

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
2:12-25

12. After this he went down to Capernaum, he, his mother, his brethren, and his disciples; and they continued there not many days. 13. Now the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14. And he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. 15. When he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16. And said to those who sold doves, Take these things away! Do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise! 17. Then his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house has eaten me up. 18. Then answered the Jews and said to him, What sign do you show to us, since you do these things? 19. Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. 20. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will you raise it up in three days? 21. But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. 23. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast *day*, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. 24. But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all *men*, 25. And needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.

12.--[*He went down to Capernaum.*] The strict accuracy of John's writing is noteworthy here. Cana was a village in the hill country. Capernaum was a town on the shore of the lake of Galilee, at a very much lower level than Cana. It is therefore said that Jesus "went *down*."

Capernaum appears to have been our Lord's principal residence in Galilee during His earthly ministry. "Leaving Nazareth, he dwelt in Capernaum." (Matt. iv.13.) At no place does He seem to have worked so many miracles; and on no place does He denounce so severe a judgment for its impenitence and neglect of privileges: "Thou, Capernaum, which are exalted to heaven, shall be cast down to hell." (Matt. xi.23.) It is a striking fact that though Capernaum was a wealthy and important place in our Lord's time, it has so entirely passed away and been "cast down," that even its situation has never been clearly ascertained.

[*His mother.*] Here again we see no mention of Joseph. Whether the Virgin Mary was a constant companion of our Lord throughout His earthly ministry, may be doubted. We see her here. We see her again at the crucifixion. But we see her in another place "standing without and desiring to speak with Him" when He was talking to the people, and giving occasion to the

solemn saying, "Who is my mother?" (Matt. xii.46.) Indeed, there is no proof that Mary ever saw more clearly than the rest of our Lord's disciples the whole purpose of Christ's advent, or was at all more prepared than the rest for His crucifixion and sufferings.

[*His brethren.*] There is no good ground for supposing that these were our Lord's brethren according to the flesh, and that Mary ever had any other son after our Lord's miraculous birth. For one thing, it is well known to every careful reader that the word "brethren" is applied in the Bible to many relatives besides those whom we call "brethren." Abraham says to Lot, "We be *brethren*" (Gen. xiii.8), though Lot was his nephew. Mishael and Elzaphan were called the "*brethren*" of Nadab and Abihu, though they were only cousins. (Lev. x.4.) Jacob said "to his *brethren*," gather stones (Gen. xxxi.46); yet they were his sons and servants. For another thing, it is quite possible that Joseph might have had children by a former marriage, before he was espoused to the Virgin Mary; and these children, we can well understand, would be called our Lord's "brethren." In the last place, we know that the Apostle James was called our "Lord's brother" (Gal. i.19), and yet we are distinctly told that he was the son of Alpheus or Cleophas, the husband of the Virgin Mary's sister. It is therefore most probable that "brethren" in the verse before us means "cousins," some of whom believed on our Lord, though others did not. (John vii.5.)

It is an interesting fact that two at least of our Lord's apostles were His kinsmen according to the flesh: viz., James and Jude, the sons of Alpheus. To them we may probably add Simon, on the strength of Mark vi.3, and perhaps Matthew also, on the strength of Mark ii.14 and Matthew ix.9.

[*And His disciples.*] This expression, being used after the words, "His brethren," may raise a doubt whether any of our Lord's relatives as yet believed on Him, except the Virgin Mary. It is possible that they only followed Him now out of curiosity, in consequence of the miracle He had just wrought.

13.--[*The Jews' Passover...at hand.*] This expression is another proof that St. John wrote his Gospel for Gentile believers rather than for Jews.

Our Lord's regular attendance on the feasts and ordinances of the Law of Moses deserves notice. So long as the dispensation of the Old Testament lasted, He gave it all due honor, however unworthy the hands which administered it. The unworthiness of ministers will not justify us in neglecting God's ordinances.

The exact number of Passovers which our Lord kept, and consequently the exact length of His ministry from His baptism to His crucifixion, are points on which there is much difference of opinion. For myself, I can see no better view than the old one, that our Lord's ministry lasted three years. It evidently began shortly before a Passover, and ended with a Passover. But whether it included only three Passovers, and in that case lasted between two and three years--or four Passovers, and in that case lasted between three and four years--I think we have no materials for

deciding positively. If I must venture an opinion, I think it most likely that our Lord only kept three Passovers. But it is an open question, and one happily not of deep moment. Three Passovers are distinctly named by John: viz., the one before us, the one in the sixth chapter (John vi.3), and the one at which our Lord was crucified. If the "feast" mentioned in the fifth chapter (John v.1) was the Passover, our Lord kept four Passovers. But this last point cannot be settled.

Sir Isaac Newton thought that our Lord kept no less than five Passovers. Some few writers have maintained that He kept only two. Those who wish to see the subject discussed will find it in Doddridge's notes on this place.

[*Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*] Let it be noted that this journey, and all the circumstances which attended this visit to Jerusalem, are only related by St. John. For some wise reason, the other three Gospel writers were inspired to leave out this part of our Lord's history.

14.--[*Found in the temple those who sold, etc.*] The presence of oxen, sheep, doves, and money-changers within the temple courts is easily accounted for. The animals were intended to supply the needs of Jews who came to the Passover and other feasts from distant places, and who required sacrifices. For them the dealers in oxen, sheep, and doves were ready, within a few yards of the altar. The changers of money came naturally enough, where buying and selling went on to meet the convenience of Jews who had nothing but foreign money which they wished to exchange for the current coin of Jerusalem. The tendency of the whole custom was evidently most profane. It was no doubt connived at by the priests from covetous motives. They were either connected with those who sold animals and changed money, and shared in their profits; or else they received a rent for the privilege of carrying on business within the sacred walls. No doubt they would have pleaded that all was done with a good intention! Their end was to provide facilities for worshipping God! But good intentions cannot sanctify unscriptural actions. As Dyke says on the passage, "No pretense of good ends can justify that which is forbidden by God."

When we are told that our Lord found all this going on "in the temple," we must, of course, understand that it means "in the courtyards surrounding the temple, within the precincts of the temple." But these courtyards, we must remember, were regarded as part of the temple and therefore holy ground.

I am inclined to see in this visit of our Lord to the temple, at His first appearance in Jerusalem after beginning His ministry, a partial though very imperfect fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy: "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple." (Mal. iii.1.) While the Jewish nation was expecting the appearance of a conquering Messiah with power and great glory, the true Messiah suddenly appeared in the temple and declared His presence, not by exhibiting temporal power, but by insisting on greater purity in the temple worship as the first thing which the nation needed.

That a fuller and more complete accomplishment of Malachi's words remains yet to come, I feel no doubt. But like many Old Testament prophecies about Messiah, the words were purposely intended to have a double fulfillment--a partial one at Messiah's first coming to suffer, and a complete one at Messiah's second coming to reign.

The great majority of the best Commentators hold that our Lord cast out the buyers and sellers from the temple twice; once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end. It is fair to say that Bishop Pearce and a few other writers think that it only happened once--at the end of His ministry, just before His crucifixion. But the arguments in favor of this view do not appear to me at all weighty or satisfactory.

15.--[*Made a scourge of small cords.*] The Greek word translated "small cords," means literally a "cord made of rushes." Some have thought that these rushes were used as litter for the sheep and oxen. Others have thought that such small cords as these might very likely have been lying about, after having been used for tying up the oxen. Whether the scourge was applied to those persons who brought the animals into the temple, as a sort of chastisement, as some old painters have represented the scene, we do not know. The more probable view seems to be that the scourge was simply meant to assist our Lord in speedily ejecting the sheep and oxen.

The whole transaction is a remarkable one, as exhibiting our Lord using more physical exertion and energetic bodily action than we see Him using at any other period of his ministry. A word, a touch, or the reaching forth of a hand, are the ordinary limits of His actions. Here we see Him doing no less than four things: (1) making the scourge, (2) driving out the animals, (3) pouring out on the ground the changers' money, and (4) overturning the tables. On no occasion do we find Him showing such strong outward marks of indignation as at the sight of the profanation of the temple. Remembering that the whole transaction is a striking type of what Christ will do to His visible Church at His second coming, we may get some idea of the deep meaning of that remarkable expression, "The wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi.16.)

A remark of Dyke on our Lord's conduct in this place is worth noticing. "This act of Christ is not to be drawn into imitation, because He did it as Lord of the temple by virtue of His Sonship. Therefore, the Papists grossly abuse this place that hence gather the power of the Pope to punish offenders even with corporal punishments, or to deprive princes of their kingdoms. As for ministers, the only whip they may use is their tongue, in powerful preaching against abuses. As for private persons, God has not tied their tongues, though He has their hands. As occasion is offered, they may show their detestation and dislike of corruption."

16.--[*Said...sold doves...Take these things away!*] The distinction between our Lord's mode of dealing with each of the objects of His displeasure deserves notice. The oxen and sheep He *drove* out; there was no danger of their being lost by such treatment. The money He *threw on the ground*; it might be soon picked up and carried away. The doves He simply ordered to

be *taken* away; had He done more, they might have flown away and been completely lost to their owners. It would have been well for the Church if all church reformers had blended like wisdom with a like zeal in their proceedings. In the present instance, all were rebuked and all instructed. But no one was really injured, and nothing was lost.

[*My Father's house.*] This expression is noteworthy. Whether the Jews observed it, in the hurry and confusion of the whole transaction, may be questioned. It was evidently an assertion by our Lord of His divine Sonship, and consequently of His right to vindicate the purity of His Father's place of worship. On another occasion when our Lord called God His Father, the Jews at once said that He "made Himself equal with God." (John v.18.) Some have thought that the expression is parallel to that used in the description of Christ among the doctors (Luke ii.49), and that the words used there, "I must be about my Father's business," would have been better rendered, "I must be in my Father's house."

The fact that the profane custom which our Lord here reprovved was resumed by the Jews, and that two or three years afterward our Lord found the same things going on again in the temple and again cast out the buyers and sellers, ought not to be overlooked. It is a striking proof of the desperate wickedness and fallen condition of the priests and rulers of the temple. They were deaf to all counsel and reproof and given over to a reprobate mind. The difference between our Lord's language at the second visit and that used at the first ought also to be noticed. At the first visit He only says, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise:" a place of buying and selling. At the second visit He says, "Ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matt. xxi.13.) The more wicked and hardened men are, the louder must be our protest and the sharper our rebuke.

[*A house of merchandise.*] Musculus remarks on this expression, that if the sale of animals for sacrifices called forth Christ's displeasure, much more must He be displeased at what goes on continually in Roman Catholic churches. The sale of masses, indulgences, etc., must be far more offensive to Christ than the sale of oxen and sheep.

The complete success of our Lord on this occasion, and the absence of the slightest opposition on the part of the Jews, deserve notice. It is a fact that induced some of the Fathers to call this the greatest miracle Christ ever worked. There are, however, three things to be remembered in considering this matter. For one thing, the conscience of the Jews was on our Lord's side. They knew that He was right and they were wrong. For another thing, as a nation familiar with the history of the Old Testament Prophets, they would not be surprised at an individual apparently under a divine impulse suddenly doing what our Lord did. Above all, there can be little doubt that a divine influence was brought to bear on all present, as it was when our Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and when He caused His enemies in the garden to "go backward and fall to the ground." (Matt. xxi.9,10; John xviii.6.) Here, as on other occasions, our Lord showed His disciples that He had complete power over all wills and minds, when He thought fit to exercise it; and that when He was rejected and disobeyed by

the Jews, it was not because He had no power to compel obedience. They had no power against Him except when He permitted.

The allegorical meanings assigned to the sheep, oxen, and doves by Augustine, Origen, and Bede, are too absurd to be quoted. They may be seen in the *Catena of Aquinas*. Origen sees in the casting out of the animals a type of the dissolution of the Jewish dispensation with its offerings and sacrifices.

Beza sees a peculiar fitness in our Lord's action of purifying the temple. It became Him who was to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, to exhibit the same zeal for the purity of God's house that was formerly exhibited by such men as the prophet Isaiah, the priest Jehoiada, and the Kings Hezekiah and Josiah. (2 Chron. xxiv.16.)

17.--[*His disciples remembered, etc.*] These words certainly appear to mean that our Lord's disciples "remembered" the text which is here quoted, at the very time when our Lord was casting out the buyers and sellers. It occurred to their minds as a striking illustration of the spirit which their divine Master was exhibiting. He was completely absorbed for the moment in zeal for the purity of God's house. It is one among many proofs of the familiarity of the poor and unlearned Jews with the Old Testament Scriptures. Whether, however, the disciples regarded the Psalm, of which they remembered this verse, as applicable to the Messiah, may be reasonably doubted.

[*The zeal...eaten me up.*] The 69th Psalm, from which this text is taken, is quoted no less than seven times in the New Testament as the utterance of Messiah. In the first twenty-one verses of the Psalm, the Messiah's sufferings are related by Himself. The fifth verse is undoubtedly very remarkable as coming from Messiah's lips, when He speaks of "my foolishness" and "my sins." Ainsworth says it means, "false imputation of sins." "Thou knowest if there be any such as my foes charge me with." Bonar says much the same.

The text before us shows that it is sometimes justifiable to be entirely absorbed and eaten up, so to speak, by zeal for some object in which God's glory is concerned. Moses, Phineas, and Paul at Athens, are examples of such zeal. (Exodus xxxii.19; Num. xxv.11; Acts xvii.16.)

Augustine remarks on this text: "Let the zeal of the house of God ever eat thee. For example: seest thou a brother running to the theatre? Stop him, warn him, be grieved for him, if the zeal of God's house hath now eaten thee. Seest thou others running and wanting to drink themselves drunk? Stop whom thou canst, hold whom thou canst, frighten whom thou canst; whom thou canst, win in gentleness: do not in any wise sit still and do nothing."

18.--[*Then answered the Jews, and said.*] Doddridge remarks here that these Jews were probably the rulers, because the Great Assembly, or Sanhedrim, sat in the temple, and our Lord's actions would undoubtedly come to their

knowledge without delay. This makes the question and answer which follow the more important.

[*What sign do you show...do these things.*] This question of the Jews shows us that they admitted the lawfulness of a man doing such things as our Lord had done, if he could prove that he had a divine commission. He had suddenly taken upon Himself a great and independent authority. Though neither a priest nor a Levite, He had virtually interfered with the management of the temple courts. Let Him now show that He was a Prophet, like Elijah or Amos, and they would concede He had a warrant for His conduct.

19.--[*Jesus answered...Destroy this temple.*] The meaning of this remarkable expression is either hypothetical or prophetic. It must either be rendered, "Supposing you destroy this temple," or "Ye will destroy this temple,"--"If ye kill my body," or "When ye shall kill my body." It is, of course, absurd to suppose that our Lord literally commanded the Jews to destroy Him. The use of the imperative instead of the future must surely be familiar to every Bible reader. See especially the 109th Psalm. In the present case, it is truly astonishing that anyone can see difficulty in our Lord's expression. He only used a mode of speaking which is in common use among ourselves. If a lawyer said to his client in a consultation, "Take such a step, and you will be ruined," we all know that he would not be commanding his client to take the step. He would only mean, "If you do take such a step." A similar form of language may be seen in our Lord's words, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers," addressed to the Pharisees. (Matt. xxiii.42.) No one would say that our Lord commanded the Pharisees to do this. It is a prophecy. So also, "Make the tree good" (Matt. xii.33), is not so much a command as a hypothesis. (See also Isa. viii.9,10.)

[*In three days I will raise it up.*] This is a prophecy of our Lord's resurrection. But it is a very remarkable one from the fact that our Lord distinctly asserts His own power to raise Himself up. It is like the expression, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." (John x.18.) Both the expressions deserve particular notice, because many now-a-days assert that our Lord's resurrection was owing to the operation of God the Father and of God the Holy Ghost, and that He did not rise by His own power. This is a dangerous heresy. That the Father and the Holy Ghost cooperated in the resurrection of our Lord's body there can be no doubt. It is clearly taught in many places. But to say that our Lord did not raise His own body is to contradict the text before us, and the other which has been already quoted.

Hurrion, quoted by Ford, observes: "The efficient cause of Christ's resurrection was the infinite power of God, which being common to all the Persons in the blessed Trinity, the resurrection is sometimes ascribed to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy Ghost. Christ's being raised by the Father and the Spirit is not inconsistent with His raising Himself; for 'what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son' (John v.19), for being one in nature, they are also one in

operation."

The questions naturally arise in many minds, Why did Jesus not work some miracle at once, as a sign, to convince the Jews? Why did He not at once proclaim Himself the Messiah? Why did He give the Jews so dark and mysterious a reply as the one before us? The answer to these questions is this. For one thing, we must remark, it was a leading principle in our Lord's dealings with men not to force conviction on them, but to speak to them according to what He saw was the state of their hearts. He answered fools according to their folly. (Prov. xxvi.5.) If He had given the Jews a more direct reply, He knew that it would have brought His ministry to an abrupt end, and would have led to His being cut off before the time. For another thing, we must remember that however dark our Lord's saying seemed when it was spoken, it did in effect tell the Jews of the greatest and most important sign which could be given them as a proof of His Messiahship. It told them of His future resurrection. It was equivalent to saying, "You ask Me for a sign, and I will give you one. I will rise again from the dead the third day after my crucifixion. If I do not so rise from the dead, you need not believe that I am the Messiah. But if I do so rise, you will be without excuse if you do not believe on Me." In effect, our Lord staked the truth of His mission on His resurrection. He did the same when He said that He would give the Jewish nation no sign but that of the Prophet Jonah. (Matt. xii.39.) When the Apostles began to preach, they continually referred the Jews to Christ's resurrection as the proof of His Messiahship. And why did they do so? One main reason was, because their Master had told the Jews, the first time He appeared in the temple, that the great sign they must look to was His own rising again from the dead.

20.--[*Then said the Jews, Forty and six years, etc.*] This expression has given rise to some difference of opinion. The temple to which the Jews refer cannot of course be the temple built by Solomon. That temple was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Nor yet does it seem likely to have been the temple built by Zerubbabel and his companions after the return from Babylon. There is no sufficiently clear proof that this temple was forty and six years in building. By far the most probable view is that the temple spoken of is the one repaired, or rather rebuilt, by Herod, and that the forty-six years here mentioned mean the time during which these repairs were going on, and that the entire completion of them had not been effected up to our Lord's time. These repairs, according to Josephus, had been going on exactly forty-six years when our Lord visited the temple. They were so extensive and costly, that eighteen thousand workmen were employed about them, and they amounted to a rebuilding. Moreover, the minds of the Jews would probably be full of them at this particular time, because they were of recent date, if not going on at that very time. The Greek words might fairly be rendered, "Forty and six years has this temple been building." They denote a time, as Whitby remarks, not perfectly past.

If anyone desires to see an instance of the extravagant lengths into which a good man may be led in following the allegorical system of interpreting Scripture, he will do well to read Augustine's allegorical explanation of the forty and six years. It is far too absurd to be worth inserting here.

[*Will you raise it up in three days?*] This question implies three things: a sneer, astonishment, and incredulity. There is probably an emphasis meant to be laid on the word "You." Such a one as You! Will You do it?

That this saying of our Lord, nevertheless, was not thrown away and forgotten but stuck in the minds of the Jews, though they did not understand it, is strikingly proved by two facts. One is, that the false witnesses brought it forward, though in a garbled form, when our Lord was arraigned before the high priests. The other is that the Jews taunted Him with it when He hung on the cross. (Matt. xxvi.61; xxvii.40.)

21.--[*But He...temple of his body.*] This verse is an instance of St. John's habit of making explanatory comments in his Gospel, as he goes on, in order to make things clear to his Gentile readers.

Let it be noted that as our Lord calls His own body a "temple," so also the bodies of His believing people are called "the temple of the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. vi.19.) If it was wrong to defile and profane the temple made of stone and wood, how much more is it wrong to defile by sin the temple of our bodies! St. Paul and St. Peter both call our bodies our "tabernacle." (2 Cor. v.1; 2 Peter i.13.)

22.--[*When...risen...dead...disciples remembered.*] This sentence is an interesting proof of two things. For one thing, it shows how much light was brought to the minds of the disciples by our Lord's resurrection, and how many hard sayings of His were at once unraveled and made plain. For another thing, it shows how long truth may lie dormant in men's minds without being understood, or doing them any service. It is one of the special offices of the Holy Ghost to bring things to remembrance. (John xiv.26.) We must not suppose religious teaching does no good because it is not understood immediately. It may do good long after the teacher is dead.

[*They believed the Scripture.*] What Scripture does this mean? It cannot, of course, be our Lord's saying. What our Lord said is specially added as something beside the Scripture which the disciples "believed." Nor yet does it seem likely that it means any particular text in the Old Testament about the resurrection. I incline to the opinion that it means generally the whole testimony of Scripture to our Lord's claim to be received as the Messiah. When Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples were fully convinced that the Scripture about the Messiah was fulfilled in their Master.

The expression "believed" cannot mean that the disciples then believed for the first time. As in other places, it signifies that they believed fully, and without any more doubt and hesitation. The same may be said of John xiv.1.

23.--[*Many believed.*] These persons do not appear to have really believed with the heart, but to have been only convinced in their understandings. The distinction between intellectual belief and saving belief, and between one degree of saving belief and another, ought to be carefully noticed in

Scripture. There is a faith which devils have, and a faith which is the gift of God. The persons mentioned in this verse had the former but not the latter. So also we are told that Simon Magus "believed." (Acts viii.13.) Again, there is a real heart-belief which a man may have that admits of great increase. This is the belief spoken of in the preceding verse.

[*When they saw the miracles.*] This expression shows us that there were many miracles worked by our Lord which are nowhere recorded in Scripture. St. John himself tells us so twice over. (John xx.30; xxi.25.) Nicodemus refers to these miracles in the beginning of the following chapter. (John iii.2.) If it had been good for us to know anything about these miracles, they would no doubt have been recorded. But it is well to remember that there were such miracles, in order that we may rightly understand the unbelief and hardness of the Jews at Jerusalem. The miracles which are related as having been worked in or near Jerusalem, we must remember, are by no means all that our Lord worked there.

24.--[*Did not commit Himself.*] The Greek word so rendered means literally, "Did not trust Himself." It is the same verb that is generally rendered "believe."

[*He knew all men.*] This is a direct assertion of our Lord's Divine omniscience. As God, He knew all mankind, and these seeming believers among others. As God, He knew that their hearts were like the stony ground in the parable and their faith only temporary.

Melancthon makes some very wise remarks on this verse, as to the example which our Lord sets us here of caution in dealing with strangers. It is a melancholy fact, which the experience of years always confirms, that we must not trust implicitly to appearances of kindness, or be ready to open our hearts to every one as a friend upon short acquaintance. The man who does not hastily contract intimacies may be thought cold and distant by some; but in the long run of life, he will escape many sorrows. It is a wise saying that a man ought to be friendly with all, but intimate with few.

25.--[*Needed not...testify of man.*] These words mean that our Lord had no need of anyone's testimony "about man." He required no information from others about the real character of those who professed faith in Him.

[*He knew what was in man.*] This means that our Lord, as God, possessed a perfect knowledge of man's inner nature, and was a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We should remember Solomon's words in his prayer, "Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men." (1 Kings viii.39.)

The immense difference between our Lord and all ministers of His Gospel appears strikingly in this verse. Ministers are constantly deceived in their estimate of people. Christ never was and never could be. When He allowed Judas Iscariot to be a disciple, He was perfectly acquainted with

His character.

Wordsworth observes that the two last verses of this chapter "afford an instance of the peculiar manner in which the Holy Spirit, in St. John's Gospel, pronounces judgment on things and persons. Compare vi.64,71; vii.39; viii.27; xii.33,37; xiii.11; xxi.17."

In leaving the whole passage, I cannot help remarking what a faithful picture of human nature it exhibits, and how many are the ways in which human corruption and infirmity show themselves. Within the space of a few verses, we find some openly profaning God's temple for the sake of gain, some angrily demanding a sign of Him who shows zeal for purity, some professing a false faith, and some few only believing, but even these believing with a weak, unintelligent faith. It is the state of things which exists everywhere and always.