

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Jesus drives out the money changers and merchants from the temple, declaring that God's house should be a house of prayer, not a den of thieves.

Matthew 21:12-17 • Mark 11:15-18 • John 2:13-22

CHARACTERS: Jesus, Money Changers, Merchants, Chief Priests, Scribes

THEMES: Holiness, Righteous Anger, God's House, True Worship

WHEN THE JEWS' passover was at hand, Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting there. The outer court of the temple, the Court of the Gentiles designed as a place where non-Jews could pray and seek God, had been transformed into a marketplace. The merchants sold animals for sacrifice at inflated prices, and money changers exchanged foreign currency for the temple currency, often cheating the worshipers.

Seeing this desecration of His Father's house, Jesus made a scourge of small cords and drove them all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables. The sound of coins scattering and tables crashing filled the temple courts as Jesus moved through with holy zeal. To them that sold doves He said, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.'

His disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.' They witnessed the fulfillment of Psalm 69:9 as Jesus demonstrated passionate concern for the purity of worship in God's house. Jesus declared, 'It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.' The religious leaders had allowed,

and likely profited from, the exploitation of worshipers who came to honor God.

The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them, showing what true temple ministry should look like - meeting people's needs and manifesting God's power and compassion. When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were sore displeased. The religious leaders were indignant at the worship Jesus received.

They challenged Him: 'Hearest thou what these say?' Jesus responded, 'Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' quoting Psalm 8:2. On another occasion of cleansing the temple, the Jews demanded, 'What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' They thought He spoke of Herod's temple, which had taken forty-six years to build, but He spoke of the temple of His body. After His resurrection, His disciples remembered this saying and believed both the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken, understanding the deeper meaning of His prophetic declaration.