is jealous for your heart. He's jealous for what you worship.

[37:29] Just as He found when He found this house of God being made into a house of trade and He was provoked and cleansed it.

He wants to do the same in us because He loves us. He wants us to share in God's holiness. His jealousy seeks to drive out of your heart and life anything that is competing for the worship of God. He wants to release you from that. And if He's willing to make a whip, and if that's any indicator, He is willing to use discomfort, pain, to be stern, even to be angry from time to time, out of love, in order to rid us of the sin that holds us captive so easily.

He's jealous for your heart's worship. He wants you to worship God. In God's plan of salvation, God is gathering worshipers for Himself from all the peoples of the world, a new people.

It's called the church who were once dead living in darkness, and then by God's grace, through the blood of Jesus, He makes them alive to live in the light. And so when He does that, He is seeking to make us holy as He is holy in a far better way.

[38:52] He changes our hearts. Christ. So if you're a non-Christian in the room, Jesus doesn't want just part of you.

He died and was raised for all of you. That all of you would love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your strength and all of your might.

So if you're a non-Christian thinking about becoming a Christian, realize to commit to Jesus to put all your chips in means it's all in. You are now going to be transformed into a living sacrifice for God. And if you're a Christian, can I just urge you, would you please stop putting limits on what Jesus can claim in your life?

Stop putting limits on Him. give Him full reign. Give Him full reign. Make us holy.

[40:03] The third thing I want you to see is that Jesus died and was raised to purify your heart, to cleanse your heart.

The pain and the violence and the anger for your sin that's provoked in God, it was poured out in full on Christ on the cross. And so when you believe in what Jesus has done for you for the very first time, here's how God thinks about it.

He thinks about all of your sin placed on Christ's head and all of His wrath poured out on Christ so that there's no more wrath. You're fully forgiven, but it's just half of it.

The other half is God thinks of Christ's righteousness, His holiness, as being credited to you. And now, in His eyes, you are legally righteous in His sight.

That's what God has done for you. It's a far better way. Jesus died and was raised to make you holy, both legally and experientially.

[41:10] Have your way with us, O God. It's all by His grace to make us holy. holy. You see, the death and resurrection of God's holy, incarnate temple is what makes us holy.

You can't make yourself holy. Only a holy God can. And so, when you become a Christian, you become part of God's new holy temple.

Christian, you are part of God's holy temple now. You are so identified with Christ that you that the New Testament will start talking about you as being a living stone in God's new temple, Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

It's extraordinary. So, we apply it knowing that Jesus has x-ray knowledge of our hearts because He loves us, that He has this loving jealousy for our hearts that we would worship God alone with all that we are, and that Jesus, His death and His resurrection is what accomplishes our holiness of heart.

It's all by His love. John 2, 13-25, Jesus drops a theological bombshell. And for the Jews of His day, this cleansing of the temple was just a preview of what would happen in 40 years to Herod's temple.

[42:48] It would be raised and burned because of ultimately their unbelief. But for us and the rest of the world, this bombshell is good news. Jesus is God's new way of dwelling with us, a new and better way to worship.

He changes our very hearts. So now we gather together and we gather together with joy. I mean, this is a magnificent building in one sense, but this is not the temple of God.

Jesus is the temple of God and we have been made a part of Him. So now we're holy as He is holy. Let's pray together. God, thank you so much for Jesus.

Thank you that we are now a part of something new and better and there's no going back. Jesus, thank you so much for willingly dying in our place and being raised three days later and that you are alive today.

We welcome, we welcome your x-ray knowledge into our hearts. We welcome your loving, jealous work of purifying us. We delight in that we stand on the ground of being forgiven with confidence because of your finished work.

[44:13] In your name we pray, amen. Amen.