

Dr. Dave Turner, John, Session 5, Jesus' Early Ministry in Jerusalem – John 2:13-3:36

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Turner, John, Session 5, John 2:13-3:36, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Turner's session on John 2:13-3:36 explores Jesus' early ministry in Jerusalem, focusing on the **cleansing of the temple** and the **encounter with Nicodemus**. The lecture examines the **narrative flow** and **important theological matters**, such as the meaning of being "**born again**" and the significance of **water and spirit**. Turner also analyzes the **literary structure** of John 3, differentiating between **Jesus' direct words** and the **evangelist's commentary**. Ultimately, the session reflects on **Nicodemus's role** as a representative of those intrigued by Jesus' signs but hesitant towards full commitment.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Turner, John, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → John).**



**Turner_John_Session
n05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Turner, John, Session 5, John 2:13-3:36

Briefing Document: Gospel of John, Session 5 (John 2:13-3:36)

Main Themes:

This session explores Jesus' initial actions and interactions in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, highlighting the contrast between outward signs and true faith, the necessity of spiritual rebirth, and the distinct roles of Jesus and John the Baptist. Dr. Turner emphasizes the literary structure of John's Gospel, the theological significance of the events, and the representational nature of Nicodemus.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. The Temple Incident (John 2:13-22):

- Jesus clears the temple of money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals. While the exact reasons are debated (dishonest practices, location), Dr. Turner suggests it was a necessary service potentially being conducted unethically.
- Jesus' actions were forceful: "So he drove all of the people out who were taking care of the sacrificial animals there, scattered the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables."
- This act prompts his disciples to recall Psalm 69:9: "zeal for your house will consume me."
- The Jewish leaders demand a sign of Jesus' authority: "The Jews responded to him, what sign can you show us to prove your authority over all this, to do this?"
- Jesus responds with an enigmatic statement about the temple's destruction and resurrection in three days: "destroy this temple, I'll raise it again in three days."
- John's Gospel clarifies that Jesus was speaking of the "temple, which was his body" (John 2:21). This is understood by his disciples after his resurrection.
- Dr. Turner notes the historical question of whether this temple cleansing occurred early in Jesus' ministry (as in John) or later (as in the Synoptics), concluding that it likely happened once towards the end, and John strategically places it early to highlight ongoing tensions with Jewish leadership.
- Dr. Turner interprets the cleansing not merely as a reform movement or a symbolic foreshadowing of the temple's destruction, but as Jesus "purifying the

people of God and renewing the presence of God with the people," foreshadowing a time when worship would be "in spirit and in truth."

2. Faith Based on Signs and Jesus' Lack of Trust (John 2:23-25):

- Many people in Jerusalem believed in Jesus' name because they saw the signs he was performing.
- However, John emphasizes that "Jesus was not entrusting himself to them. He was not putting his faith in them... for he knew all people. He did not need testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person."
- This introduces the idea that faith based solely on signs might be superficial or insufficient for true, saving faith.

3. The Encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21):

- Nicodemus, a "ruling teacher of the Jews," approaches Jesus at night, acknowledging Jesus as "a teacher come from God, because of his signs." This links him to those who believed based on signs in chapter 2.
- Jesus' immediate response is the necessity of being "born again" to see the kingdom of God.
- This leads to mutual misunderstanding, as Nicodemus interprets "born again" literally.
- Jesus clarifies that one must be "born of water and the spirit" to enter the kingdom of God. Dr. Turner explores interpretations of this phrase:
- **Natural and Spiritual Birth:** Turner finds this unlikely as "born of water" wasn't a common ancient expression for physical birth.
- **Christian Baptism:** Turner deems this anachronistic for Nicodemus.
- **Jewish Ritual Purification and John's Baptism:** Turner sees some connection here but suggests a broader understanding.
- **Old Testament Prophecies of Eschatological Renewal:** Turner favors this view, citing Isaiah 44:3-5 ("I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your offspring...") and Ezekiel 36:25-27 ("I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you will be clean... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you... I will put my spirit in you..."). He suggests "born of

water and the spirit" could be understood as "born of water, that is to say, born of the spirit."

- Jesus highlights Nicodemus' lack of understanding despite being "Israel's teacher."
- Jesus speaks of heavenly things and his pre-existence: "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, that would be Jesus."
- The narrative concludes with the analogy of Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness and the necessity of believing in the Son of Man to have eternal life.
- Dr. Turner believes John 3:16-21 represents an editorial comment by John the Evangelist, emphasizing God's love for the world, the gift of his Son, and the judgment that comes upon those who do not believe. This illustrates "realized eschatology" in John, where belief and judgment are present realities.

4. The Ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist (John 3:22-36):

- This section contrasts their baptisms and the growing popularity of Jesus' ministry.
- John the Baptist humbly acknowledges his subordinate role: "He, Jesus, must become greater, I must become less" (John 3:30). He sees himself as the "friend of the bridegroom," whose joy comes from the bridegroom's happiness.
- Dr. Turner posits that John 3:31-36 is likely an editorial commentary by John the Evangelist, highlighting the superiority of the one who comes from above (Jesus) and the importance of accepting his testimony.
- Verse 34 is noted for its slightly interpretive translation in the NIV regarding who gives the Spirit without limit. Dr. Turner clarifies the text simply says "he gives the Spirit without limit," likely referring to God giving the Spirit to Jesus without any restriction. This connects to John 1:32-33 where the Spirit remains on Jesus.
- Verses 35-36 reiterate the Father's love for the Son and the consequences of believing or rejecting him.

5. Jerusalem at the Time:

- Dr. Turner briefly discusses the physical layout of Jerusalem and the temple area, acknowledging uncertainty about the precise location of the temple cleansing (potentially the outer courts or even streets). He shows images of the Western Wall and possible areas where commercial activity might have occurred.

6. Literary Structure and Theological Concerns:

- Dr. Turner emphasizes the literary structure of John 3, with the narrative of the conversations followed by editorial interpretations.
- He highlights the implicit Trinitarian theology in John 3, showing the Father sending the Son and equipping him with the Holy Spirit, and Jesus in turn sending the Spirit to his church. He discusses the Greek words *apostello* and *pempo* used for the Father sending Jesus, emphasizing Jesus as the Father's fully empowered agent (*shaliach* in rabbinic terms).
- The sending of the Spirit doesn't stop with Jesus but extends to the church, enabling worship "in spirit and in truth," empowering the apostles, and being breathed upon the disciples in John 20:22.

7. The Significance of Nicodemus:

- Dr. Turner suggests Nicodemus represents those in John's Gospel who were drawn to Jesus by his signs but lacked deep commitment.
- His initial acknowledgment of Jesus as a teacher from God is seen as "damning Jesus with faint praise."
- Nicodemus' character evolves throughout the Gospel, as seen in his later defense of Jesus in John 7 and his involvement in Jesus' burial in John 19 alongside Joseph of Arimathea, suggesting a potential, albeit perhaps initially hesitant, move towards belief.
- The briefing concludes with a challenge to the viewer to examine their own response to Jesus: are they merely curious, or are they seeking the transformative new birth offered by his Spirit?

Quotes:

- "zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17, quoting Psalm 69:9).
- "destroy this temple, I'll raise it again in three days" (John 2:19).
- "Jesus was not entrusting himself to them... for he knew what was in each person" (John 2:24-25).
- "you can't see the kingdom of God unless you're born again" (John 3:3).
- "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the spirit" (John 3:5).

- "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).
- "the one whom God sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without limit" (John 3:34).
- "my words are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).
- "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21).

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented in Dr. Turner's Session 5 on John 2:13-3:36, providing an overview of Jesus' early ministry in Jerusalem and its theological implications as discussed in the source.

4. Study Guide: Turner, John, Session 5, John 2:13-3:36

Study Guide: John 2:13-3:36

Quiz

1. Describe the scene Jesus encountered at the temple in Jerusalem. Why did he react the way he did?
2. What question did the Jewish leaders ask Jesus after he cleared the temple? What was Jesus' cryptic response, and how was it later understood by his disciples?
3. According to John 2:23-25, how did many people respond to Jesus' signs in Jerusalem? How did Jesus, in turn, respond to their belief?
4. Who was Nicodemus, and why did he come to see Jesus? What was the initial statement Nicodemus made to Jesus?
5. What was Jesus' surprising first response to Nicodemus? What was the source of Nicodemus' confusion regarding Jesus' statement?
6. Explain Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus about being "born of water and the Spirit." What Old Testament passages might shed light on this metaphor?
7. According to the text, when does the narration of Jesus' direct words to Nicodemus likely end in John 3? What follows this, and what is its purpose?
8. Describe John the Baptist's response when his disciples expressed concern about Jesus also baptizing. What does John say about his own role in relation to Jesus?
9. According to John 3:34-36, what is said about God giving the Spirit to Jesus? What are the consequences of believing and not believing in the Son?
10. What might Nicodemus represent in the Gospel of John regarding the different kinds of responses to Jesus? How does his later appearance in the Gospel further develop this portrayal?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Jesus found people in the temple courts engaged in financial transactions, selling sacrificial animals and exchanging money. He reacted by driving them out, overturning tables, and telling them to stop turning his Father's house into a

market. This suggests he was angered by the commercialization and potential corruption of worship.

2. The Jewish leaders asked Jesus, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." His disciples later understood that he was speaking about the temple of his body, referring to his death and resurrection.
3. Many people in Jerusalem saw the signs Jesus was performing and believed in his name. However, Jesus did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and what was in each person, indicating that faith based solely on signs was not the deep, saving faith he desired.
4. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruling teacher of the Jews, a person of prestige and status. He came to see Jesus at night, acknowledging that Jesus must be a teacher who has come from God because of the signs he was performing.
5. Jesus' first response to Nicodemus was, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." Nicodemus was confused because he interpreted "born again" literally, questioning how an old person could re-enter their mother's womb to be born a second time.
6. Jesus explained that one must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God, contrasting physical birth with spiritual rebirth. Passages like Isaiah 44:3-5 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 connect water with spiritual cleansing and the outpouring of God's Spirit, suggesting a holistic renewal.
7. The narration of Jesus' direct words likely ends at John 3:15. Verses 16-21 follow as an editorial comment by the author (John the Evangelist), offering an interpretive theological reflection on the significance of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, emphasizing God's love and the consequences of belief and unbelief.
8. John the Baptist responded with humility, stating that a person can only receive what is given to them from heaven and reiterating that he is not the Messiah but the one sent ahead of him. He compared himself to the friend of the bridegroom, whose joy is in the bridegroom's happiness, and declared that Jesus "must become greater; I must become less."
9. John 3:34 indicates that God gives the Spirit without limit to the one whom God has sent (Jesus). Verses 35-36 state that the Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands, and that whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, while whoever rejects the Son will not see life, and God's wrath remains on them.

10. Nicodemus may represent those who are initially drawn to Jesus by his signs and perhaps acknowledge his divine origin, yet struggle to fully understand and commit to his teachings. His later appearances show a gradual development, from a cautious inquirer to someone who defends Jesus and ultimately helps with his burial, suggesting a potential journey towards deeper faith.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the significance of Jesus cleansing the temple in John's Gospel, considering its placement early in his ministry compared to the Synoptic Gospels. Discuss the potential reasons for this difference and what theological points John might be emphasizing.
2. Explore the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus as a pivotal teaching moment in John's Gospel. Discuss the misunderstandings that arise, the key theological concepts Jesus introduces (such as being born again, the role of the Spirit, and salvation through belief), and the lasting implications of this dialogue.
3. Compare and contrast the responses to Jesus presented in John 2:23-25 and the encounter with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21. What does John seem to be conveying about the nature of belief, the role of signs, and the deeper understanding Jesus seeks from individuals?
4. Examine the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus as portrayed in John 3:22-36. Analyze John's statements about his own role, Jesus' increasing importance, and the theological truths presented in the editorial commentary that follows.
5. Discuss the literary structure of John 3, focusing on the interplay between narrative and editorial commentary. How does this structure contribute to the reader's understanding of the events and the theological significance of Jesus' words and actions in this chapter?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Passover:** A major Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- **Temple Incident:** Jesus' act of clearing the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals from the temple courts in Jerusalem.
- **Sign (in John's Gospel):** Miraculous acts performed by Jesus that point to his divine identity and purpose.
- **Believe (in John's Gospel):** A term that often implies a deep trust and commitment to Jesus, going beyond mere intellectual assent or belief in his ability to perform miracles.
- **Born Again:** A spiritual rebirth or regeneration necessary to see and enter the kingdom of God, involving the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Born of Water and the Spirit:** A phrase used by Jesus to describe the process of spiritual rebirth, often interpreted in light of Old Testament prophecies of spiritual cleansing and renewal.
- **Nicodemus:** A Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council who comes to Jesus by night seeking understanding.
- **Realized Eschatology:** The theological concept, prominent in John's Gospel, that the blessings and judgments associated with the end times are already present and experienced in the person and ministry of Jesus.
- **Shaliach:** A Hebrew term referring to a person who is sent with the authority and representing the one who sent them; applied to Jesus as the Father's agent.
- **Testimony (of John the Baptist):** John the Baptist's role as a witness to Jesus, declaring him to be the Messiah and the Lamb of God.

5. FAQs on Turner, John, Session 5, John 2:13-3:36, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: John 2:13-3:36

1. What was the significance of Jesus clearing the temple in Jerusalem?

Jesus' action of clearing the temple, by driving out those involved in financial transactions and the sale of sacrificial animals, was a dramatic assertion of his authority and a prophetic statement. While these activities served a necessary function for temple worship, their location or the dishonest manner in which they were conducted was likely the issue. More fundamentally, Jesus' act symbolized a purification of the people of God and hinted at a coming shift in how and where God would be worshiped, foreshadowing a time when worship would be "in spirit and in truth" rather than tied to a specific physical location. It also served as a point of contention with the Jewish leaders, who questioned his authority to perform such an act.

2. How did the Jewish leaders respond to Jesus' clearing of the temple, and what was Jesus' cryptic reply?

The Jewish leaders responded by demanding a sign to prove Jesus' authority to cleanse the temple, asking, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus replied with the enigmatic statement, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." The Gospel of John clarifies that Jesus was not speaking of the physical temple building, which had been under construction for 46 years, but of the "temple of his body." This statement was a veiled prophecy of his death and resurrection, which his disciples would later remember and understand.

3. What is the meaning of the statement that many believed in Jesus' name when they saw his signs in Jerusalem, but Jesus did not entrust himself to them?

This passage highlights a distinction in the nature of belief. While many people in Jerusalem were impressed by the miraculous signs Jesus performed and, as a result, "believed in his name," this belief was based on observable wonders rather than a deep, transformative faith. The author of John notes that Jesus did not entrust himself to these believers because he knew the hearts of all people and understood the superficiality of their faith. This sets the stage for the encounter with Nicodemus, who initially approaches Jesus based on the recognition of his miraculous abilities.

4. Who was Nicodemus, and why did he come to Jesus at night?

Nicodemus is described as a Pharisee and a prominent "ruling teacher of the Jews," indicating he was a man of significant religious authority and status within the Jewish community. The text mentions that he came to Jesus "at night," and while the exact reason is not explicitly stated, it is implied that he sought this private meeting perhaps out of caution due to his position and the potential opposition from other Jewish leaders, or perhaps out of a desire for a less public, more personal discussion about Jesus' identity and teachings.

5. What is the significance of Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus that one must be "born again" to see the kingdom of God?

Jesus' statement that "unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" is the central point of his conversation with Nicodemus. It emphasizes the necessity of a radical, transformative work of God in a person's life for them to understand and enter God's kingdom. Nicodemus initially misunderstands this literally, thinking of a second physical birth. Jesus clarifies that this new birth is "of water and the Spirit," signifying a spiritual renewal and cleansing that is essential for a relationship with God and entry into his kingdom.

6. What are the possible interpretations of being "born of water and the Spirit"?

There are several interpretations of this phrase. One common but less likely interpretation is that "water" refers to natural birth (amniotic fluid) and "Spirit" to spiritual birth. Another view connects "water" to Christian baptism, though this is anachronistic given the context. A more compelling interpretation, drawing from Old Testament prophecies like Isaiah 44:3-5 and Ezekiel 36:25-27, understands "water" as a metaphor for spiritual cleansing and renewal, closely linked with the outpouring of God's Spirit. In this view, being born of water and the Spirit is essentially being born through a spiritual transformation initiated and empowered by God's Spirit, often associated with cleansing and a new heart. It's also suggested that "water, even the Spirit" could be a way of emphasizing that the spiritual rebirth is being described.

7. How does the narrative in John 3 transition from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus to the discussion about John the Baptist's ministry?

Following the account of Jesus and Nicodemus, the narrative shifts to describe the concurrent ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus is baptizing in Judea, while John continues to baptize in Enon near Salim. A debate arises among John's disciples concerning the significance of ceremonial washing in light of Jesus' growing popularity. John the Baptist humbly clarifies his subordinate role to Jesus, stating that he is not the Messiah but the one sent ahead of him. He uses the analogy of the friend of the bridegroom, whose joy is found in the bridegroom's success, declaring, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

8. What does Nicodemus' later appearances in the Gospel of John suggest about his response to Jesus' teachings?

Nicodemus reappears twice later in John's Gospel. In chapter 7, during a debate among the Jewish leaders about Jesus, Nicodemus reminds them of the importance of hearing Jesus out before condemning him, showing a degree of fairness and perhaps a growing conviction. In chapter 19, after Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea in providing a costly burial for Jesus' body. This public act of respect and care suggests a significant shift in Nicodemus' allegiance, indicating that he likely became a believer in Jesus, even if his initial understanding was limited. His journey reflects a progression from initial curiosity and confusion to a more profound commitment, although the text leaves some ambiguity about the exact timing and nature of his full belief.