

KEY STUDY VALUES

Below are the key values behind reading the bible like a human being. The phrases are intentionally in pithy, memorable form so you can easily remember and apply them:

EXPERIENCING JESUS

We study to experience the human Jesus personally, not to learn what to believe or how to behave.

DON'T BE HALF-BRAINED

Your rational brain knows God, your emotional brain experiences him. You need to study with both.

EMOTIONS HAVEN'T CHANGED

Human brains and emotions haven't changed in 2000 years, so applying my life experience to scripture can help me understand it.

NO MAGIC JESUS

We don't make up 'Magic Jesus' explanations to avoid acknowledging his humanity. (We also don't explain away the miracles in the bible to downplay his divinity!)

MAKE STUFF UP!

We can use imagination to fill in the missing details without needing to get every fact exactly right, because we aren't making doctrine. Our emotional brain insights don't replace sound doctrine, they are tested by it.

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE WITH THE EMOTIONAL BRAIN

How to Read the Bible Like a Human Being is designed to revitalize and deepen your connection with scripture by studying it with the lesser-used side of your mind—the emotional brain. Using a different brain means that these studies have entirely different goals, use different tools and look for different things than most others. Here’s a quick overview of what makes this approach unique.

Our goal is to experience Jesus’ humanity. The emotional brain learns by *immersing itself* in a thing, so we want to visualize and experience his human life on earth. We feel the wooden mast rocking on Peter’s boat, breathe the odor of fish and sweat, hear the timbers groan as it rides the waves.

GOAL

To experience Jesus’ humanity

But the rational brain learns by *standing outside* a thing, at an objective distance, to remove messy emotions from your thinking and focus on the facts. If your rational side is in charge of buying a car, you research the gas mileage, cost of ownership, etc. before you ever set foot on a car lot. You want to know all *about* the car so you can make a rational decision. The experience of cruising down the boulevard in a candy-apple-red ragtop while the hot girls ooh and aah is just a distraction.

The rational mind is great tool for learning good doctrine, applying the Word to daily life, and for grasping abstract concepts like grace, forgiveness or glory. But there’s a hidden down-side: *the rational approach works by creating distance between you and the Jesus you study*. It’s the difference between looking at the ten-thousand-foot view of a map versus actually walking the countryside, or reading a textbook about hormones versus finding the love of your life. You can’t fully grasp God’s love without loving him and being loved—the experience is a crucial part of understanding it. In the same way, you can’t fully understand scripture without experiencing it with your emotional brain.

EXAMPLE: HARVESTING GRAIN ON THE SABBATH

- To learn the rational truth in a passage, I read a commentary exploring Jesus’ view of Sabbath-keeping, or find a lesson in those verses I can apply to my daily life.
- To *experience* the passage with the emotional brain, I get some heads of wheat, rub them between my palms and eat some of the wheat berries to see what it was like.

A DIFFERENT PROCESS

While the rational brain gets its information through words, facts and concepts, the emotional brain understands through *image, experience and metaphor*. One way to grasp Jesus or Peter or John with your emotional brain is to put yourself in their shoes and experience what they did. So pop those

wheat berries in your mouth—and chew, and chew, and *chew* those gummy little beads! You’ll probably come away thinking, “I’d have to be *really* hungry to scavenge a meal like this!” And then you wonder, “How often were the disciples hungry? What was their everyday life really like?” Now you are thinking with your emotional brain.

Sometimes we can replicate a first-century Israelite’s experience, but more often we recreate it through *Visualization*. That’s the first of the three key tools for emotional-brain study. Picture Jesus walking the narrow alleys of Capernaum, with ten-foot-high, black stone walls on either hand. Or imagine the smells as he wakes in Peter’s house after sleeping in his clothes in a room with twelve other guys! I you can *see* a scene, you can *feel* it, and if you feel it, you can *identify* with it.

Our second tool is experiencing the *Emotions* in the pictures we make. For example, Jairus recruits Jesus to deal with the emergency of his dying daughter (see Mark 5:22-35), but Jesus gets distracted along the way—and the girl dies! How would he feel? How would YOU feel if you were

GROUND RULES

To keep focused on using our emotional brains, we DO NOT discuss **theology** or **application!**

Jairus? People in Jesus' day had the same emotions we do, so to understand their emotions we just have to ask what we'd feel if we were in that situation (after correcting for cultural differences).

Doing the work to build a rich, emotion-filled picture of the story triggers connections between Jairus' experiences and our own. That's called *Identification*, our third tool. We remember times when we've gotten delayed on the way to something important, and feel the sinking dread in our gut that goes with it. When we can connect our own memories with the experience of a bible character, we truly understand, with our hearts as well as our heads. This is what learning with the emotional brain feels like—that instinctive sense that you 'get' someone. And that's what we're going for!

Example: in the shortest verse in the bible, where "Jesus wept" over Lazarus' death (John 11:35), a rational bible study might ask:

- *Doctrinal questions:* What quality of God do Jesus' tears reveal?
- *Behavioral questions:* How is my heart broken for those who are suffering in my city?

An emotional brain study might ask:

- *Visualization questions:* Picture Jesus' tears running down his cheeks. Where do they fall?
- *Emotion questions:* What is going on in Jesus' heart at that moment?
- *Identification questions:* When in your life did someone you loved die unexpectedly? What did that feel like? How was Jesus' experience with Lazarus like yours?

A DIFFERENT LEARNING METHOD

Therefore, your role as facilitator is to keep the group focused on *visualizing* the scene in detail, exploring the *emotions* of the characters, and *identifying* life experiences where they felt the same. To maintain this focus on the emotional brain, you will actually have to steer people *away* from discussing theology and life application!

These studies use an interactive *Discovery Learning* method, where facilitators ask open questions to help participants develop their own insights. Adults remember up to **ten times** as much when they discuss something versus being lectured, and they tend to learn best from each other. So, there is NO teaching in these studies! Your job as facilitator is to ask questions and create an environment where participants can learn, not to feed people truth. Everyone participates, everyone learns, everyone shares. The beauty of this approach is that since it uses our own life experience to understand biblical characters, anyone who has life experiences (that's all of us!) has something valuable to contribute, from brand new believers to those who've studied scripture for decades.

TRADITIONAL TEACHING METHOD (DO NOT DO THIS!)

- **Teaching:** I study the passage, then teach my insights to the group in lecture format.
- **Passive Participants:** the group mostly listens, either to me or to a video.
- **Limited Discussion:** questions cover what I've already taught or is on the video, and often have a 'right' answer.
- **Teacher-centered:** I set the agenda: we focus on what *I* want people to learn.

ADULT LEARNING METHOD

- **Facilitate:** I ask open questions that have multiple answers and create discussion.
- **Engaged Participants:** everyone has an active role. We study the passage together.
- **Open Discussion:** there is no 'fill in the blank.' Open questions let participants freely explore and bring their own experiences to bear on the passage.
- **Participant-centered:** participants direct the discussion toward what *they* want to learn.

LEADING A GROUP SESSION

THE MEETING OUTLINE

The second page of the leader's materials for each session (like page fourteen) is the *Meeting Outline*, listing the tasks you do at the **beginning** of the session. Note that some tasks you do weekly, some only in weeks one and two, and some just in week one. Here's a brief explanation of each task.

1. **Read the Passage** (all three sessions)
Have someone read this aloud at the beginning of all three sessions. It's what we're studying!
2. **Fifteen Facts Reminder** (sessions one and two)
This program sends participants a text each weekday featuring interesting cultural and historical facts about the passage, to keep people's heads in the study during the week. Sign up by texting-to-join *the week before* starting a new passage (you sign up once for *each passage*).
3. **Notetaking Reminder** (sessions one and two)
When it's time to write narratives, it is *extremely* helpful to have jotted down your insights on the note-taking pages of the *Workbook*. You'll have to remind people repeatedly.
4. **Play the Setting Video** (sessions one and two)
This video shot in Israel helps people visualize where the story took place. Seeing it twice keeps the visuals fresh in your second week of discussion.
5. **Debrief the Setting Video** (session one only)
Debriefing on what caught people's attention increases engagement and doubles retention.
6. **Debrief the Background Info** (session one only)
Have people read this at home before week one to save time. Discuss each section for a few minutes using the provided questions so the group can learn from each other's insights.

THE DISCUSSION (WEEKS ONE AND TWO)

Each section of discussion questions tells you where to focus and offers a *Key Analogy* to help people connect their own life experiences with scripture. Ask **each Main Question** in the left column (they are on the note-taking pages of the *Workbook*); use the *Follow-up Questions* on the right to keep the discussion going. Adults retain **ten times** more of what they actively discuss than what they are taught, and are far more engaged when they contribute. The questions are designed to foster exploration; not lead to predetermined 'right' answers. You'll find yourself making up additional questions on the fly when you want to continue to pursue an interesting thread of the conversation.

MAKING UP QUESTIONS: EXAMPLES

You ask a question from the *Leader's Guide*: "How do you think Jesus felt when Peter left everything and followed?" It's a feeling question, but the group is stuck in the rational: with the actions Jesus took or what they meant instead of what he felt. So, create a follow-up question, by:

- **Rephrasing:** "How do you think it impacted Jesus' heart when Peter left his job to follow?"
- **Asking for emotion words:** "Look at the Emotion Diagram in the notetaking pages of the *Workbook*, and give me some feeling words this time. What did Jesus feel in that moment?"
- **Making the question visual:** "Looking over his shoulder, Jesus sees Peter running down the beach after him, sand flying off his sandals and his robe billowing behind. What expression is on Jesus' face?"
- **Personalizing it:** "How do you think Jesus felt when YOU said yes to following him?"
- **Accessing life experience:** "When you've recruited people before, how did it feel when they said 'Yes'?"

PREPARING TO WRITE NARRATIVES (END OF WEEK TWO)

Each person writes a *Visual Narrative* about the passage on their own during week two, and we share our narratives in week three. So, at the end of session two you need to do some prep.

The **first time** the group will write narratives, watch the seven-minute *Writing Your First Narrative* video together (it's at www.LikeaHumanBeing.com/videos). It describes the process, and helps people overcome their fears so they can really enjoy writing. (NOTE: if anyone joins the group later, just give them the link to the video to watch on their own.)

Next, read the list of possible characters in the *Narrative Assignment* section (e.g. page eighteen). Then each person selects a character to write as. Picking up front increases participants' commitment to actually doing the task. Writing as Jesus is a little intimidating at first, but can be very rewarding!

KEY WRITING INSTRUCTIONS IN THE VIDEO (REPEAT THIS!)

- Set a timer and write for one hour only!
- When the hour is over you are finished, no matter what point in your story you are at.
- Free write. Don't try to plan it all out—just start writing.
- Just write! Don't go back and edit, check spelling or grammar, etc. You'll read the story aloud, so as long as you can read your own writing, the grammar nazi stuff doesn't matter.
- Make it visual! Describe it in rich detail, to help us **see** what you are writing about.

SHARING NARRATIVES (WEEK 3)

The highlight of the study is reading our narratives to each other in session three. Directions are on the last page of the *Meeting Outline* (e.g. page eighteen) in the *Leader's Guide*. Here's what you do:

1. Ask who wants to go first!
2. Before the start, ask that person to share which character they were writing as.
3. The person reads their story out loud.
4. Discuss the story immediately afterward using the *Debriefing Questions* in the *Leader's Guide* (they are slightly different each week). The first question always goes to the reader (it feels safer if you get to comment on your own story before others give feedback).
5. If you have extra time, read one or both parts of the narrative in the *Leader's Guide* and discuss.

To write about a character, you have to identify with them: think their thoughts and feel what they feel, then describe it. That identification is the main goal of the study! Most people say that what they've been learning about the passage all comes together when they write their narrative.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

OVERVIEW

We'll treat the story of the Cleansing of the Temple in John 2:13-22 in two main segments:

- Jesus runs off the vendors (2:13-15)
- The conversation afterward (2:16-22)

PREPARATION

- Read** the passage carefully.
- Watch** the *Setting Video* here: LaHB.net/free
- Study** the *Background Info*. (No research links are provided for this sample study.)
- Review** the discussion questions in this *Leader's Guide*.
- ACTIVITY:** Make sure you have materials (twine) for weaving whips in week one!
- Read** the provided *Narrative* and study the footnotes for more background info.
- If this is your **first study**, remember to save seven minutes at the end of week two for a narrative orientation video.



JOHN 2:13-22

SOUTH END OF THE TEMPLE PLATFORM

MEETING OUTLINE

Each Session

- Welcome!
- Orientation: If this is your group's **first-ever** session, watch the video at LaHB.net/orient.
- Have someone read the passage aloud, while others follow along in the *Workbook*.

Week One and Two

- Notetaking Reminder: take notes to prepare to write your narratives!
- Play the *Setting Video* at LaHB.net/free

Week One Only

- Debrief the *Setting Video*:
 - What stood out to you in the video?
 - What does this change about your picture of Jesus visiting the temple?
 - What struck you about having thousands of animals in the temple courts at Passover?
- Review the *Background Information* in the *Workbook* one section at a time:
 - What stood out to you in this section?
 - *The Temple Mount*: What was new to you about the different sections of the temple?
 - *Selling in the Temple*: What difference does it make to the story if this is the first time Jesus saw them selling in the actual temple courts?
 - *The Temple Tax*: How does it impact you to learn about the abuses of the temple tax in Jesus' day?

SECTION I: JESUS RUNS OFF THE VENDORS | VERSES 12-15

Focus: Our main goal here is for people to put themselves into this scene and feel it. The enormous temple complex was a source of pride for the Jewish nation, and an overwhelming experience for villagers who may have never seen a three-story building, let alone the 150-foot-high Pinnacle of the Temple. The floors were inlaid marble, the huge columns were topped with capitals, and the platform was a third of a mile in length.

Next, we want to experience the shock of seeing a market set up in the Court of the Gentiles. The smells will be particularly visceral: imagine several thousand animals tramping across the marble floors, while barefoot worshippers can scarcely avoid stepping in the excrement. While the High Priest had the power to set up his market where he wanted, the priests who came from the villages to work at the feast were probably shocked and offended by what Caiaphas had done, and so were the worshippers. They would have seen this as corrupt. Use the analogy of setting up flea market booths in your sanctuary on Sunday morning to help people get in touch with how they would feel!

The ACTIVITY of weaving a rope of cords helps people identify with Jesus' emotional state. If he saw the corruption and immediately started turning over tables, what he did seems like an act of rage. But the interlude for making a whip allows Jesus to stop and think, take a deep breath and calm himself. Participants tend to see his actions as more deliberate and thoughtful (as opposed to angry and spontaneous) when they go through the same process of preparing to act that Jesus did.

Then comes the cattle drive! I imagine Jesus driving the animals south, away from the temple and toward Herod's Basilica. At the southwest corner of the platform, a 40-foot-wide gateway leads onto the Great Stair (what we know today as Robinson's arch.) My guess is that the cattle headed for the light of an opening in the walls, rather than entering the long, underground tunnel to the Double Gate.

MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. VC: Imagine you are a worshipper coming to the temple for the first time that day. What about the buildings catches your attention?
2. HQ: Jesus found vendors and moneychangers in the temple. Since Herod's Basilica wasn't considered part of the temple, what part were they in?
3. EM: How did seeing a market in the temple impact Jesus' heart? What emotions is he feeling?
4. **ACTIVITY:** Give each person three four-foot lengths of garden twine and have them imagine they are Jesus, sitting there watching what is happening while they weave.
5. HQ: Has anyone been around sheep or cattle? What happens when you wade into a group of them with a whip?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. Answer the 'Who, when, where, what' questions on the notetaking page in the workbook.
- b. The temple mount was the largest worship structure in the Roman empire. How do you feel as a Jew when you see it?
- c. If you came from a hick town in Galilee to Jerusalem for the first time, and you had never seen a three-story building, how would all those monumental buildings impact you?
- d. What was it like the first time you went to a really big city and walked among the skyscrapers?
- e. Jerusalem swelled to three times its normal size at Passover. What's it like in a town of 50,000 when 100,000 visitors come to town for a week?
- f. What kind of Gentiles came to worship here on Passover?
- g. Imagine you're a gentile 'God-fearer' here to worship in the Court of the Gentiles. How would the market affect your worship experience?
- h. What's an open-air cattle market like? Anyone ever been to one?
- i. What sounds do you hear from the vendors? The customers? The thousands of animals? Is it loud or quiet?
- j. What do you smell? What does the inlaid marble floor look like?
- k. Animals are being slaughtered and roasted nearby—how can you tell? After the meat is roasted, what happens to it? (It is carried out through the temple to a family feast.) What do you see/smell?
- l. If you'd traveled two weeks to come here and worship God, and the worship space was turned into a feedlot, how are you feeling?
- m. If he'd come here every year since he was twelve, and this is the first time a market was in the temple...how would he feel?
- n. Imagine if you went to church on Sunday and found a bunch of manned flea market booths set up in the back of the sanctuary. How would you feel about it? Could you worship there?
- o. How long would it take Jesus to make a decent whip?
- p. What are you thinking as you sit there silently weaving?
- q. When you first saw what was happening you got really angry. How does taking this interlude affect your emotions?
- r. So after weaving the whip, do you think Jesus drove out the animals in a rage? What state would you be in?
- s. If they are in an enclosure, what do they do? Here, there is a 30-foot-high stone wall all around—where would they go?
- t. When one or two groups of animals start running, what do the rest do?
- u. Look at the map of the temple mount in the workbook. If this happened in the southern part of the Court of the Gentiles, which way would Jesus drive the animals if he wanted them out?
- v. Imagine a crowd of pilgrims coming up the 50-foot Great Stair at the southwest corner, when suddenly a stampede of sheep and oxen come clatter down the stairs. Describe the scene!

6. **ACT IT OUT:** Jesus poured out the coins of the money-changers and turned over their tables. Have several in turn act out what that would look like.
- w. *Where did all these animals end up? Did the vendors get their flocks and herds back?*
 - x. *How are you feeling about all this if you are a money-changer? A priest? A worshipper?*
 - y. *What happened to the money given to the temple that was lying on the ground? Did people take it or leave it?*
 - z. *If you spent five- or ten minutes stampeding animals and overthrowing tables—what do you look like afterward?*
7. If time allows, ask one or more *Questions for Jesus* from the *Workbook*.

SECTION II – THE CONVERSATION AFTERWARD | VERSES 17-22

Focus: Our goal here is to imagine how the different groups would have responded to Jesus' act of protest. The disciples are on the sidelines—why? The only clue we have in the passage to what they are thinking is when they remember the verse from Psalm 69, that 'zeal for thy house will consume me.' So we'll look at our own life experience for clues: what's it like when a family member makes a scene and ruins Christmas? Would you have wanted to get out there and turn over tables alongside Jesus? Our own reactions give clues to how different disciples might have felt.

An interesting part of this passage is that Jesus doesn't get beaten by the crowd, or arrested. Instead, 'the Jews' ask for a sign: a curious response. They aren't joining him, but they aren't opposing him, either. I wonder if many are secretly rooting for him. Knowledge of the corruption of the priesthood was widespread, but it seems like it would take a miracle (literally!) for the people to demand change from their own leaders.

Key Analogy: A well-known religious leader comes to town, and makes a powerful, public statement about the corruption in your city government. Most of the residents agree with him—the Mayor and his cronies have been skimming off the top for years, and live far beyond what their salaries would allow. But when asked for documentary proof of his accusations, the leader says, "Burn down city hall—and the football stadium for good measure—and in three days I will rebuild them." Is that the kind of proof you were looking for? How do you react to that statement? Jesus has the ability to perform a sign here—why doesn't he? And why does he lay out a challenge to do something that is so repulsive to them?

MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. HQ: Jesus told the dove sellers to 'take these things away'. Describe his face and voice tone as he said it.
2. HQ: Picture the disciples are during all this. Where are they standing? What are they doing (see vs. 17)?
3. EM: The disciples came with Jesus to celebrate Passover. How might they be feeling

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. *Why does he treat the doves differently than sheep and cattle?*
- b. *The Greek indicates that Jesus used his whip on the animals but not the people. Does that give you a clue?*
- c. *Is Jesus objecting to the selling of doves, or the place they are sold?*
- d. *See if you can come up with five plausible reasons for why the disciples didn't join in.*
- e. *Why might Jesus not want them to get involved? (see Ps. 69)*
- f. *Roman sentries were watching from the roof of the porticos around the temple mount. How would they see Jesus' act? Would it make a difference to them if it was one guy turning over tables or a dozen?*
- g. *A devout Jew came here every year—it was tradition. How do people in church react when someone changes the traditions? Do you think some of the disciples might have reacted that way?*

- when Jesus disrupts it?
4. EM: Read Ps 69:7-11. Does the context give you any clues to why the disciples recalled this particular verse?
5. HQ: At your town's farmers' market, someone dumps all the vegetables and throws the cash registers on the ground in protest. What happens to that person in our world?
6. HQ: Why do "the Jews" ask for a sign to validate his cleansing of the temple? What are they hoping for?
7. If time allows, ask one or more *Questions for Jesus* from the *Workbook*.
- b. Imagine (or remember!) someone in your family makes a big scene at Christmas or Thanksgiving. How does that impact you?*
- i. Or are you the kind of person who have wanted to go out and turn over tables with Jesus? What's that like for you?*
- j. Several of the disciples (like Peter and Judas) thought Jesus was going to usher in a military/political kingdom and overthrow the Romans. How might that have influenced their view of this?*
- k. How about Nathaniel, the integrity person 'in whom there is no guile?' How might he react?*
- l. What clues does the fact that they remembered this verse give you about what they were thinking and feeling as they watched Jesus?*
- m. The second part of verse nine implies that the insults falling on God also fell on Jesus. What was insulting to God here? What insight does this give you into what Jesus was feeling, or why he got angry?*
- n. Let's look at why Jesus doesn't get arrested here. Who exactly are 'the Jews' in verse 18? [Note that it doesn't name a group, like 'the priests,' 'the gentiles' or 'the money changers'.]*
- o. Who is actually standing there in the Court of the Gentiles at that moment? [You had to pass through this court to get to the temple.]*
- p. Look at the reaction of the different groups. What would you think if you were a gentile God-Fearers come here to worship? A Jewish pilgrim who traveled from Galilee and found a market in the temple? A Pharisee?*
- q. Most of the priests were farmers who lived in priestly villages out in the countryside, and came to the temple two or three weeks a year. They weren't part of the grift. What would they think of having a market in the temple?*
- r. What do the Romans think of it all? They aren't interfering.*
- s. Who actually **is** in favor of having a market in the temple itself?*
- t. Why are the Jews asking Jesus for a sign to validate what he did, instead of beating him or turning him over to the temple guards?*
- u. Sum it up: why would you say Jesus wasn't arrested?*
- v. Do you think they are wishing he would do a sign to validate his protest against the market, or that he would fail and prove that his message is wrong? Why do you say that?*
- w. Jesus responds by inviting them to destroy their precious temple, and then he will show them a sign. Can you think of something in your country or community that would carry the same weight if it was destroyed?*
- x. Read the **Key Analogy** above and ask the questions with it.*
- y. You may criticize your sports team, but you will always root for them. How is that like or unlike the way the Jews felt about their temple despite the corruption of the high priest?*

NARRATIVE ASSIGNMENT – END OF WEEK TWO

If this is your group's **first time** writing narratives, watch the seven-minute "Your First Narrative" video together (it's at LaHB.net/orient). Then have each person choose a character to write about:

- One of the disciples
- Jesus
- A money-changer or dove-seller
- A priest from out of town
- A gentile God-Fearer who came from Antioch to celebrate Passover
- A Jewish pilgrim
- A Roman guard watching from atop Solomon's portico

SHARING NARRATIVES – WEEK THREE

Each person reads their narratives one at a time to the group.

Ask the author:

1. Before reading: Who is your character? Anything you want to tell us before you read your story?
2. After the story: What did you learn about your character by writing his/her story?

Debrief: After each narrative is read, discuss:

1. What did you like in this story?
2. What impacted your heart, and how?
3. What will stick with you from this narrative?

If you have time left over, read one or both parts of the Narrative in the *Leader's Guide*, and debrief.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE | NARRATIVE

The long climb between the towering walls of Nahal Prat¹ on the Jericho road was finally over. For seventeen miles they'd followed the winding path uphill toward Jerusalem through the gorge King David named 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death'. Yet no bandits had dared leave their caves in the cliffs² to attack the caravan of pilgrims heading for the feast. Instead, remembering David's psalm provided a good opportunity for Jesus and his small party disciples to discuss Abba's role as the good shepherd of Israel.

Now refreshed by a healthy night's sleep with friends in Bethany³, the group set out for the Passover market a mile or so away on the far side of the Mount Olives.⁴ They'd need a pair of lambs for the Passover feast⁵, and purchasing them at the marketplace (Hanut) on the slopes of the Mount of Olives was far easier than towing a bleating and obstinate sheep all the way from Galilee.⁶

Exiting from an olive grove on the slopes, the panoramic vista opening up before him brought a smile to Jesus lips. Spread out below was his city, the Jerusalem of Adonai's chosen people, aglow in the morning sun. Above the high walls the dazzling golden façade of the temple⁷ flashed like a brilliant mirror, forcing him to shade his eyes from the glare.

Further down the hillside streams of pilgrims were converging on the market he'd visited each spring for the last 20 years. Yet on this day it seemed strangely empty. The 'Booths of the Sons of Annas,' the now-legendary, extortionate legacy of the ex-High Priest and powerful family⁸, were nowhere in sight. Only the smaller pens and tables of money-changers in Pharisaic garb remained⁹. Motioning Judas to take the lead, the two men stepped up to the nearest table.

"Shalom, my friend," Judas addressed the vendor, as he pulled out a purse¹⁰ and selected a few coins donated by Jesus' followers back in the Galilee. "We need half-shekels for thirteen men for the temple tax."

"Very well," the Pharisee replied grumbled, wobbling slightly as his wooden stool tilted on the uneven ground. This was normally his best day of the year. At 4.2% profit per transaction¹¹, he could make three months' wages and more by sundown. But with the number of pilgrims at the Hanut far lower than previous Passovers, his wife was going to be disappointed. Judas handed over 13 denarii, plus one extra and a few more small coppers to cover the Kolban surcharge.

¹ Now known as Wadi Qelt.

² The road from Jericho to Jerusalem ran up a deep gorge that was famous for its thieves. Pilgrims going to the feasts at the temple customarily traveled in groups for protection. The parable of the Good Samaritan was set here.

³ Jesus apparently was friends with and stayed often with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany.

⁴ Several sources mention that booths were set up here for pilgrims to purchase animals for Passover, and that traditionally this market was located outside the temple proper.

⁵ One lamb was shared among a maximum of ten people.

⁶ The original idea was that a family would bring their own animal to sacrifice, but the law made provisions that those coming from a distance could purchase a lamb that met the requirements in Jerusalem rather than transport it.

⁷ Josephus tells us that "to approaching strangers [the temple] appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not over laid with gold was of purest white" (*Jewish War* 5.222–23).

⁸ Annas was the ex-High Priest at this time, but through bribery and collaboration with the Romans he maneuvered five of his sons and grandsons into the position over the next few decades. His family became fabulously wealthy from their controlling position in the temple. The Mishnah even includes a curse against his family for their money-grubbing!

⁹ The Pharisees were said to largely control the market on the Mount of Olives, so moving the marketplace into the temple both placed it under the rival priests' control and increased their profits.

¹⁰ Judas was in charge of the disciples' common purse—see John 12:6.

¹¹ Later writers like Mamonides specify that the Kolban was 8.4%, with half going to the temple and half to the money-changer. However, some commentators think this surcharge was inflated even more in Jesus' day, possibly by a lot.

“The crowd seems very small this year,” Jesus interjected, looking around at the sparse assembly as the vendor handed back the requisite number of silver Tyrian shekels.¹² “Where are the fabled sons of Annas?”

“Sons of snakes, if you ask me,” the Pharisee spat. “They’re gone—they’ve set up their booths on the plaza now,” he asserted, waving vaguely toward the Shushan Gate.¹³ “Yes, even within the Mountain of the House!¹⁴ No amount of money will satisfy them.”

“I have not seen that before,” Jesus replied evenly. “How did this come to be?”

“It was that half-Jew Herod’s.¹⁵ grandiosity that started it. Adding his own courts to Solomon’s holy ones, then erecting that monstrous basilica to glorify himself. Every year the Sadducees fill his buildings with something new: first bankers lending from the temple treasury—practicing usury in that holy place!—then courts of law, then more and more commerce. And now Caiaphas has thrown out the Pharisees who were teaching the people in the stoas,¹⁶ and replaced them with the Passover market—doubtless to line his own pockets with the fees.”

“They are selling in the very sanctuary itself?” Judas replied in astonishment.

“Yes! First it was in Herod’s Basilica, but then they spilled over into the Court of the Gentiles. Our law says that one must not take purse or money belt into the Holy Place, yet now they are teaching thousands of the sons of Israel to profane the temple! And still more: the true worshippers who go barefoot on that holy ground.¹⁷ now tread in the dung of their doves and oxen. Curse them!”

Judas jerked closer until he leaned against the table, incensed by what he heard. “Their sin be on their own heads!” he fairly shouted. “We must right this great wrong!”

“But what can we do?” the vendor replied with a shake of his head, a downcast look on his face. “Caiaphas might as well be a Roman—he certainly lives like one!—and the legions are on his side. We cannot conquer the fortress Antonia that looks down on our temple,¹⁸ let alone Rome itself.”

Jesus gently placed a hand on Judas’ shoulder to calm him. “Peace, my friend! Stay your anger. It is Adonai’s temple, not Herod’s, or even Caiaphas’. Adonai is well able to defend his own honor. Come, let us go to the temple now and see for ourselves what He is doing.”

Shuffling along with hundreds of pilgrims through the packed tunnel leading up from the Huldah gates,¹⁹ their lambs in tow, the disciples breathed the odor of the temple even before they saw it. The breeze blowing through the tunnel bore the scent of burned meat, entrails, of incense, the

¹² The priests standardized on the Tyrian shekel for the half-shekel temple tax, because it had a consistently high silver content. The extra 4% was to ensure that the temple got the ‘full value’ of silver owed it, given that the coin contained a few percent of other metals.

¹³ Now known as the Golden Gate. It faces the Mount of Olives.

¹⁴ The Mishnah calls the sacred precinct Har Habayit, or, “Mountain of the House,” taken from Isaiah 2:2.

¹⁵ Herod’s Idumean grandfather, a native of Edom, had (forcibly) converted to Judaism under the Hasmoneans, but his mother was a Nabatean Arab princess. Josephus claims he was half-Jewish. Because of this, some suggest that other than the Royal Stoa, Herod was unable to enter the temple he had built himself!

¹⁶ There is a record of the Pharisees having to meet on the Southern Steps outside the temple mount, presumably because the priests or Sadducees had denied them a room inside.

¹⁷ The Pharisees took the scripture from the burning bush where Moses was told to take off his shoes because he stood on holy ground, and applied it that ‘Holy Ground’ concept to the Temple.

¹⁸ During Passover and other feasts, the Roman authorities stationed extra troops at the Antonia fortress on the Northwest corner of the Temple Mount, in case the massed pilgrims started an insurrection. Apparently, sentries were stationed on the roof of the porticos. A door from the fortress led down a stair directly onto the mount, and more than once troops poured out of it into the Jewish holy place to violently quell some disorder.

¹⁹ The main entrance to the temple platform was from the south, where a wide plaza stood in from of the towering wall. The extensions Herod and the Hasmoneans added to the plaza above had moved this entranceway a considerable distance from where it originally stood, so large underground tunnels were constructed beneath the platform to bring pilgrims to the actual temple gates.

sweat of the crowds—and of manure. Jesus took the final step out onto the marbled plaza,²⁰ blinking in the brilliant daylight, and found himself in the middle of a feedlot.

All around were cages of doves and pigeons, here a flock of bleating lambs, there tied loosely to a post a half-dozen oxen; and all throughout pilgrims haggling with shouting vendors or shouldering their way past others in the crowd. Just ahead the doorway to the wide Court of the Gentiles stretched up to the Soreg, the barrier beyond which no non-Jew could go on pain of death.²¹ But stepping through the gate, he peered around a court filled with the tables of the money-changers and pens of sheep and cattle instead of God-fearers. Temple guards stood every 30 paces or so, carefully watching over piles and pots of coins from across the empire.²² And a small river of priests carrying sacks of coins flowed back to the treasury built into the sides of the Holy of Holies. It was just as the Pharisee on the Mount of Olives had said: the temple had become a market.

Looking around, Jesus spied an open spot in the shade of the Royal Stoa²³ and headed toward it, his disciples muttering curses as they followed behind. At the base of one of its 162 great columns they gathered, waiting expectantly to see what their master would do.

“Men,” Jesus began, as they leaned in to hear him over the din. “Wait here by this column. I’m going to cause some trouble, and it is best if I do it alone. We don’t want to get the Romans involved, now do we?” he ended with a conspiratorial smile.

“Yes, master,” they mumbled, unsure of what else to say.

Noticing a small pile of light cords (used for tying the horns of animals to the slaughter stake) at the base of the column, Jesus squatted down and weighed them in his hand, seeming to ponder their suitability. After a moment he chose the three longest, knotted them together at one end and began methodically weaving the cords into a heavier rope. After a few moments, Peter crouched down beside him.

“Master, what are you going to do? Is there some way we can help?”

Jesus stopped weaving for a moment, looked up. “Do you remember the prayer I taught you?”

“Certainly.”

“Lead the men in it while I finish up here.”

“Yes, sir,” Peter replied, feeling rebuffed. He rose, looked around the circle, and began chanting. “Our Father, who dwells in heaven, Holy is your name...” The others quickly joined in.

Jesus rose just as his disciples recited the ‘amen.’ “Thank you,” he nodded gratefully. “That helps steady my soul. Now, hang on tight to our two lambs—and watch!”

Striding purposefully back to the Court of the Gentiles, he found 20 or so crying lambs milling about inside a loosely-roped pen. A determined set to his face, Jesus rounded the pen til he was between the animals and the temple, then kicked down the corner post and waded into the flock, his woven rope flying through the air like a flagellum. “Yah! Yah!” he cried, and the lambs broke and ran, darting under the barrier and between the legs of the passers-by.

“Hey there! What do you think you are doing?” the vendor cried in anger, but Jesus took no notice. In an instant he was at the next pen, housing a dozen skittish oxen and a vendor with his back turned, servicing a customer. Again Jesus’ whip flew, and the cattle huddled back, bawling loudly. Then the wooden fence behind them collapsed and they turned and ran, crashing into the next corral and the next until the opulent marble rang with stampeding hooves. Lambs scooted every which way,

²⁰ Archaeologists have reconstructed some of the *Opus Sectile* tiles made from richly colored marble that paved the temple mount. They were discovered in the Temple Mount ‘sifting project.’

²¹ The Romans allowed the Jews to carry out the death penalty themselves for only one offense—a Gentile crossing this barrier. Signs were posted here in multiple languages warning non-Jews. Several of these original signs have actually been found.

²² Only one coin was accepted for the tax—the Tyrian shekel. Travelers tended to bring coins of large denominations so as to have less to carry and conceal. The moneychangers provided the necessary service of both providing Tyrian shekels and making change.

²³ Another name for Herod’s basilica.

women screamed and men shouted, while the priests with their money bags stood rooted to the ground, unable to comprehend what was happening to their precious ceremony.

Heading southwest, the bellowing cattle forged a path through the crowd to the nearest opening, an angle in the wall where the Great Stair led down to the *Cardo*.²⁴ bisecting the city. Through the huge opening they rushed, clattering down the grand, fifty-foot-wide marble staircase and into the city, as shocked pilgrims dressed in their Sabbath-best jumped onto the stone railings or huddled against the sides with their children to avoid the 1000-pound beasts.

Peter excitedly turned to his companions, delighted to see his master stand up to the powers that be (Peter was always for stirring things up)—only to see that the other eleven were clearly mortified. “C’mon guys—this is great!” he urged. “We’re finally doing something about these corrupt priests!”

“But... but... he’s ruined Passover!” Matthew countered, nearly in tears.

“So he has.” Shrugging, Peter swiveled back to see what his rabbi would do next.

Jesus marched up to a row of wooden coops containing hundreds of doves. Some of the vendors were angry, while others seemed chagrined that they were being called out by a rabbi for doing something they knew wasn’t kosher. Jesus stepped up on a table and glared at them, then shouted fiercely to be heard over the din.

“Take these things out of here, and your money with them!” he ordered. “My Father’s house was meant to be a place of prayer for *all* people, but you’ve made it into a den of thieves, robbing men of access to God. Out with all of you!”

Peter chuckled, looking back triumphantly at Matthew. “Remember when the Psalmist said, ‘Zeal for your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproached you have fallen on me?’ Seems like Jesus *did* take that personally.”

“I still think there might have been a more peaceful way,” Matthew replied uncomfortably.

“Suit yourself,” Peter answered, laughing. “I’m off to the Great Stair to see what happened to all those cattle.”

“Still running wild in the streets, I’ll wager,” James joined in.

“They’ll make a good catch for the poor—these merchants will never get them back! Like Mary always says, ‘He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.’ Well, see you back here in a few minutes!” Peter cried, as he turned and jogged off through the debris of the stampede.

²⁴ The monumental stairway at Robinson’s arch was nearly sixty high, one of the largest arches in the Roman empire. It led down from the temple platform, then turned left to intersect with the main north-south street of the city, which ran next to the west wall of the Temple Mount. This street was lined with stores and vendors, and would have also been packed with pilgrims at Passover.