



## **John 2:13-22**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After 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.



## **Jesus the Reformer? Jesus the Trouble-Maker?**

My passage is from chapter two of the Gospel of John: Jesus comes to Jerusalem at Passover, enters the temple, and surprises everybody by raucously chasing away the money-changers and sellers of animals. Startled onlookers rightly demand an explanation—a “sign” of his authority to do such a thing. His response is not satisfying—not for the moment.

In our age of demonstrations against corruption everywhere, how easy it is to see here a picture of Jesus the reformer, revolting against the commercialism and self-seeking that has invaded our institutions. (The *Message* translation implies this, using terms like “loan sharks” and “shopping mall.”) Historians remind us, however, that the animals and money-changers were not corrupters of the process but essential to it: Sacrificial animals were requirements of the Passover

ceremony, and Jerusalem was a site of pilgrimage. Pilgrims could not bring animals with them from far lands; they must purchase them after arriving, with a variety of currencies. If Jesus was protesting anything, it seems, it was not corruption of the setup but the entire setup: Tear down this (magnificent) temple, he responds, and I will rebuild it in three days.

At this point John explains that by “temple” Jesus was referring to his own body. Still, what an explanation! I am reminded of what John said in chapter one: “He was in the world...yet the world knew him not.” Jesus makes trouble for us, with startling “signs” about the weakness of the entire setup—any human setup, no matter how strong or beautiful we *think* it is—to represent or comprehend the Almighty.



- Walter Beale



*Dear God, help us in this time of penance to understand how we must die and be born again. Amen.*