



# EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



## From My Window

Last month a dear friend gave me the book *IWO*. It is written by Richard Wheeler, a member of the company that raised the US flag on Mt. Suribachi in 1945. One the one hand, the story of Iwo Jima was difficult to read. Of the 21,000 Japanese who fought on the island, only 1,083 survived; and of the 50,000 American troops, 6,821 died and over 20,000 were wounded. On the other hand, no story in recent history captures the American spirit as does this five-week war. The Americans not only faced fierce fighting, but they had to overcome their own mental and physical fatigue. Speaking of the US in Iwo Jima, General Holland Smith noted that even decimated regiments can win battles. Spiritually, I see an application as we press on in truth and grace. Do you feel decimated? Psalm 142:3 says, "When my spirit faints within me, You know my way!"



## Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

Michael & Sarah finished their final year of Bible College in 2002 as a married couple. God then led Michael to pastor Lexington Baptist Church in Lexington, Virginia, and also to enroll as a *resident student* at VBTS. For the next five years, Michael traveled 4.5 hours each way to VBTS a couple times a week to complete his M.Div degree (May 2007). This has become a "legendary accomplishment" within the VBTS family. After 12 years at LBC, Michael and Sarah (Chloe, Titus, and Noelle) accepted a call to the historic Immanuel Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia where he has served as the pastor since 2014. When asked about his passion for pastoral ministry, he said, "I want to look back in 30 years and say, 'God's Word did all the work.'" The Wilburns are model servants of grace, and we pray God's blessing upon them!





## Truth for the Agora: *Jesus' Two Tragic Entries in Matthew 21*

**The Temple cleansing** in Matthew caught my attention this Easter because it immediately follows the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Chronologically, these two events are a day apart, but thematically Matthew highlights these two events as connected narratives. Why does Matthew do this?

**First, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was tragic not triumphant.** When He arrived, he entered the city with the singing pilgrims of Galilee (Matt. 21:9). Though the four Gospel records differ in the stanzas of the Messianic song, they all focus on the main idea from Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Matthew's version includes the chant, "Jesus, the Son of David." The connection of this title to Psalm 118 undoubtedly means that these Galilean pilgrims were ready to stand with their "brother from Nazareth of Galilee" as the Messiah sent to rescue them (21:11). However, Luke 19:38-44 records that Jesus wept while the pilgrims sang. Through his sobs he said, "I would that you were able to understand the things that make for peace . . . but they are now hidden from your eyes." The rescue the people were seeking was not the same rescue that Jesus was offering.

**Second, the cleansing of the temple was deeper than a mere external act.** When Jesus entered the Temple, he did not (as the Jews expected) speak against Rome, but "drove out *all* who sold and bought in the temple" (21:12). Jesus was not acting *only* against the hypocrisy of the Temple money-changers, but against all those who were exchanging their money for items of worship. Jesus directed his words to the entire crowd in the Temple: "It is written, 'My House shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a cave of robbers.'" For Jesus, *all* the worship activity in the Temple had lost its real meaning and purpose, and the worship acts of the people – in his eyes – mirrored those of a thief.

**Third, the temple was actually "possessed" by Jesus.** The Gospel of Mark adds a key comment to the temple cleansing – Jesus "would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple" (11:16). In other words, Jesus not only cleanses the Temple, but he possesses it. Indeed, this was "His House!" For a few hours, and without military escort, Jesus controlled Temple activity. His presence alone became the sole focus of the people.

**Fourth, Jesus reproves the religious leaders by quoting from Psalm 8.** When the chief priests and the scribes become "indignant" with Jesus (v. 15), Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2. What an astonishing message — Just as Yahweh receives praise from little children when his enemies refuse to honor him, so Jesus receives the praise of these little ones when the religious leaders refuse to honor him.

**In conclusion, are you making the proper connections from Matthew's passage?** For Matthew, Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem *and* his entry into the Temple were both tragic events. Neither the people nor their religious leaders grasped the moment. Does this not apply to us today? To "grasp the moment" we must view Jesus for who he is, and this should cause us to fall on our knees and worship our Redeemer and coming King.