

LSB John 2:13 - 19

13 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 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; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up."

Last week we considered something marvelous about how God communicates with us through His written word. The scriptures. And we discovered that God will at times, when it suits His perfect purposes and perfections, tell us a future prophecy, and within that prophecy, sometimes within a single sentence, there can be thousand year spans between the fulfilling of the first part and then later the fulfilling of the second part.

Jesus Himself did this also as He taught. At the beginning of His public ministry, He went to the village of Nazareth where He had grown up as a child and young man, and He went into their synagogue, and read to them a select portion of Isaiah chapter 61 vss. 1,2

*Lk. 4:17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the scroll and found the place where it was written,
18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set free those who are oppressed,
19 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."*

20 And He closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.”

If you compare those words of Jesus that day to the Isaiah passage you will find that Jesus stopped reading at a precise place in the Isaiah passage and handed the scroll back to the synagogue attendant.

And if you study a little further you will find that the very next words of the prophet Isaiah in that passage, the part that Jesus chose to not read, says these words; *And the day of vengeance of our God,*

God gives us prophecy with precision. Sometimes what we see horizontally is two mountain peaks that appear right next to each other from our vantage point but we can't see the vast wide valley that separates them.

Likewise, sometimes a prophecy will give precise events that sound like they will happen at the same general time period but there is actually thousands of years separating the fulfillment of the first part from the second part.

That Day in Nazareth, if Jesus had continued to read, vs 2 in Isaiah 61 would have stated; *2 To proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh And the day of vengeance of our God,*

Jesus began His ministry stating the first part. Favor. God has sent His Son to dwell with men. God is offering forgiveness for sins. God is offering grace. Jesus stops the reading at the offer of favor. The offer of grace and forgiveness for sins. Healing our sinful souls. Releasing our captured spirits from the sin that held them in death.

But flip to the final part of Jesus ministry, and you will find that this particular precise prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled completely in that 3 year span, as regards the proclamation.

Jesus, at the end of His earthly ministry, goes into great detail warning of

the coming vengeance of our God upon those whose sins have not been forgiven, those who have rejected God's offer of grace and forgiveness.

That's our introduction. Not all the parts of every prophecy are fulfilled on the same day. There can be thousands of years between just a few words in the prophetic texts.

And the reason I draw your attention to that is this. The Jews were literalists. Most of them. Some were not. But the Pharisees who confronted Jesus and who ultimately murdered Him, were literalists in some sense.

And they had made up their collective minds that when Messiah came, there would be signs in the skies. And indeed, there will be. Fire and brimstone and vapor of smoke. The sky will go pitch black. The firmament will be rolled up like a scroll. Heavenly bodies will strike the earth from outer space. Massive cataclysmic events in the sky and upon the earth, when Messiah comes and delivers Israel.

So, a guy from Tonopah shows up in congress, in Washington DC. That's the relative importance of a hick from Nazareth showing up in Jerusalem. I just wanted to paint that picture first. People in Washington DC don't pay much attention to some little cowboy from out in fly-over land.

And that's Jesus to the movers and shakers, the chief priests and rulers in Israel, at Jerusalem. Jesus shows up and He makes a whip out of cords and He literally drives all of the commerce out of the temple area. Drives the animals and the sellers and all the commercial people, the money changers, and the guys selling turtle doves and cattle. Drives all of it out in fury.

That's probably His first miracle, not the wine at Cana. One man removes hundreds of people and animals and chaos single handedly. He clears the place out. By Himself. No one stops Him. Somehow they knew He could not be stopped. He emptied the place. Probably an area about the size of our Rodeo grounds. But filled with commerce and activity.

Thousands had come from all over Israel to offer sacrifices at the temple during passover. We're talking hundreds of thousands. It was a cacophany of people. Like LAX at thanksgiving. Thousands of people, all moving, all trying to accomplish a sacrificial offering at this festival.

And the temple authorities had the power to dis-allow your sacrificial animal. It had to be perfect. So the gig was they would find imperfection in the one you brought and not allow it as a sacrifice and then you're forced to buy a more expensive animal from the sellers at the temple. Gotcha.

And likewise, Roman money, no good in the temple. So you had to take your roman money to the money changers and exchange it, for a fee, a percentage, for Israeli money that was allowed in the temple to pay your temple taxes and offerings.

Everybody was making a buck. It was like a mafia. The guys at the top, the chief priests and elders skimming from all of it and getting very rich. And then the second level managers, and then the people out on the ground handling animals and money. It was big business. Really big business.

And Jesus comes with a whip and single handedly drives all of those sellers and money changers out of the temple. Off the property. Then He claims that the Temple is His Father's house. This is My Father's house. Leave. And He backs it up with a whip. One man. From Tonopah, I mean Nazareth. How did that happen??!!

And, pay particular attention to what the mafia, I mean the chief priests and elders of Israel, the national heads, what did they ask Him. They didn't challenge what He did, or what He said. They knew He was right. God's house had become a den of thieves. They were the heads of the thieves. That isn't what they challenge.

Listen carefully; *18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"*

First of all a tiny bit more background. This is John's account. And when the apostle John says, "the jews", he's identifying a certain group here. This is like John's code word for the jews who are leading the nation. These are the men who have power. The rulers of Israel. Rome has veto power but Rome allows the jews, these jews to rule in Israel.

These are the folks with power. The Sanhedrin. The 70 elders. The chief priests, plural. The rich men at the top who have control. And Jesus has just cost them . . . a lot of money.

Their question isn't about whether what He did was the right thing to do or not. They don't challenge His claim that the temple had become big business for thieves. They knew they didn't have a leg to stand on.

Their question is about power. Someone goes down and clears out the cartel in Mexico, the question everyone would have is, where did the power come from to do that. How does whoever cleared out the cartel, have the power to challenge the authority of the previous guys who were doing illicit business.

One man cleared the place out. He then makes claim on the property. Right? Get out! This is My Father's house. That wasn't lost on these rulers. These bosses of Israel.

Only one person could make that claim. Messiah. And they get it. But they don't believe it for a minute. Some guy from Nazareth clears the place out and claims ownership as Son of God. We'll need to see your credentials.

“What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?”

You claim this property is your Father's. By immediate extension you claim you are Son to that Father. You're the Son of God. From Nazareth? Prove it. Show us a sign.

Show us the sky coming apart. Show us some fire and brimstone and hail the size of Volkswagens please. Show us the planets moving out of place as the sky rolls up. Show us the sun going dark. Then we'll believe.

You've made a big claim. And we're impressed that a man from Nazareth can come and single handedly evacuate these premises. That was impressive for sure. But we don't believe God lives in Nazareth. And we won't believe without signs in the sky. That's what we expect when Messiah arrives.

I do admire their literalist interpretation. They're doing better than a lot of evangelicals from that standpoint. But they err in demanding all of prophecy being concluded on the day the Messiah arrives. We'd like to see some signs in the sky please.

Let me read a section from the prophet Joel, chapter 2

*I Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And make a loud shout on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of Yahweh is coming;
Surely it is near,*

2

*A day of darkness and thick darkness,
A day of clouds and dense gloom.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
So there is a numerous and mighty people;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
For the years from generation to generation.*

3

*A fire consumes before them,
And behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them*

*But a desolate wilderness behind them,
And nothing at all escapes them.*

4

*Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like war horses, so they run.*

5

*With a noise as of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consumes the stubble,
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.*

6

*Before them the peoples are writhing;
All faces turn pale.*

7

*They run like mighty men;
They climb up the wall like men of war;
And they each march in line,
And they do not deviate from their paths.*

8

*They do not crowd each other;
They march everyone in his path;
When they fall against the defending weapons,
They do not break ranks.*

9

*They rush on the city;
They run on the wall;
They climb up into the houses;
They enter through the windows like a thief.*

10

*Before them the earth trembles;
The heavens quake;
The sun and the moon grow dark,
And the stars lose their brightness.*

11

But Yahweh gives forth His voice before His military force;

*Surely His camp is very numerous,
For mighty is he who does His word.
The day of Yahweh is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?*

That's Messiah's entrance. Not a guy from Nazareth, who is, we'll admit, pretty impressive to single handedly evacuate the temple grounds with a whip. That was impressive, but it doesn't sound like Joel's prophecy.

We'd like to see the earth tremble please. And the heavens should quake, if you don't mind. And the sun and moon seem to be fine. You didn't make them go dark. And the stars will shine tonight just like they did last night. We're not impressed.

“What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?”

Just who, exactly, do you think you are Jesus! Evacuating the temple activity during passover. You just cost us a LOT of money. We challenge your claim. We don't believe God is your Father. We don't accept your claim upon this real estate, as God's Son. Prove it!

Listen carefully to Jesus answer. He doesn't say that the signs from heaven won't happen. They will. But He tells them, they're transfixed upon the wrong signs. A different sign will prove for all time that Jesus is exactly who He claims He is, and that He in fact does own the real estate.

19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Allow me to give you a little side bar just here. A lesson within a lesson. A truth about how God deals with men. Something has happened here, just within the confines of a single short conversation. We'll see this time and time again. Here it is.

God begins with precise clarity. You've turned MY Fathers house into a

den of thieves. He just claimed ownership of the property by means of family tie. He clearly stated to them that God owns this house. God is my Father. I'm here evacuating the thieves . . . as His Son, doing His business. Pretty clear.

Those claims are met with dis belief. Non belief. And notice what happens. This is always always true in God's dealings with men. Disbelief gets answered with parables. What Jesus says next is not as crystal clear as what He first stated.

God does that. Disbelief causes the next thing He says to be veiled in mystery. Disbelief spirals downward because God answers disbelief with riddles. Less clear. He locks you in your disbelief by answering in terms that are more difficult to understand, not easier.

In Matthew 13 Jesus began to teach in parables. The easy clear direct teaching is over. You didn't believe the easy stuff and the result is, what you hear after your disbelief will be harder to understand than the clear teaching you chose to reject in disbelief.

The disciples ask Him, why the parables. Why the riddles. And Jesus quotes the old testament;

Mt. 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; 15 For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Lest they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.'

Disbelief compounds the problem. It sends people into a tailspin towards hell. Disbelief causes deafness and blindness and hardness. You chose not to believe the clear truth, now you get riddles.

Jesus answer to these leaders who challenge His claim to ownership of this House of God is much more difficult to understand than His original claim. That's on purpose. You get the easy clear stuff and you reject it because you'd rather be a sinner, and amazingly, everything you hear from then on is actually harder to understand than the first easy part that you rejected. It's how God rolls.

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up."

They're standing around going: . . . huh? You're a lunatic. It took 46 years to build this place. And you're going to accomplish it in 3 days? What??

Listen, He spoke the worlds into existence in 6 days. That temple wouldn't have been a challenge at all. He could make a better one in the time it took Him to speak it into existence. Maybe 30 seconds.

That whistle you just heard was Jesus answer going right over their heads. Whoosh. Destroy the temple of my body, in death, and I'll come out of the grave in 3 days. That's what He just told them that they didn't understand.

It wasn't the only time, either. In Matthew 12, the story of the confrontation immediately prior to and causal of the parables that follow, He tells them the same thing. Again.

Mt. 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered and said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation eagerly seeks for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; 40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea

monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

They had seen miracle after miracle after miracle. Not good enough. The occasion of this particular confrontation in Matthew 12 is that Jesus created a new hand for a man with a withered hand. His hand was dead. Withered. Useless, and Jesus creates a new hand for him where the useless one was. Billions of dead cells replaced with billions of perfect ones. With the man's DNA. Old dead withered hand gone, new hand in it's place.

Not good enough. We want hailstones as big as Volkswagens. This withered hand stuff, we think you did that somehow with satanic powers. You're connected to Satan. It's just magic somehow from some kind of connection with Satan. That's where you're so called miracle powers come from. You're satanic. Show us the signs in the sky.

And Jesus taught only in parables after that. But He did tell them, again, you're going to get one sign. Put me in the grave, dead, and I'll be back in three days. Resurrected. Death will not be able to hold me.

So, then, beloved, I will close out our thoughts this morning with a single question. Why do we believe any of this? Actually, let me re-state that. Why do we believe ALL of this book?

What is the sign, that Jesus gave to us, that trumps all of the other signs and miracles, some of them still on the books waiting for the sentence in Isaiah, that Jesus didn't read at Nazareth. The day of vengeance of our God.

That day is still waiting to be fulfilled. Hailstones like Volkswagens will happen. Mountains will melt like wax. The sky will be rolled up like a scroll. Heavenly bodies will in fact strike the earth. All of that will happen. But none of that is the sign that proves that Jesus is in fact the owner of not just the temple grounds, and the temple, He owns the whole

earth.

What is the sign that causes us to believe it? All of it!

He rose from the dead, on the third day.

1 Cor. 15:1 Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I proclaimed as good news to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I proclaimed to you as good news, unless you believed for nothing. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that, He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

You say, well, He didn't appear to me. I didn't see Him alive from the dead. Sorry, dude, 500 reliable witnesses is all you get. 500+ reliable witnesses is enough. A man could be put to death on the word of two or three witnesses. God was abundantly gracious in His proof of His Son's resurrection from the dead. 500 people in one place all witnessed Jesus alive again, risen from the grave. Disbelief is a dangerous dangerous choice.

We bow down in worship to Him who came and took the punishment of death that we deserved and then gave the single sign for all times that all will be held accountable for. He rose from the dead and lives today.