



I Will Raise

Jesus brought honor to the Father in word and deed.

JOHN 2:11-23

While driving, we may see a sign that indicates what is on the next exit. That sign is not the entity it advertises but points beyond itself to a restaurant, hotel, or other attraction we may want to visit. John wrote his Gospel so readers “may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing [they] may have life in his name” (20:31). The signs in John’s Gospel point to Jesus being the Messiah, the Son of God.

What signs stand out to you when driving on a highway? How do those signs help you make decisions along the way?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 2:1-25

The first of Jesus's signs was performed at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. This city was located near His hometown of Nazareth. Apparently, Jesus's mother was close to the family of the couple being married. Mary, Jesus, His disciples, and probably His entire family were invited. At some point in the festivities, the wedding party ran out of wine. It is curious that Mary came to Jesus with this need. It was not His problem. In fact, He asked His mother what the situation had to do with Him. Nevertheless, He quietly performed a miracle, turning water into wine. The headwaiter declared this wine to be superior to what had been served previously. In this simple act, Jesus displayed His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:1-11).

John 2:13-17 describes the scene of Jesus expelling the money changers and merchants from the temple courtyard. The other Gospel writers place the cleansing of the temple after Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, less than a week before His crucifixion. Some scholars argue these narratives described two separate events—one at the beginning of His earthly ministry and one near the end. Other commentators point out that John was not interested in presenting a chronological account of Jesus's activities. They contend the incident occurred only once and John included it earlier for theological reasons. Since John's primary purpose was to help readers believe in Jesus, we could understand this placement.

The temple scene ends with Jesus's prophesy that if the temple were destroyed, He would raise it in three days. He was speaking about the resurrection of His crucified body. After His resurrection, the disciples recalled His statement and believed in Him (2:18-23).

As you read John 2:11-23, underline details that might seem symbolic in nature. What was John trying to communicate with the details he included?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

GLORY SHOWN (JOHN 2:11-12)

¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. ¹² After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

VERSES 11-12

Jesus and His family attended a wedding *in •Cana of •Galilee* (2:1). Mary told Jesus that the groom’s family had run out of wine. She expected Him to do something to remedy the situation as evidenced by her instruction to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (v. 5). Nearby were six stone jars; each held twenty to thirty gallons. After Jesus had the servants fill the jars with water, He turned it to wine. Not knowing where the wine had come from, the headwaiter commended the groom for serving the better wine this late in the week-long celebration.

What did ***this, the first of his signs*** point to? It pointed to Jesus’s superiority over Jewish law. For Jews, seven was the number of completion; six represented incompleteness. The six unfilled purification jars (2:6) symbolized the inadequacy of what had become essentially Jewish rituals. Turning the jars full of water into wine indicated Jesus would be offering something new—and it would be far better and more satisfying than anyone had anticipated.

DID YOU KNOW?

The seven signs in John’s Gospel that point to Jesus’s identity are (1) turning water into wine (2:1-11); (2) healing an official’s son (4:46-54); (3) healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15); (4) feeding the 5,000 (6:5-14); (5) walking on water (6:16-21); (6) healing the man born blind (9:1-7); and (7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45).

The sign also **revealed his glory**. It showed Jesus’s ability to do the impossible and His willingness to meet tangible human needs. It highlighted His compassion for people in helpless situations.

Jesus—not the wine or the wedding—is the focus of the story. Mary is simply called **his mother**. None of the disciples or members of the wedding party are named. The spotlight is on Jesus alone. Because of what He had done, His disciples **believed in him**. The word *believed* is the verb form of “faith”—thus Jesus’s disciples “faithed” in Him. Something deep inside profoundly changed because of what they witnessed.

Believers should see Jesus working even in the smaller things. Too often, we want to see great miracles to bolster our faith. Jesus warned against joining the wicked generation that demands a sign (Matt. 16:4). God involves Himself in the ordinary aspects of our lives, yet with extraordinary results.

How does Jesus reveal His glory to us today?

WORSHIP EXPECTED (JOHN 2:13-17)

¹³ The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. ¹⁵ After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers’ coins and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling doves, “Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!” ¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me.

VERSES 13-14

Jesus **went up to Jerusalem** (an elevation of about 2,600 feet) for **the Jewish Passover**. Passover commemorated the Jews being spared the night the Egyptians’ firstborn males were killed throughout the land and the Israelites subsequently being released from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 11–12).

The number of people visiting Jerusalem for Passover in Jesus's day would have been about half a million, five times the city's regular population. The city would have been bustling with people who were there for the celebration.

The **temple** included not only the Jewish sanctuary but the surrounding courtyards as well. As worshipers neared the altar, they could purchase **oxen, sheep, and doves**, which they would offer as a sacrifice. Having the animals available there in Jerusalem was convenient, especially for those who had traveled a long way.

Jesus's problem was not with what type of animals the people were selling. The Old Testament mentioned these animals being given as burnt offerings (Lev. 5:6-7; Num. 7:1-8). The Scripture does not even say the merchants were selling the animals at exorbitant prices. Nor was Jesus offended that **money changers** were exchanging currencies. Based on Exodus 30:13, Jewish men were expected to pay a temple tax of a half-shekel each year. This tax could not be paid in foreign currencies, which often had the images of pagan rulers or symbols. The money had to be exchanged for the appropriate temple currency.

Jesus was enraged because people had turned His **Father's house into a marketplace**. Rather than hearing the songs, praises, and prayers of sincere worshipers, those at the temple were forced to hear the constant bleating, mooing, stomping, fluttering, and cooing of sacrificial animals. Rather than the solemnity that one would expect at the holiest place in Judaism, one heard coins clanging and people haggling, talking, and laughing. This was anything but worshipful.

Amplifying the offense, the merchants set up their tables in the court of the Gentiles. This massive outer courtyard could accommodate about 75,000 people; it was as close as Gentiles were allowed to get to the altar and holy of holies. Merchants were thus prohibiting a whole group of people from having a genuine worship experience at the temple. Mark, in recording this event, stated that Jesus said, "Is it not written, my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?" (Mark 11:17, emphasis added).

What are some ways people show disregard for worship today?

VERSES 15-17

Jesus responded not with a flare of human anger but with the deliberate action of righteous indignation. Although all four Gospel writers record this event, only John specified that Jesus made **a whip**. The text does not say Jesus struck anyone. The term **drove** implies an element of force but not necessarily physical violence. Nor should the word **everyone** be taken to include the worshipers, since this term is associated with the phrase **their sheep and oxen**. Totally disrupting their business, Jesus forcefully ran off the beasts and birds, the merchants and money changers.

Jesus wanted to remove all barriers that would keep people from experiencing genuine worship. His actions reminded the disciples of David's **zeal** to experience God's presence in His **house** (see Ps. 69:9).

BIBLE SKILL: *Examine Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament.*

John pointed to Psalm 69:9 when the disciples reflected on the removal of the merchants and money changers. Read Psalm 69 and note other places the Psalm is quoted in the New Testament. How do the other quotes relate to the point being made in John 2 if any? How does reading Psalm 69 give a deeper understanding of the events taking place in John 2?

Jesus's **disciples** did not participate in His actions against the sellers of animals or the money changers. Perhaps they were stunned into being silent spectators. Still, they **remembered** the Scripture about how zeal for God's house would consume Him (Ps. 69:9).

Believers must worship God in Spirit and truth. The purpose of the sacrificial system ended with the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God who died for our sins. As we worship God, believers demonstrate sincerity by focusing on Jesus rather than trying to make worship conform to what pleases us.

How does proper worship help us maintain a right relationship with God?

SIGN REMEMBERED (JOHN 2:18-23)

¹⁸ So the Jews replied to him, “What sign will you show us for doing these things?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.” ²⁰ Therefore the Jews said, “This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made. ²³ While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing.

VERSES 18-21

Wanting some validation of Jesus’s authority to do what He had done, the Jews demanded a **sign**. He responded with what Jews called a *mashal*, meaning a riddle or parable. The riddle confused those who heard His words. Those who read them in John’s Gospel, though, understood what Jesus meant—especially since John clarified Jesus’s response.

Jesus said that if they, the Jews, would **destroy this temple**, He would raise it again in **three days**. They were bewildered by this statement. Why would they destroy the temple? In front of them were construction crews that were continuing the temple expansion work Herod the Great began in 19 BC. The Jews could see how much more impressive this temple was going to be compared to Zerubbabel’s temple. At the time of this encounter, temple construction had been under way for **forty-six years**.

The Jews were bewildered because they took Jesus’s words literally, as if He were speaking of the temple where they were standing. Jesus, though, was referring to **his body**, which would be **raised from the dead**. The Jews could not fathom either the destruction of the temple or its magical reconstruction in three days. Certainly, they were not considering His death and resurrection.

What was the significance of Jesus pointing to the temple as a metaphor for His resurrected body?

VERSES 21-23

After Jesus's resurrection, the disciples remembered what Jesus said in this encounter and **believed** both His words and **the Scripture**. John did not specify which Scripture; many scholars think he was referring to Psalm 69:9, mentioned in verse 17. Others suggest he was referring to Scriptures that teach the grave does not win (Ps. 16:8-11; Isa. 53:12). Later, Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would bring to His disciples' remembrance Jesus's words and would enable them to understand (John 14:26; 16:14). This verse (2:22) is an example of that happening.

At Cana, Jesus had turned water into wine. He replaced the old with the new and better. Similarly, Jesus highlighted the inadequacies of ancient Jewish rituals. He replaced these with a faith system based on grace. His sacrifice on the cross as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) rendered the old sacrificial system obsolete.

Closing out this account, John tied it to the wedding in Cana. Seeing the "sign" of Jesus turning water into wine, His disciples believed in Him (v. 11). When He was in Jerusalem for the Passover, many who **saw the signs he was doing** likewise believed.

How does the resurrection serve as a sign of Jesus's glory and authority?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. (See John 20:16,27.)

