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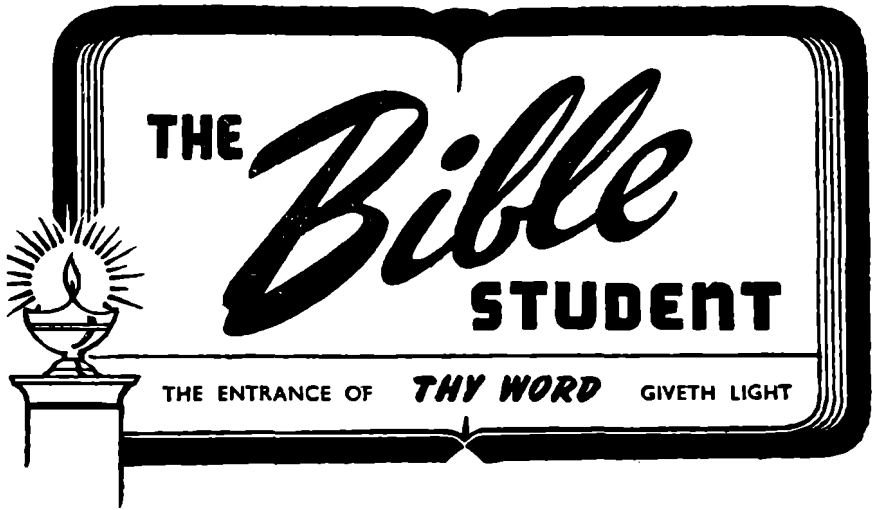
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

Holy Trinity, without which life will be barren. The teaching of Romans, chapter eight, will provide a life-time of study and practice in this aspect. It is worth mention that the American R.V. refers every occurrence of 'spirit' in this chapter to the Holy Spirit except in verse 10.

The believer's life-motto should ever be 'For me to live is CHRIST' therefore 'lay hold on the life that is LIFE indeed'.

## AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

### II. Jesus reveals Himself to the World (John 1: 18—12: 50)

#### (b) MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE, JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA

(John 2: 1—4: 42)

#### ii. *The Cleansing of the Temple* (2: 13-22)

Ch. 2, v. 13—*And the passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*—The Passover, celebrated on the eve of Nisan 15, was (with the week of Unleavened Bread, which immediately followed) one of the three great pilgrimage-festivals of the Jewish year. The other two were Pentecost (seven weeks later) and Tabernacles (six months after Passover). Three Passovers are mentioned in this Gospel—the present one, the one which fell about the time of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:4), and the Passover of the Passion (John 11:55 and onwards). It is disputed how far this Evangelist intends to preserve a strictly chronological sequence, and it is argued by some that, owing to displacements of the material of the Gospel at an early stage, the section from 2:13 to 3:21 has been detached from the record of the last Passover, to which it properly belongs. This last suggestion would remove the problem of relating John's record of the cleansing of the temple to the Synoptic record, which dates it at the time of the last Passover. But it is most probable that we are meant to regard the three Passovers

of this Gospel as separate, and as falling in consecutive years. If, as we suggest in dealing with v. 20, the present Passover was that of A.D. 28, the Passion Passover would then fall in A.D. 30, a date which is supported by other arguments. The present Passover would be the first occurrence of the festival after the baptism of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the Synoptists explicitly record one visit only as paid by Jesus to Jerusalem during His ministry, and that right at the end, John mentions at least four such visits (see, in addition to the present passage, chs. 5:1; 7:10; 12:12). Yet the Synoptists themselves imply that He had visited the city before the last Passover; we may recall, for example, the words 'how often would I have gathered thy children together' in His lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34).

We may note, incidentally, that this Gospel, written in a Gentile environment some decades after the final breach between the Church and the Synagogue, refers to the Passover and similar convocations as festivals 'of the Jews' (compare chs. 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55).

v. 14—*And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves*,—"The record", says B.F. Westcott, 'is a commentary on Mal. 3:1 ff. Comp. Zech. 14:20 f. The first step in the Messiah's work was the abolition of the corruptions which the selfishness of a dominant and faithless hierarchy had introduced into the divine service.' The description here given is of the Outer Court of the temple, which had been enclosed by fine colonnades in Herod's reconstruction of the whole area. It was not strictly part of the sacred precincts; Gentiles were permitted to enter it, and hence it is also known as the Court of the Gentiles. In this court a market was established where worshippers might buy animals for sacrifice. The later traditions preserved in the Talmud, with their idealizing tendencies,

<sup>1</sup> John the Baptist's ministry, in the course of which our Lord was baptized, is dated 'in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar' (Luke 3:1). According to the method of computing reigns current in Syria, which Luke probably followed, Tiberius's fifteenth year began in September or October of A.D. 27.

deny this. But the temple was at this time under the control of the great chief-priestly families, whose mercenary instincts, attested and reprobated in the Talmud itself, might well have connived at such traffic, especially if they had some financial interest in it.

*And the changers of money sitting:* Visitors to the temple would bring all sorts of coinage with them. The engravings on these coins would, in many cases, infringe the ban imposed by the Second Commandment against graven images; this ban would apply particularly to the official Roman coinage bearing the Emperor's image. Such coinage could not be paid into the temple treasury or otherwise used for sacred purposes; it must be exchanged for coinage which did not infringe the letter of the commandment. Coins minted by Jewish kings, such as the Hasmoneans or the Herods, were acceptable, as was also the standard Tyrian coinage; and even under direct Roman rule the copper coinage of Judaea bore no human likeness, but only the Emperor's name and inoffensive emblems. In view of the inoffensive character of the copper coinage, it is striking that the word here used for a money-changer (Gk. *kermatistes*) means literally one who changes money into *small coins* (Gk. *kermata*).

v. 15—*And he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen;*—The improvised whip was used for driving the animals out. Those who express surprise that He should have used force even upon the cattle have probably had little experience in moving animals in the streets and open spaces of a busy town. Modern drovers can rely on the invaluable help of dogs, but these were not available here.

*And he poured out the changers' money and overthrew their table;*—In this verse a different word is used for money-changer, not *kermatistes*, as in v. 14, but *kollybistes*. This word is derived from *kollybos*, the commission charged for the exchange. Many people took the opportunity of a visit to the temple, especially at this season, to pay the annual half-shekel, which all Jewish men of twenty and over had to contribute to the temple treasury. The half-shekel was payable in Tyrian coinage, and on the 25th of Adar (the month preceding Nisan) money-changers'

tables were set up in the temple area for this purpose. The rate of commission charged for changing the half-shekel was high—as much as one-twelfth or possibly even one-sixth.

v. 16—*And to them that sold the doves he said, take these things hence*;—The doves or pigeons (the offerings of the poorer worshippers) could not be driven out, as the sheep and oxen were; their vendors must carry them out in their cages.

*make not my Father's house a house of merchandise*.—Our Lord's designation of the sacred building as 'my Father's house' echoes His similar description of it when He visited Jerusalem at the age of twelve (see Luke 2:49, R.V.). It must not be desecrated by such profane traffic. There is probably an allusion here to Zech. 14:21, 'there shall be no more a trafficker in the house of the Lord of hosts' (R.V. marg.).<sup>1</sup> Had the convenience of the worshippers been the sole purpose of the sale of animals and exchanging of money, His attitude might have been different; but there is strong reason to suspect that the worshippers were being exploited to increase the wealth of the unscrupulous magnates who at this time controlled the temple and its services. There is a reference in the Palestinian Talmud to a 'bazaar of the sons of Annas' in the temple neighbourhood, and while this bazaar cannot be certainly associated with the traffic denounced by Jesus, it is a fact that the high priesthood and other chief-priestly offices were at this time in the possession of the family of Annas (cf. John 18:13; Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18 to 36). The house of Annas was so thoroughly disliked by the people that Jesus may have had the cordial support of many of them in His present drastic action.

v. 17—*His disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of Thine house shall eat me up*.—It is uncertain whether John means that they remembered this Scripture immediately, or that it

<sup>1</sup> In the preceding verses of Zech. 14 it is said that all nations will go up annually to Jerusalem to worship. We recall that in the Synoptic account of the temple-cleansing Jesus quotes Isa. 56:7, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations' (Mark 11:17). The significance of the Synoptic account need not be treated as part of the exegesis of John's present narrative, but it will be adduced as highly relevant when we come to John 12:20 ff.

came to their minds when they reflected on the incident in the light of later events (as in v. 22). The words quoted are from Ps. 69:9, where the Hebrew and Septuagint texts alike read 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.' The change to the future is no doubt deliberate, and may point forward to the crucifixion as the event which fulfilled these words in Christ's experience. His zeal, or jealous concern, for the honour of God's house and all that it stood for, as contrasted with the attitude of those who professed to reverence the place but in fact treated it as a means of gain, did in a very real sense consume Him, as our study of the following verses may suggest.

v. 18—*The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?*—As was pointed out in the comment on Ch. 1:19, 'the Jews' in this Gospel are frequently equivalent to the religious leaders of the nation; here the temple authorities are intended. If the cleansing of the temple suggested to them a messianic claim (as indeed it might, in view of such O.T. passages as Zech. 14:21 and Mal. 3:1-3), then they considered some convincing token of authority should be forthcoming from one who dared to act in this way. It was generally expected that when the Messiah came, He would manifest His dignity in some unmistakable fashion. For example, a rabbinical commentary of later date says: 'When king Messiah is revealed, he comes and stands upon the roof of the holy place; then he will make an announcement to the people of Israel, saying: "Ye poor, the time of your redemption is come."' But had the temple custodians realized it, the cleansing of the court was a sufficiently eloquent sign in itself; none the less, another would be provided, but not such a sign as they desired. There are always those who must have authority for truth, forgetting that truth carries its own authority with it.

v. 19—*Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*—On another occasion when He was asked for a sign, Jesus replied that no sign would be given but the sign of Jonah. Perhaps the sign which He promises here is the same sign, although it is described in quite

different language. The word here translated 'temple' is different from that used in vv. 14 and 15. There the Greek word is *hieron*, which comprises the whole sacred area; here (and in vv. 20 and 21) it is *naos*, which denotes the sanctuary proper, consisting of the two compartments, the holy place and the holy of holies. These or similar words of Jesus were remembered by His opponents as well as by His disciples. When evidence was sought against Him at His trial, two men were found whose witness, though inconsistent in detail (and therefore inadmissible), amounted to this: 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple (Gk. *naos*) that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands"' (Mark 14:58). And although this was not the ground on which He was actually sentenced to death, we are told that, as He hung on the cross, some passers-by cried out: 'Ha! thou that destroyest the temple (Gk. *naos*), and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross' (Mark 15:29 f.). So deeply had His words about the temple impressed themselves on the memory of people in Jerusalem.

v. 20—*The Jews therefore said, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up again in three days?*—Those who asked Him for a sign interpreted His reply literally, and were bewildered by it. Certainly to rebuild in three days a structure whose erection had required over forty years would be a wonder-work sufficient to impress any who wanted a sign on the material plane. Herod the Great had started his work of rebuilding the sanctuary and its surroundings in the beginning of 19 B.C.; forty-six years had elapsed since then. (In fact the work was still unfinished; it was not completed until A.D. 63, only seven years before its destruction by the Romans.) This time-indication helps to fix A.D. 28 as the year of this Passover (compare the comment on v. 13).

Both in antiquity and in recent times, however, there have been those who have curiously tried to understand the forty-six years as a reference to our Lord's age at the time, thinking that this view fits in well with Ch. 8:57, where 'the Jews' describe Him as 'not yet fifty years old'. Some even suppose that the Evangelist pictures His life on earth as covering a complete jubilee period of



forty-nine years; one commentator has gone so far as to see in this John's interpretation of the 'seven weeks' of Daniel 9:25. But we need not pay much attention to such far-fetched notions; the speakers on this occasion had no idea that our Lord was referring to 'the temple of his body', but thought only of the material sanctuary.

v. 21—*But He spake of the Temple of His Body.*—This is one of the most outstanding examples of the tendency of John's thought to move on two planes simultaneously. On the one hand, our Lord's reference was to 'the body of His flesh.' His resurrection was the only sign which that generation would receive over and above His actual presence and ministry in their midst. And, as a matter of historic fact, when He was done to death, His body was taken down from the cross and laid in Joseph's sepulchre, whence it emerged on the third day in the power of an indissoluble life. (The expression 'in three days', inclusively reckoned, is synonymous with such a phrase as 'on the third day'.) These events form the sure foundation of the Christian faith: we confess that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3 f.).<sup>1</sup>

But none save His disciples and friends saw Him in His resurrection body.<sup>2</sup> How then was His resurrection a sign to those who refused to believe in Him? It was a sign inasmuch as they heard His disciples when they 'proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead' (Acts 4:2). And it was a sign inasmuch as His resurrection life was embodied in their midst in the community of His followers—that 'holy temple (Gk. *naos*) in the Lord' in which all the members of Christ are built together 'for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Eph. 2:21 f.). While the false witnesses who were produced at our Lord's trial gave a garbled report of His words, they probably represented Him correctly when they emphasized the contrast between the old sanctuary

<sup>1</sup> For the O. T. background to this time-reckoning cf. Lev. 23:11; Hos. 6:2.

<sup>2</sup> James the Lord's brother (apparently) and Paul (certainly) became disciples through seeing Him in resurrection.

'made with hands' and the new one 'made without hands'. For this is a contrast which finds repeated expression in the apostolic teaching.<sup>1</sup> What was raised up in three days was not only the body of Christ which had been placed in the tomb but His body the church, the members of which, having been crucified with Him, are risen with Him in newness of life.<sup>2</sup>

This promised sign of two-fold resurrection, therefore, reinforces the teaching of the first sign recorded earlier in this chapter—the turning of the water into wine. That is to say, it announces the supersession of the old order by the new. But it amplifies the previous sign by showing that the inauguration of the new order depends on the death and resurrection of Christ.

v. 22—*When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He spake this; and they believed the Scripture, and the Word which Jesus had said.*—Even the disciples of Jesus could not be expected to grasp the significance of His words, however, until His death and resurrection explained them by fulfilling them. The fulfilment confirmed the disciples' faith, not only in their Master's words, but in the Old Testament prophecy which underlay them and was equally fulfilled in His death and resurrection. For these saving events illuminated the whole volume of messianic prophecy, as the apostles' use of the Old Testament in their preaching and teaching abundantly illustrates.

(to be continued)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts 7:48; 17:24; Heb. 9:11, 24; see also the contrast between Eph. 2:11 and Col. 2:11. An excellent monograph on this whole subject is *The New Temple*, by A. Cole (Tyndale Press, London).

<sup>2</sup> A similar oscillation between the body of our Lord's incarnation and His body the church appears in Paul's exposition of the breaking of the bread as 'a communion of the body of Christ', (Cor. 10:16 f.).