

The Cleansing of a Temple

Doug Hamilton

Mark 11:15-18 And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 16 and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. 17 And He {began} to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard {this} and {began} seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

- When entering the city from the east, the first gate that one went through led directly into the temple court, which was called the “Court of the Gentiles”. This would have been a curious sight in those days for it had become a haven of commercialized corruption.
 - There were the money exchangers: Because people from all over the world were coming for the Passover, it resulted in many different foreign currencies being brought as well. In front of the “Court of the Women” were thirteen trumpet-shaped banks for the Jews to put in their offering. Some of the banks, like the second one, the “shekel of the sanctuary”, the currency was required to be Jewish. All men had to pay this tax during this time. This necessitated an exchange of funds at a poor rate with the money changers.
 - There were the sacrificial salesmen: There were also many sacrifices to be made while there. These pilgrims would bring their animals from afar, thinking they would simply make this offering. There would be individuals that would inspect their offering and unjustly declare it to be blemished. What is a pilgrim to do in this situation? These “Sacrificial Salesmen” would conveniently allow the individual to trade in his “blemished” animal for an “acceptable” sacrifice for a small fee. This was called the “CHURN”. By the way, this small upgrade fee for a lamb, goat or dove would need to be paid in Jewish money, causing the money changers to profit again.
 - There were the money-grubbing Jewish leaders and Soldiers: With every transaction, there were fees. The Jewish leaders had their temple fees imposed because a transaction was carried out in the temple. The soldiers also watched over the transactions and added occasional bonus taxes to make a little profit.
- This is the second time that we find Jesus doing this, with the first being in John 2 during the first noted Passover of the adult years of Jesus. It is similar for it said in *John 2:15-16 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove {them} all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise."*
- Jesus is quoting from two passages, Isaiah 56:1-7 and Jeremiah 7:1-16.
 - The first one in Isaiah is a passage referring to the inclusive nature of God. All people that wish to come to His house, His temple, and praise Him,

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whether a Jew or Greek, will be able to do so. Is 56:7 closes with *“Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”*

- The second passage refers to the wicked, evil behaviors of some of the so-called children of God using the temple of God as nothing more than a thief’s hideout. God is calling these “temple dwellers” into question. *Jer 7:11 “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen {it,}” declares the LORD.*
- This is why He was clearing out the temple, for it was the place that God had commissioned the people of God to offer their prayers and draw close to Him. They are using the same facility to hang out and turn a profit on the unsuspecting.
- Jesus turned over the tables of the money-changers and the dove-sellers. He would not permit them to do business there, for they had no right. Jesus forced them out and would not let them come back in with the goods. According to the Luke account, Jesus was in the temple every day; therefore we may assume that the temple cleansing was an ongoing activity.
- We might ask “Why did they allow Jesus to do this and shut down the money-making machine?” It is because of what Luke wrote in 19:48 *“...and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging upon His words.”*
- Jesus cleansed the temple of God, for the present state was not adequate for the reception of the Son of God. Jesus was finishing His ministry here and would not tolerate it.

The Purpose of the Lesson:

1) We as the church are the Temple of God

Eph 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone} 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

When we are working together for the goodness of the kingdom of God, the church is viewed as being the temple of God, shining as lights in a dark work, hence causing it to grow. However in order for this to be of the greatest success, we must have the second part of this issue.

2) We as individual Christians are the Temple of Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 6:18-20 Flee immorality. Every {other} sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

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- Paul was just discussing with the Corinthians their need to deal with the sin in their lives. The Corinthians had entered a covenant with Jesus, but many were not living for Jesus.
- *1 Cor 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor {the} covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.*
- It is possible that a person can go through life thinking that Jesus is living in them, but the temple is full of dead man's bones. Paul also told the Corinthians later on in *2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves {to see} if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?* It is possible that Jesus was not even in them because they would not take care of the problems with the temple, their body.
- Just like there were issues in the Temple that Jesus needed to deal with and just like there were issues in the Corinthians lives that needed to be dealt with to cleanse their temple, there are many issues in the Christian's lives today that need to be addressed before Jesus can do His greatest work.
- It is not "money-changers" and "dove-sellers" that we drive out, but the sins that we are still hanging onto.
 - Alcohol and Drug problems
 - Abusive and Perverse Language
 - Anger and Grudge-holding
 - Stealing and Lying
 - Greed and Materialism
 - Sexual Deviancy
 - Laziness and Gluttony
 - Willing Ignorance and Poor Decisions
- It is not with a "cord of whips" that we drive these sins out, but through the following strategy:
 - Study of the Scriptures
 - James 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows {the} right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.
 - Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.
 - Ps 119:130 The unfolding of Thy words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.
 - 2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

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- Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- Turn Against the Sin:
 - Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.
 - 2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
 - 2 Cor 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to {the will of} God produces a repentance without regret, {leading} to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.
- Make Confession and Receive Prayer:
 - James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed...."
 - Mark 14:38 "Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- Accept Admonition and Encouragement from Others:
 - 1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.
 - Heb 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

The challenge for this week is to go through your temple and drive out all the “Money-changers” and “Dove-selling” sins that are hindering Jesus from the ministry in your life.