

Luke 19:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Analysis

Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer (λέγων αὐτοῖς, Γέγραπται, Ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς, legōn autois, Gegraptai, Ho oikos mou oikos proseuchēs)—Jesus cites Isaiah 56:7, but significantly, Luke omits 'for all nations,' focusing on prayer's priority. Gegraptai (it stands written) appeals to Scripture's permanent authority. **My house** (Ὁ οἶκός μου) asserts ownership: this is Jesus's Father's house, making Him rightful Lord. Proseuchē (prayer) defines the temple's purpose—communion with God, not commercial transaction.

But ye have made it a den of thieves (ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατε σπῆλαιον λῃστῶν, hymeis de auton epoiēsate spēlaion lēstōn)—quoting Jeremiah 7:11, Jesus condemns not just commerce but robbery. Lēstēs (robber, bandit) implies violence and exploitation, not mere shopkeeping. Jeremiah's context warned that religious ritual without justice brings judgment—within decades, Rome destroyed the temple (AD 70), vindicating Jesus's prophetic critique. The accusation 'ye have made' (epoiēsate, aorist active) assigns direct responsibility to the leaders.

Historical Context

Jeremiah 7 was delivered at the temple gate, warning that the building wouldn't protect a disobedient nation. Jesus deliberately echoes this 'temple sermon,' positioning Himself as prophet announcing imminent judgment. Within a generation, the temple complex would be demolished, never rebuilt, while the church—a 'house of prayer for all nations'—would spread globally.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can religious institutions meant to facilitate worship become obstacles to genuine encounter with God?
2. What does Jesus's Scripture citation teach about the Word's authority in confronting religious corruption?
3. Where might we have made sacred spaces into 'dens of thieves' through exploitation or profit-driven ministry?

Interlinear Text

λέγων αὐτὸν Γέγραπται ὁ οἶκος μου οἶκος προσευχῆς
Saying it It is written G3588 house My house of prayer
G3004 G846 G1125 G3624 G3450 G3624 G4335

ἐστίν, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατε σπήλαιον ληστῶν
is ye but it have made a den of thieves
G2076 G5210 G1161 G846 G4160 G4693 G3027

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 56:7 (Prayer): Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Jeremiah 7:11 (Parallel theme): Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

