

Matthew 21:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Analysis

Jesus' rebuke 'It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves' combines Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, condemning the temple's corruption. God intended the temple as a place of prayer (worship, communion with God); instead, it became a marketplace where money-changers and merchants extorted worshipers. 'Den of thieves' means a hideout where robbers retreat—the religious establishment used God's house for profit while maintaining external piety.

Historical Context

The temple's outer court (Court of Gentiles) was designated for Gentile worship—filling it with commercial activity excluded Gentiles from prayer space. Money-changers exchanged Roman coins (bearing Caesar's image, considered idolatrous) for temple currency at exorbitant rates. Jesus' cleansing asserted His authority over the temple and its worship.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do religious practices or traditions obscure genuine worship in your life?
2. What needs cleansing in your personal 'temple' (heart) to restore prayer's primacy?

Interlinear Text

καὶ λέγει αὐτὸν Γέγραπται Ὁ οἶκος μου οἶκος
And said unto them It is written G3588 house My house
G2532 G3004 G846 G1125 G3624 G3450 G3624

προσευχῆς κληθήσεται ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατε
of prayer shall be called ye but unto them have made
G4335 G2564 G5210 G1161 G846 G4160

σπήλαιον λῃστῶν
it a den of thieves
G4693 G3027

Additional Cross-References

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.

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.

Luke 19:46 (Prayer): Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mark 11:17 (Prayer): And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Psalms 93:5 (Parallel theme): Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

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