

**Jesus Cleanses the Temple**  
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**Original: 9-15-24**

**Text:** Mark 11:15-19 (see also Matt. 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48)

**Gospel of Mark:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** The Cleansing of the Temple

**Central Idea of Message:** Jesus is the great purifier and reformer of the violated sacred trusts of truths and properties given to believers to steward and safeguard so that the salt never loses its saltiness.

**Introduction:** Episode 59. This appears to be the second time that Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem, having done so earlier in his ministry as recorded in John 2:13-22. Obviously, the effects of the first cleansing had not lasted long, as is evidenced by the need for this second cleansing. The first one really angered the religious leaders. This second one gets Jesus killed.

**I. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (vv. 15-16)**

- A. Jesus and his disciples came to Jerusalem (v. 15)
  - 1. They had stayed the previous night in Bethany and had left there enroute to Jerusalem, where, along the way, Jesus had cursed an unfruitful fig tree
  - 2. Jesus entered the temple complex and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple
    - a) Not the sanctuary but the temple complex, which spanned an area of about 30 acres (cf. Barclay 317)
    - b) This area was likely in the part of the temple complex known as the *Court of the Gentiles*, where things necessary for sacrifices and rituals could be purchased (cf. Plummer 262)
      - (1) Wine
      - (2) Oil
      - (3) Salt
      - (4) Ritually approved sacrificial animals and sacrificial birds [potentially hundreds of thousands (cf. Shekalim in Lane 406)

- (a) Stockyard
- (b) Cattle mart
- (c) What an odor!
- c) All of this was being done for gain and the Jewish religious hierarchy shared in the profits from the over-priced items and animals
- d) Jesus ran the buyers and the sellers out, treating each one as offensive as the other and doing so in fulfilling the obligation set forth in Zech. 14:21 (cf. Plummer 262)
- e) Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers
  - (1) The temple tax [see Exod. 30:12-16] could not be paid with foreign coinage [Roman or Greek], so money had to be exchanged into Jewish [Tyrian] coinage, for a fee, which was perhaps as much as 10-12 percent (cf. Grassmick 2:157-8; Plummer 262)
  - (2) The Greek and Roman currency "featured human portraits," which the Jews considered to be idolatrous (Grassmick 2:157-8)
- f) Jesus also overturned the seats of those who were selling doves
  - (1) The acceptable sacrifice of the poor (Lev. 14:22)
  - (2) Offered by Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:24)
  - (3) But not to be sold in the temple complex
- g) **This bazaar or emporium was likely the most profitable during this week leading up to the Passover Feast**
- h) Such a commotion in the temple complex was highly uncommon, and undoubtedly stunned not just a few onlookers!
- i) Why was Jesus angry?
  - (1) **Jesus was angry at the commercialization and secularization of the temple and its religious rituals**
  - (2) **Jesus was angry at the exploitation of the worshipers by the Jewish religious leaders**
  - (3) **Jesus was angry at the greed displayed by the chief priests and scribes**

- (4) **Jesus was angry at the desecration of the temple by the presence of animals, commercialization, secularization, greed, and exploitation**
  - (5) **Jesus was angry that the Court of the Gentiles was not being properly used for its purpose of bringing the Gentiles to faith in God [i.e., universal outreach]**
- B. Jesus would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple (v. 16)
- 1. The temple was never intended to be a thoroughfare to serve as a shortcut through the city or as an excursion for a sight-seeing tour
  - 2. The "irreverent conduct" of extortion, exploitation, and desecration taking place agitated Jesus to the point of taking action (Robertson 1:360)
  - 3. Jesus intended for the Court of the Gentiles in the temple complex to be regarded with the same respect as other parts of the complex, which the Jews certainly were not doing
  - 4. **The temple was there to bring glory to God by faithful people coming to honor and worship him with their tithes, offerings, and sacrifices in obedience to the Old Testament teachings on such**
- II. **Jesus Teaches the Truth about the Temple (vv. 17-19)**
- A. Jesus then began to teach about what he had just done (v. 17)
- 1. Jesus cited the Old Testament, affirming, again, its inspiration
  - 2. **"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Isa. 56:7): "The court of the Gentiles should have been a place for praying, but it was instead a place for preying and paying" (Wiersbe, *Exposition*, 1:151)**
  - 3. How could anyone pray there with so many distractions?
  - 4. "But you have made it a robbers' den"
    - a) More than just thieves, they were exploiters
    - b) The word expresses the violence of a bandit (cf. Plummer 263; Jer. 7:11)
    - c) **The Court of the Gentiles had become a haven for fraudulent merchants, like turning the**

**First Baptist Church into a Woodland Hills Mall or a large Flea Market**

- d) It was a place for robbers [chief priests and scribes] to huddle together and hide in plain sight under the guise of religion
  - e) This sacred place had been stolen away and made into a home for criminals!
5. People needed to be taught what God's purpose for the temple was and was not
- a) Jesus did what the chief priests and scribes had not done, and, in so doing, claimed an authority over the temple and its complex which was above that of the chief priests and scribes
  - b) For this and other actions, the chief priests and scribes, normally not allies, could not let him live
- B. The plot to kill Jesus (v. 18)
- 1. The chief priests and the scribes heard about what Jesus had done
    - a) Chief priests: Sadducees
    - b) Scribes: Pharisees
  - 2. They immediately began discussing how best to rid themselves of Jesus
    - a) They were fearing him
      - (1) Not because of his miracles
      - (2) Not because of his fearlessness
      - (3) Because the multitude was astonished at his teaching and seemingly hung on every word, seeing immediately the stark contrast between Jesus' teaching and that of the chief priests and scribes
      - (4) Because the chief priests and scribes viewed him as an imminent threat to their authority, income, and way of life
    - b) **The chief priests and scribes decided to kill Jesus because they would not convert to his way and they knew that he would make no peace with them unless they did**
- C. Jesus and his disciples exited Jerusalem when evening came (v. 19)
- 1. Not just that day, but each day at evening time (cf. Vincent 1:216)
  - 2. Did they withdraw from Jerusalem each evening because staying there would have been unsafe?

**Conclusion: Principles.**

(1) Righteous indignation is the response of Jesus to exploitation of sincere worshipers at the hands of religious leaders and business opportunists (v. 15).

(2) The actions of Jesus seem to strictly forbid making merchandise of the gospel; thus, Christians and churches must beware lest they violate this sacred trust (v. 15).

(3) The actions of Jesus also demonstrate his offense at the secularization and commercialization of the temple complex, which, by application, shows his anger at the secularization and commercialization in any way of the Church (v. 15).

(4) Jesus' cleansing of the part of the temple complex known as the Court of the Gentiles, built to be a house of prayer but hijacked for profit-making purposes, shows the importance Jesus puts on prayer and on the places where believers can gather together for individual and group prayer (v. 17).

(5) The church building is not to become a flea market, strip-mall, or a civic center, but, rather, it is where repentant sinners gather together for prayer, worship of the risen Christ, spiritual nurture, and biblical exhortation in the ways and expectations of almighty God (v. 17).

(6) "There is only one thing that prayer is not: an attempt to manipulate God. Often we think that if we pray hard enough or long enough or have enough faith, God will act. We treat God as though he is a cosmic candy machine; if we plug in enough quarters, he will give us the candy bar," (Cooper 194) but this is blatantly false (v. 17).

(7) Jesus is the great purifier and reformer of the violated sacred trusts of truths and properties given to believers to steward and safeguard so that the salt never loses its saltiness (v. 17).