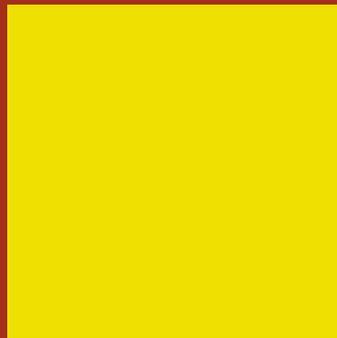


2



ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS:
TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

MODULE TWO

TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

**'JESUS AND THE
CLEANSING OF THE
TEMPLE' (JOHN 2:13 -
21):VIDEO CLIP**



Figure 2.1
The Video Clip

This scenario shows David and Sarah playing a video game. They are just starting a new chapter. This chapter of the game iChrist is about Jesus going to the temple and noticing the merchants and money changers there. The players must empty the temple court with a whip. David and Sarah discuss this chapter after completion. David indicates that he thinks this is a violent chapter and does not like it at all. Then there is a notification that Ahmed wants to join the group of David and Sarah have for this game. Sarah indicates that Ahmed is not welcome in the group because he is a Muslim and that just as in the story of Jesus cleaning the temple, he should not play a Christian game. Together with Sarah's father, the two teenagers explore what this story can really mean.

2.2 JESUS AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

The Bible is an important book for Christians. It is not a book with one story like Narnia. Nor is it a book full of poems, such as some of Shakespeare's works are. It also is not a book that contains only facts. No, it is a book that consists of many types of texts: stories about Jesus, letters from Paul, poetic texts in the Psalms and some texts that are strange to us such as Revelation. This diversity of biblical texts makes that the Bible raises a lot of questions about what they mean for us today.

This lesson concerns a story of Jesus that still raises many questions about how we should live. This story is contained in the Gospel of John (2:13-17). It tells how Jesus and his disciples go to the Temple in Jerusalem. There he finds sellers and moneychangers at work in the Temple court. He chases them away from the Temple court with a whip. Then he talks to the leaders of the Jews who are on the Temple court.

Exercise 1

Read the story about Jesus on the Temple court below. Did you already know this story and what do you think it means? Write this down below.

JOHN 2:13–21

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So, he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

2.3 THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE

Jesus lived 2000 years ago when life differed vastly from life today. You can probably imagine that people interacted differently without the internet. There are many more things that make our world completely different from theirs. We can say that they are not alike at all. Knowing what the world of Jesus looked like is important to understand a biblical text. Only then can the meaning of a text become clear for us today. We call the world of the bible the context. The exercises and texts that follow teach you more about the world of Jesus.

Exercise 2

Imagine that there is a time machine at school. You are lucky and allowed to travel to the time of Jesus. What would you like to learn about the time when Jesus lived?



2.3.1 JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** at about the beginning of our era and lived in the area the Romans called "**Palestine**" (a region in the Middle East). One place Jesus visited a few times in his life was **Jerusalem**. Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine.

In the Old Testament it is described that David, the second king of the people of Israel, made Jerusalem his capital. Jerusalem has since that time remained an important place in the religious life of the inhabitants of the area. David's son, Solomon, built a **temple** for the God of Israel. A temple is a place where people worship gods. This Temple was the center of the religious life of the people of Israel.

The Bible books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and 2 Kings describe that the Babylonians destroyed the Temple because the people had not remained faithful to God and began to worship other gods. This destruction of the temple is dated to 586 BC. A part of the people of Israel was led into **exile**. Exile means that a large part of the people was forced to live in a different place, far away from where they had grown up. Eventually, the period of the Exile ended when the later rulers, the Persians, allowed the exiles to return and build a new temple.



Figure 2.2
Map of Palestine in the
First Century AD

The construction of this **Second Temple** is described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This Temple was less grand and impressive than the first Temple. Around the year 19 BC, Herod the Great started a major renovation of the Temple. This renovation aimed to restore the Temple to its former glory. The new Temple became so impressive that even the Romans considered it a special building. The period after the construction of the second temple is called "**second temple Judaism**". This is the period when Jesus wandered in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

The temple consisted of several courts and buildings. As you can see in figure 2.3 the main temple building was surrounded by a large court. On this court also non-Jews were welcome. Inside the main temple complex, there were the Courts of the Women and of the Priests that restricted access to only Jews and priests, respectively. On the Court of the Priest animals were slaughtered and sacrificed. The Holy place was the place where the priests did all their temple work.



Figure 2.3
Photo of a Replica of
the Temple of Herod in
the Holyland Model of
Jerusalem.
Source: Wikimedia
Commons: [https://
als.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Datei:19_Shrine_of_the_
Book_005.jpg](https://als.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:19_Shrine_of_the_Book_005.jpg)

Exercise 3

Enter the correct term on the lines. Use the text above to find the correct answers.

A place of worship
and sacrifice

The temple at the time of Jesus'
life

The temple built at the time of Ezra
and Nehemiah

Forced to live in another country,
because you are not allowed to live
in your own country.

Name of the region where Jesus
grew up.

Capital of Palestine

Empire that destroyed the temple
in 586 BC.

The court around the Temple
building where non-Jews were
welcome.

2.4 THE WORLD OF THE STORY

The Bible contains many stories of Jesus. Some stories are very simple to understand, other are more difficult. The story of Jesus cleansing the temple is such a difficult story to understand. This story appears in all four Gospels. This lesson takes a deeper look at the story as John described it.



Did you know that the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke are remarkably similar in order and content? Because of this similarity, they are also called the Synoptic Gospels. 'Synoptic' comes from the Greek 'synoptikos' which means 'seen together'. The Gospel of John looks vastly different and contains several stories that you will not find in the other three Gospels.

John tells the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple court at the beginning of his ministry. The three other Gospels tell this story at the end of Jesus' life, just before he enters his last days. In this story, Jesus travels to the city of Jerusalem and visits the temple. When Jesus enters the Temple, he sees how animals are sold in the Temple for **sacrifices** and money is exchanged.



When you read a Bible text, you can ask the question: what do I notice about the text? The first thing to notice is that this text is a story. Something else that you can notice is that this story is about Jesus acting and also commenting on his act. This is striking because in most stories it is others who do things that Jesus tells us about.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.



Money changers exchanged travelers' money to adequate coins to enable them to pay the temple tax.



This story most likely takes place in the **Court of the Gentiles**. This was a large court where non-Jews were also welcome. The market was probably in a corner of this court.

Exercise 4

At the beginning of the story, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. According to the text, why did Jesus go to Jerusalem?

- A. To visit a friend
- B. To preach in Jerusalem
- C. To celebrate Passover
- D. To buy cattle, sheep and doves.

When you are reading a Bible text, it is advisable to look at what is written before or after the text. In the story that precedes the cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel of John, Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding. This wedding took place in **Cana**, a place in the **Galilean** region where Jesus grew up. After the wedding, Jesus went to **Capernaum** and a few days later when the Passover feast was approaching, Jesus left for Jerusalem. When Jesus arrived, he went to the Temple and found traders and moneychangers there.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Exercise 5

How did Jesus respond to what he saw in the Temple? How would you describe his actions? What do you think of this response?



The biblical text does not state that Jesus got angry. Yet, Jesus is often described as angry when people talk about this story. Although it is not stated, the text can be interpreted like this. There seems to be legitimate reason for Jesus to become angry, namely the presence of merchants and moneychangers in the Temple. It is important to look at what is actually written in the Bible. Sometimes we read a text and see things that are not actually in the text. For instance, there are other ways to describe Jesus' actions. Jesus could also be described as being sad about the situation in the Temple court. Reading a Bible text to understand what it says is called **interpretation**.

Exercise 6

What other descriptions of the reaction of Jesus can you think of other than angry and sad?



Jesus makes a whip to chase traders and moneychangers out of the temple. You could imagine Jesus as someone whipping around forcefully with the whip. As you read this, you may be startled by what Jesus does. In the world today, it is hard to imagine anyone doing this in a temple.

 The Bible text says that Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers. Jesus also has a whip in his hands. Yet it **does not say** exactly how Jesus expelled the merchants from the Temple. It is unclear at first glance whether Jesus used physical violence against humans and animals.

 If you compare this story with the same story in the other three Gospels, it is striking that these three do **not** mention a whip. These accounts thus seem less violent than the narrative in John.

Exercise 7

Jesus calls the Temple his father's house. Who is Jesus referring to? Why would he do this?

 The disciples of Jesus remembered a verse from the Old Testament. This text is from **Psalms 69 verse 10**. In this Psalm, a person is talking who is in a period of suffering due to following God. He lists several difficulties he is experiencing and calls on God to punish his enemies. After Psalm 110, this Psalm is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament.

 The disciples respond with a Bible text that says something about Jesus' actions. The students want to understand why Jesus cleared the Temple court.

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

After Jesus sent the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple court, the leaders of the Jews went to Jesus. Jesus was asked what sign proves he was allowed to do what he did. Asking for a sign meant that the leaders wanted to know by what authority he had acted. Jesus had to show that he had a good reason and was allowed to drive the merchants and moneychangers out of the Temple. Jesus responded to this question by making a statement about the Temple. He claimed that if they demolish it, he could rebuild the Temple in three days. This is a striking response because it is impossible for his listeners to demolish the Temple so that Jesus can demonstrate his authority.



In the Gospel of John, “the Jews” usually refers to the leaders of the Jews. These are the leaders of the Temple in this case.



When Jesus was alive, many people were expecting a different and **renewed Temple**. Still, the suggestion of Jesus to destroy the temple sounded offensive or even blasphemous to them. The rebuilding of the Temple started by Herod the Great and was still ongoing during the life of Jesus. Construction started in 19 BC and was not finished until AD 64.

Exercise 8

Think about what Jesus’ reaction is doing to you. Write down some words that come to mind. What do these words say about how you look at the story.

We have just covered the familiar part of this story. Jesus talks at the end of this section about breaking down the Temple and rebuilding it in three days. What does this have to do with expelling the merchants and moneychangers? To answer this, you need to read further in the story. At the end of the story, everything would become clear to the disciples.

But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John tells in the text what Jesus meant by breaking down and rebuilding the Temple. According to John, Jesus referred to his own body when he referenced to the temple. The temple in Jerusalem was an important place where God's presence dwelt. Jesus is depicted as a person who disrupted the temple ministry. A possible interpretation is that he wanted to draw **attention to the future**. John showed throughout the scene and questions that he saw Jesus as the new true temple that replaces the old temple. What this means is that the **presence of God** has been moved from the original temple to Jesus. Jesus became the new way of getting closer to God, without the need for the rituals of the old temple. In his response to the leaders Jesus spoke about his own death, because then he showed who he really was. The disciples eventually understood this all when Jesus died on the cross and rose again on Easter.

Exercise 9

Why does Jesus not want the Temple court to be a marketplace?



Exercise 10

What do you think of this story? Do you think Jesus was violent?

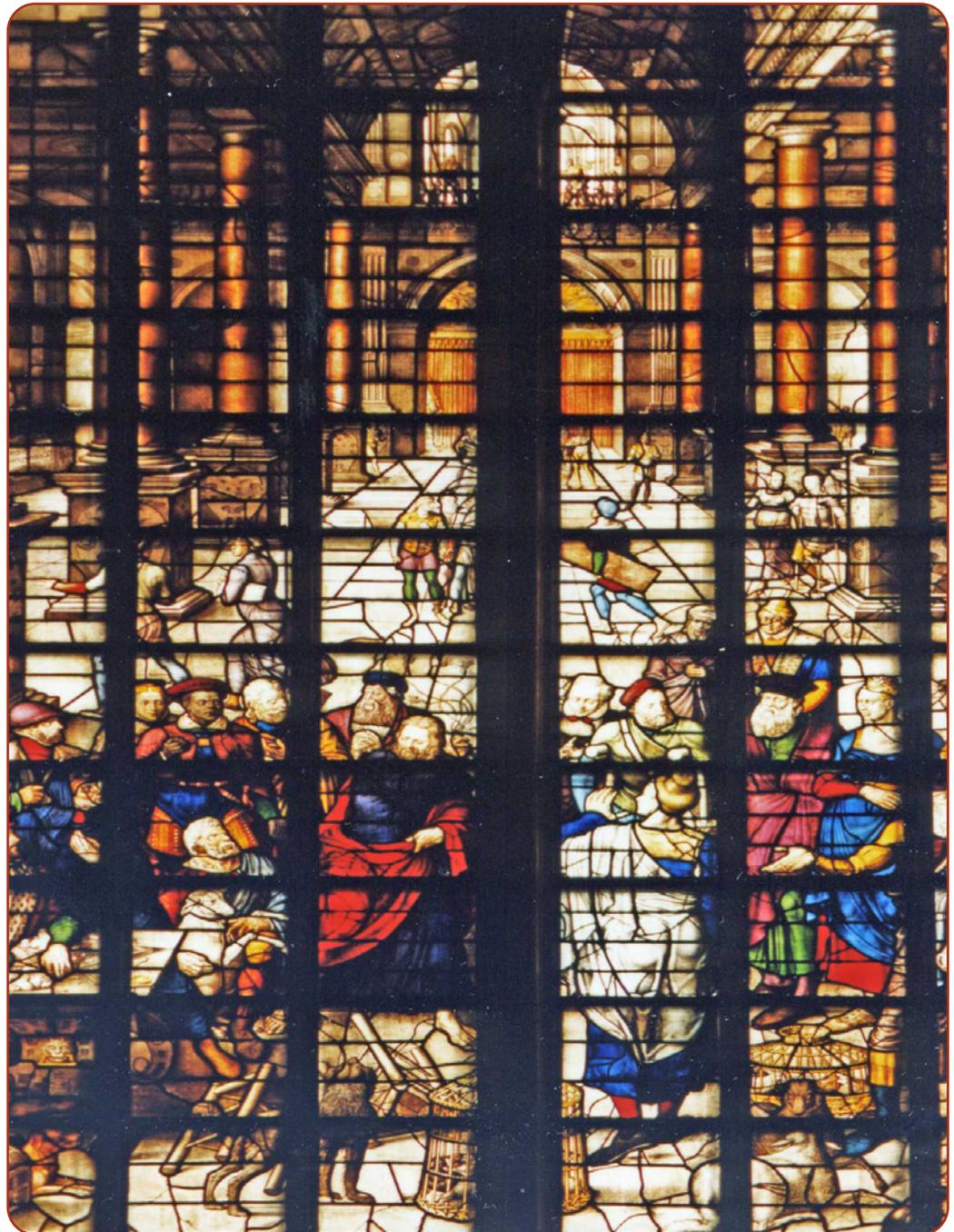


Figure 2.4
Depiction of Jesus
Cleansing the Temple
as Stained Glass in the
St. Janskerk in Gouda,
Netherlands.
Source: Gouvenaar via
Wikimedia Commons:
[https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Tempelreiniging.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tempelreiniging.jpg)

2.4 GLOSSARY

In this glossary, you will find more information and an explanation of certain terms.

Cana

In ancient times, Cana was a small village in Galilee. Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine (a region of the Middle East). According to the New Testament, Jesus was present at a wedding in Cana, where he turned water into wine.

Capernaum

In ancient times, Capernaum was a small village in Galilee. Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine (a region of the Middle East). According to the New Testament, Jesus lived in Capernaum. He taught in the synagogue of Capernaum.

Exile

Exile means that a large part of a people group is forced to live in a different place, far away from where they grew up. In Jewish tradition, the term typically refers to the period in which the Jewish people lived in Babylonia (traditionally from 597 to 538 BC).

Galilee

At the time of Jesus, Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine. This area was slightly smaller than Belgium today. Jesus spent most of his life in the region of Galilee.

Herod the Great

Herod the Great was a vassal king under the Romans who ruled over the region of Judea from 37 BC to 4 BC. Herod the Great did not have the favor of the people. By starting a renovation of the Temple in 19 BC, he hoped to gain some popularity and leave a legacy.

Holy

Holy is a concept that indicates purity and the separate status of God and everything that belongs to the divine (sacred). Holiness was an important concept in Judaism. The most important building of the Temple whole complex was called 'The Holy Place'.

Interpretation

Interpretation is the act or process of explaining or understanding the meaning of something. When you read the Bible, interpretation occurs when you try to understand what the text means.

Jerusalem

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine. Jerusalem had not only a temple but also synagogues: this is where the Jews came to pray. Even today, Jerusalem remains an important city for Jews all over the world.

Jerusalem is also an important city for Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, Jesus was condemned, crucified, and buried. Christians also believe that he was resurrected here. The apostles began to tell the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

Middle East

Jesus lived in the Middle East. That is why Christianity has its origin in this region. The term 'Middle East' refers to the countries of Southwest Asia and some parts of North Africa, such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and so on.

Passover

Passover is a Jewish festival that commemorates the end of slavery in Egypt and the journey out of Egypt as narrated in the book Exodus. It is a celebration that commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery. It is celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar and lasts seven or eight days.

Palestine

In the time of Jesus, Palestine was a region in the Middle East. After Herod the Great became vassal ruler of this area, it was enlarged. As a result, Jesus lived in Palestine, because Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilea all lie in Palestine.

Second Temple

The second Temple is the name for the Temple of Jerusalem built at the end of the Exile. It was continuously remodeled from 19 BC to about 64 AD. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed this Temple. Only one wall of the Temple remained: the western one. This wall / place is now known as the Wailing Wall.

Temple

A temple is a building devoted to the worship of a god or multiple gods. Temples have been built throughout the whole world by different societies for a wide variety of different religions.

Temple of Jerusalem

When Jesus lived, the Temple of Jerusalem was the heart of the Jewish religion: all devout Jews came here to pray and sacrifice. Only Jews were allowed to enter the Temple. Jesus also came here regularly. The Temple used to be the most important building in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital / center of Palestine.

2.5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

1 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Sarah is playing a video game with David on the computer. We see them playing with controllers in their hands.

David: *Ha, this time Ill beat you!*

Sarah: *Never! God is always on my side, you can't beat me!*

2 INT SCHOOL DAY

We see the title of the game appearing.

iChrist's adventures chapter 6 - The Cleansing of the Temple

We see a 2D 8bit video game with a Character representing Jesus in a temple filled with people: sellers of cattle, sheep and doves, Coin exchangers... (small texts in image)

In voice over we hear the computer speaking.

Computer: *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem... In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So, he made a whip out of cords, ...*

We see an 8-bit Christ with a whip entering a temple.

Sarah: *ah one of my favorite chapters!*

David: *Pff, I dont know, this one is a bit violent for Jesus, I think.*

Sarah: *no, it's just cleansing the temple!*

We see a count down 3...2...1... Cleanse!

3 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

We see Sarah and David heavily using the controllers, tapping buttons and pulling on the cords a bit.

Computer (off): *He drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"*

4 IN-SCREEN VIDEOGAME

We see iChrist 8bit version with a text in image 'get out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'

Computer: *His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"*

We see some followers of Jesus with a text 'Zeal for your house will consume me' and then some Jews with 'What signs can you show us to prove you authority to do this all?'

Then we see title screen with 'End of Chapter 6' Then we see 2 scores counting up: Guest loses to Sarah 4360 to 11575pts.

5 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

David: *Ah I'm so bad at this game... and I don't like to be so aggressive towards others...*

Sarah: *You're not bad, just a noob but you have great potential! You just need to practise a bit more.*

David: *Don't you think this chapter is a bit violent? I mean, thought Jesus was a peaceful person.*

Sarah: *Well I think Jesus is just disgusted with the people who do not, belong in the temple... So that's why is acting like that.*

Suddenly the computer gives an alert. Sarah walks to the computer.

6 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER

We see a notification:

Ahmed want to join your group 'iChrist's Adventures'

Sarah: *What is this? Once again, Ahmed wants to join our community online about iChrist's Adventures.*

David: *Uhm, Oh? What's the problem I told him about this game, he is a classmate.*

Sarah: *Yeah, I know, but he is a Muslim, he shouldn't be playing our Christian game. Maybe I need to teach him a lesson.*

7 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

David: *Why not?*

Sarah: *It's just like the chapter we just played. The sellers that don't belong in the temple is just like other believers. They shouldnt play our Christian game, either!*

Sarah's father Adam enters the room

Adam: *What makes you say that, Sarah?*

Sarah: *Ah Father! Well Jesus taught us that we should clear Gods place of false believers. Ahmed is a Muslim so he wouldn't belong in the temple either, so why would we accept him in our online community?*

Adam: *but the story doesn't say if the sellers in the temple were of another religion.*

Sarah: *uhm... yeah...that's true but why would Jesus be angry then? I think Jesus wants to emphasise his disgust with the people who don't belong there. That is why he throws them out of the temple.*

8. INT LIVING ROOM DAY

We see the 3 characters around the computer pointing at the screen.

Adam: Was he really angry? Maybe he was just upset by what he saw. I'm sure the sellers would not been thrown out if they were there to pray.

David: uhm... I don't get that...

9. IN-SCREEN COMPUTER

We see some of the details of the temple in 2D that show people praying.

Adam: The temple was an important place, where Jews in that period went for rituals, such as animal sacrifices. Why do you think Jesus went to the temple?

Sarah: Well, he also says it is his father house. So maybe he wanted to be there to pray to his father.

10 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER

We see the crowd again with the text "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

Adam: What does the crowd think of the action of Jesus later on?

Sarah: They are wondering why he is doing this.

11 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

David points at the screen.

David adds: And questioning Jesus's right to do that. So they condemn what Jesus did.

Sarah (confused): Yeah, I guess that's right ... so maybe the crowd didn't mind those sellers.

Adam: indeed, and just maybe Jesus was also acting because he had another reason. We can't be sure.

Sarah: Yeah, I that could be the case. Maybe he was talking about that the temple was primarily a place for prayer and worship. Prayer was important for Him, that is why he gave us the Lord's prayer... Maybe I need re-think how I look at that story.

David: Yeah, you should. I think a game is not the same as a temple

Adam: Now. Why don't you try to talk to Ahmed and see why he likes this game? And there is definitely no need to teach him a lesson.

Sarah: Yeah, that may be a good idea! Thanks, Dad!

12 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER

We see a text 'Message to Ahmed sent'.

2.6 REFERENCES

2.3 The world of the Bible

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Source of the images

2.2 Map of Palestine is an adapted version of: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_century_ludaea_province.gif, released under CC BY-SA 2.5

2.3 Photo of the model of the Temple of Herod is from Wikipedia Commons and is in public domain.

2.4 The world of the story

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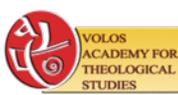


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