

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is reasons critics give for Jesus' death.

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of April 21, 2012*

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

After this He [Jesus] went down to Capernaum, with His mother and His brothers and His disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. 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 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?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you 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 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. (John 2:12-25)

1.

John's Gospel is from the last decade of the 1st-Century, more than sixty years after the beginning of Jesus' ministry ... there is a problem imbedded in what historical criticism teaches about the New Testament, a serious problem, that of when and how many times Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers and cleansed the temple. The assumption of historical criticism is that Jesus could have only done this one time: the assumption is based on overturning the tables being somewhat like robbing a bank. Thus, Jesus could not have overturned the moneychangers' tables at Passover in the first year of His ministry (six months into His ministry) and then overturned the tables at the end of His ministry (forty-two months into His ministry). The assumption of critics is that Jesus overturned the tables only once, at the end of His ministry just before Calvary, and that overturning the tables of the moneychangers is what got Him killed. Again, embedded in this assumption is that overturning the tables was a serious crime.

Pause before beginning: if for the past six months it was rumored or even known with certainty that a person was performing miracles, healing the lame and casting out spirits, and if you as a moneychanger knew that you should not be conducting money transactions on the Sabbath or conducting these transactions inside the temple even though officials had authorized you being there—if you were your local County Clerk or worked in the County Treasurer's office, and your local Sheriff said to add fifty dollars to everyone's tax bill and you had even though you knew doing so was wrong, how vigorously would you fight against the taxpayer who demanded that the surtax be removed from not just his or her bill but removed from everyone's tax bill, especially if this taxpayer were an attorney? So if you were that moneychanger in Herod's temple in the 1st-Century, how much of a stink are you going to put up when this Galilean miracle worker comes into the temple and flips over your table ... you, who know you are guilty of not giving fair exchanges, who know that what you are doing is questionable at best, who has nothing stolen by the miracle worker who merely leaves you to pick up the coins and right the table—are you going to physically tangle with this guy? How is it that He works miracles? You don't know. So are you going to lay hands on Him? Remember, you know the story of what Elijah did when King Ahaziah sent men to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron as to whether he would live or die, how Elijah called fire down from heaven to kill the two captains of fifty men along with their men (see 2 Kings 1:9–12). You don't know if this miracle worker, who isn't from Jerusalem but who is a virtual stranger—whose father was a carpenter and who should have been a carpenter Himself; you don't know what this man is capable of doing. Obviously, in overturning your table, He isn't much concerned about what you think. Why? What sort of power and authority does He have? And you're going to do what? Stand up and lay your hands on this man? No you're not. You're going to tread softly until you have a better understanding of the extent of His power; for you didn't come to the temple this morning with the intention of becoming a crispy-critter as the two captains of fifty became.

Now, move forward three years, you are again in the temple, knowingly defrauding your brothers by devaluing Roman coinage, giving only a pittance of the worth of Corinthian coins, of Parthian coins when converting these foreign coins into the coinage of the temple, which itself is not only overvalued but also underweight, the edges of these coins having been carefully trimmed to center the striking—even if those coming into the temple are paying twice what a turtledove is worth to have a sacrifice, you simply cannot permit a coin with the likeness of a person or of a beast to enter the temple; therefore before God it is your duty to take from your brothers these graven images, and so what if you shortchange them, they should not be accepting idolatrous coins as payment for anything. So you feel good about what you are doing ... until here He comes again, this time with more men and looking more determined than ever to make you feel the sting of His wrath. This isn't someone you wanted to see today: He didn't do anything when He was here in the winter and declared Himself the Son of God—

But what if He is the Son of God as He claims ... He has to be stopped, but not today—

There was an aura about Jesus that conveyed the message that He was without fear.

Fear has a scent: a dog will sense, with scent whether a person fears the dog or not. When a wildlife photographer carries a firearm, the scent of the photographer changes: carrying a firearm reduces fear and increases predatory instincts, which apparently also has a scent. The photographer cannot get as close to the animal the photographer seeks to capture on film or in pixels if he or she carries a firearm. And human persons will pick up on the changed scent of a person who is without fear, with the person without fear producing involuntary intimidation in the other, this involuntary intimidation then producing a fight or flight response in the other, with the person who knows that what he or she is doing is wrong wanting to flee but also wanting to save face. If the person who is without fear permits the other person to save face, physical altercations are usually avoided.

Cowardice comes from knowing what the person does is not in the *right*, is not doing the thing that ought to be done. The bully is inevitably a coward inside, for he (or she) knows that what he (or she) does isn't right; so the bully will not long engage in a fight. When his nose is broken and blood covers his shirt, he quits; whereas the person who fights for justice will persevere, continuing the fight long after he or she should logically quit. It is this person, the ones who fights for justice, that will pull victory from what seems certain defeat.

The moneychangers in the temple, and the livestock merchants knew what they were doing wasn't right, that at best they were a necessary evil so that the temple could maintain its *purity* and sacrifices be made. They were sacrificing their integrity so that their brothers could rid themselves of their guilt and thereby be right with God. And it wouldn't have made any difference how many times Jesus overturned their tables or drove out the livestock, they were not going to resist Him for they knew they were in the wrong and He was in the right.

The preceding is correct: Jesus could have overturned the tables every Sabbath and the moneychangers would have simply taken their trade outside the temple. The livestock auction yard would have moved outside the temple. Oh, there would have been plenty of threats and considerable complaining, but those who were in the wrong—who had turned the temple into a dens of thieves—would have accommodated Jesus by relocating their business into a more secure part of the hood, moving their trafficking out from the mall and onto street corners.

Academics engaged in textual criticism; scholars practicing historical criticism didn't fight many bullies when they were in grade school or high school: today, they want school administrators to put an end to bullying for some of them were bullied. Some of them turned the other cheek, and was hit a second time ... they did what they thought Jesus would do, but what is it that Jesus really did when He was struck?

The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."

When He had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"

Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but *if what I said is right, why do you strike me?*" (John 18:19–23 emphasis added)

Knowing that He would die, that He had to die within hours, Jesus challenged the official who struck Him and didn't allow the blow to go unchallenged by figuratively turning the other cheek.

The person who turns the other cheek is the person who has the upper hand in the situation at hand: it is this person who has the option of turning the other cheek. The person who has no other option will fight.

Again, the preceding is correct: the person who turns the other cheek controls the situation and isn't overcome by the situation. The person who strikes another is looking for a fight, for a fight-response, for fear to be manifested by the person struck. And when the appearance of fear is manifested without evidence that the person struck will fight, the bully will strike again and again. But when there is no fear shown, the bully becomes unsure of how to proceed for the person struck controls the situation and by extension controls the bully, regardless of whether that bully is a person or a nation-state or an ideology.

Because academics who didn't engage bullies claim that Jesus only once overturned the tables of the moneychangers, that He couldn't have twice overturned tables, let alone overturned them three times, they find a discrepancy between John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels—and they assume that John got the story wrong, or that for reasons apart from historical accuracy, John moved the cleansing of the temple story from the end of Jesus' ministry to the beginning of His ministry. Then they spend time and effort in trying to determine why the story is moved. It is no wonder that they were bullied when they were youths: they are still being bullied by inner fears ...

Academics practicing historical criticism at some inner level fear that there is a God and that they are required to obey this deity; thus, they work to show that Holy Writ cannot be accepted as the word of God, that there are too many discrepancies, too many corruptions of the text, too many possible interpretations, too many plausible explanations for what happened in the 1st-Century. Yet all of the Christian writings that they have from the 1st-Century are in Holy Writ. It is in writings from the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE that they find those things that permit them to regard Scripture as the human writings of human men, and nothing more, not realizing that the Body of Christ died with the Apostle John about seventy years after Calvary (ca 100–102 CE); that the writings from the 2nd and 3rd Centuries are the decomposing fragments of a then dead Corpse of Christ that will be returned to life in the 21st-Century for the gates of Hades will not prevail over the Assembly that Jesus built on the movement of breath from the front of the face and into the lungs to the heart of the person, the person's previously dead soul.

The person whose sense of justice as a youth required that the person take on bullies understands that the one who is wrong will back down unless this bully believes that he or she can physically prevail over the other. Then a fight is inevitable.

The Christian who fears that he or she is wrong—is not *right* with God—will, in the Affliction, attempt to bully and intimidate Christians who believe God and keep the commandments by faith; for if this bullying Christian can convince believing Christians into *seeing things his way, her way*, then he or she will feel justified in believing what he or she knows is false.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, temple officials were not certain that they could physically prevail against Jesus who, if He were the second Elijah or if He were the promised Prophet like Moses, might well call fire down from heaven on them. However, three years later, they knew that Jesus, a righteous person, wouldn't called fire down from heaven—He had not done so when they picked up stones to kill Him at the Feast of Dedication (John chap 10). They now *knew* Him: He had become familiar to them. He was no longer an unknown commodity. How He would react in a situation was known to them, including overturning tables at Passover when the Sacrifice is the national covering for sin so that the entirety of the nation as the firstborn son of God will not die as would have happened in Egypt and as did happen in type when first the Assyrians then the Chaldeans hauled away as captives the House of Israel [Samaria] and the House of Judah [Jerusalem], thereby leaving the Promise Land to Gentiles.

Pharisees of the Second Temple were not particularly good readers of Holy Writ, but they knew what Moses had required the children of Israel on the plains of Moab to memorize:

But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; [*physical/physical*]
you grew fat, stout, and sleek; [*physical/spiritual*]
then he forsook God who made him [*physical/physical*]
and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. [*spiritual/spiritual*]
They stirred Him to jealousy with strange gods; [*spiritual/physical*]

with abominations they provoked him to anger.
 [spiritual/spiritual]
 They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, [spiritual/physical]
 to gods they had never known, [spiritual/physical]
 to new gods that had come recently, [spiritual/spiritual]
 whom your fathers had never dreaded. [spiritual/spiritual]
 You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, [physical/physical]
 and you forgot the God who gave you birth. [physical/spiritual]
 YHWH saw it and spurned them, [spiritual/physical]
 because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.
 [spiritual/spiritual]
 And He said, "I will hide my face from them; [spiritual/physical]
 I will see what their end will be, [spiritual/physical]
 For they are a perverse generation, [spiritual/spiritual]
 children in whom is no faithfulness. [spiritual/spiritual]
 They have made me jealous with what is no god; [spiritual/physical]
 they have provoked me to anger with their idols. [spiritual/physical]
 So I will make them jealous with those who are no people;
 [spiritual/spiritual]
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
 [spiritual/spiritual]
 For a fire is kindled by my anger, [spiritual/physical]
 and it burns to the depths of Sheol, [spiritual/spiritual]
 devours the earth and its increase, [spiritual/physical]
 and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
 [spiritual/spiritual] (Deut 32:15–22 emphasis added)

For seventy years, the *important* people of Jerusalem had been without control of their destiny [from 609 CE to 539 CE] and as good as dead. For seventy years, Solomon's temple had been ravished [from 586 CE to 516 CE] and Israel had nowhere to make sacrifices. And for seventy years, the way to God was closed to everyone except Christians through the living Body of Christ being the temple of God (*cf.* 1 Cor 12:27; 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 9:2–3, 6–9). For seventy years [from 31 CE to 101 CE], no righteous Jew or Gentile could come to God except through acknowledging that Christ Jesus was the Lord, was the High Priest of Israel, but once the Body of Christ died from want of spiritual breath, the way was again open to righteous Jews and Gentiles to come to God and to appear before the Lord in the great White Throne Judgment to be judged by those things they did when they lived physically. And this is the present state of humanity—and will remain the state of humanity until the Second Passover liberation of Israel, when every self-identified Christian will be suddenly filled with the breath/spirit of God and thereby liberated from indwelling sin and death.

Greater Christendom has provoked the Lord with its idolatry and will continue to provoke the Lord with its idols through the Affliction, the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years; thus the Lord will provoke Christians by giving to the third part of humankind (from Zech 13:9) His spirit and the opportunity to be the majority of the harvest of firstfruits of this earth when the single kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man halfway through these seven endtime years of tribulation. Then, when the kingdom of this world is taken from the King

of Babylon (see Isa 14:4) and given to the Son of Man (Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–18), the Lord will *baptize* the world in His breath/spirit (see Joel 2:28) and the person who endures to the end [without taking upon the person the mark of the beast; i.e., the tattoo of the cross] shall be saved. And it is this good news—that all who endure to the end shall be saved—that must be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt 24:13–14; 10:22). It is this good news, this Gospel, that *The Philadelphia Church* proclaims even now to all the world.

Returning to the earthly temple that was a shadow and type of the spiritual temple, in the 1st-Century CE temple officials were in the midst of political intrigues as Herodians contended with Hasmoneans for control of power in the temple and out of the temple: the office of high priest was a political football that the Hasmoneans had fumbled. And Jesus was a complication that no one in authority wanted. After all, the temple tax and the selling of sacrificial animals wasn't an extremely lucrative business, but it was moneys that the Romans let the Jews collect and spend.

Temple officials understood why God could have been provoked by the idolatry of pre-Babylon kings of Israel and Judah, but post-Babylon—surely God had to be pleased with Israel ... well, if you were a Pharisee maybe you knew why God wasn't pleased with Israel: Hasmoneans had converted Edom at the point of the sword, thereby bringing into the temple a *foolish nation* that was now [1st-Century] lording it over genuine Israelites. Maybe God was again making Israel jealous with a people who are *no people*, but it was really the Romans that were to temple officials as Pharaoh had been in Egypt: Rome was the new Babylon for these temple officials. And as the Lord had used Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon as His agent to punish the idolatrous kings of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah, the Lord was apparently using Rome to again punish Israel because of its lack of purity. Therefore Hellenist Jews and Sadducees, as far as Pharisees were concerned, needed to repent and mend their ways before Israel was again taken off to exile and dispersed throughout Asia Minor.

Jesus read Scripture in too many places as Sadducees read Scripture—so as far as Pharisees were concerned, despite His apparent righteousness, Jesus had to go; for overturning the tables and driving out the livestock is something the Sadducees' contender for the office of High Priest would do, if he could. The Sadducees had already written a stern twenty-point letter as to why the practices of present temple administration were false ... no copy of this letter exists, but a number of draft copies have been found among the fragments from Qumran.

The above cannot be known for certain, but is what seems not only plausible but true: because of the ongoing disputes between Sadducees and Pharisees over how the temple was to be administered, Jesus and His disciples, following the Passover practices of Sadducees as can be determined about the historical loser of control, would have alienated Himself from Pharisees, with this source of alienation repeating itself every Passover season when the paschal lamb is sacrificed at the end of the 13th of *Aviv* in accordance with Moses' instructions and roasted and eaten on the dark portion of the 14th of *Aviv* as opposed to the

Pharisees' practice of sacrificing paschal lambs late in the afternoon of the 14th, and roasting and eating the Passover on the 15th of *Aviv*.

Jesus would have seemed to temple moneychangers as an agent of the Sadducees' contender for the office of High Priest; thus, temple officials would have taken no more action against Him than doing a lot of complaining, for the Sadducees remained an important segment of overall Judaism even if they were currently out of power and in disfavor by the Herodians.

Pharisees were bullies, and ones who knew Israel had sinned in converting Edom to Judaism. They knew that the temples practices of officials were not honorable; for no Edomite should be permitted to enter the temple. Therefore, although both Sadducees and Pharisees would not like Jesus overturning the tables, this was no a cause for which they would have killed Him—and this is evident when Jesus is on trial. No mention is made of Him overturning the tables. The only testimony that stood against Him about His previous deeds was that Jesus said He was able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days (*cf.* Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58)

According to Matthew,

Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." (Matt 26:59–66)

According to Mark,

Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. (Mark 14:55–64)

According to Luke,

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips." (Luke 22:66–71)

What John records has previously been cited—

In none of the biographies [the Gospels] is cleansing the temple a charge leveled against Jesus: cleansing the temple had nothing to do with getting Jesus killed other than aggravating the hostility that came with temple authorities receiving an evil spirit as King Saul received an evil spirit when the spirit rushed upon David when he was anointed by Samuel. Therefore, do not permit academics practicing higher criticism to tell you that Jesus cleansing the temple was a reason for temple officials to kill Him.

For reasons that will not be addressed here but in later writings, Jesus thrice cleansed the temple: once at the first Passover of His ministry. The second time was the day when He entered Jerusalem on the 10th day of *Aviv* in the Common Era year 31. The third time was the following day, the 11th of *Aviv*, the day after the Sabbath.

*

*The person conducting the Sabbath service should
close services with two hymns, or psalms,
followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.*

* * * * *

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.
reserved."

[[Home](#)] [[Sabbath Readings](#)]