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Text: Matthew 21:12-17
Title: Cleansing the Temple!

Intro: Jesus and His disciples journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover. The city of Jerusalem was overflowing with Jews from all over the ancient world. Shortly after entering Jerusalem, Jesus went into the Temple of God. Entering the Temple, Jesus saw money changers, merchants, and animals desecrating the Temple. He drove out those who sold and exchanged money because He did not want His Father's house to become a house of merchandise.

The cleansing of the Temple is connected to the Triumphal Entry. Both say something about the purpose for which Jesus came from heaven. Jesus came to cleanse our temples and lead us in triumph.

To understand this event, it is imperative for us to have some kind of knowledge of the purpose and layout of the temple. When God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, they journeyed here and there until they got to the Promised Land. Prior Promise Land, God had them build Him a tent (Tabernacle) in which He dwelt as a symbol of His presence among them. After reaching the Promised Land, throughout all the generations before the coming of Christ, God had them build Him a Temple where He would continue to dwell among them. The Temple was known as God among His people.

Not only was the Temple known as a place of God's presence, but it was also known as a house of prayer. The place where God dwelled was a place reserved for prayer.

1 Kings 8:29 & 38 ***That Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place.*** Verse 38 ***What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart and spread forth his hands toward this house.***

The outer most area surrounding the temple in Jerusalem was called the court of the Gentiles because it could be entered by all people. It was the most exterior and by far the largest of all the courts. The court of the Gentiles was considered not holy ground and non-Jewish. Within the court of the Gentiles were situated the Temple and inner courts, built on a platform 22 feet above the floor of the Court of the Gentiles. Stairways led up to this platform. A stone wall surrounded it, on the wall were placed stone with inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding non-Jews from entering on pain of death. On the platform was the inner court. It was the Temple precinct and holy ground. Only covenant people could enter here. It was surrounded by a high wall and against the inner side of this wall were built storage chambers and colonnades. The inner court was divided into two unequal parts by a cross wall running north and south. The eastern and smaller area was the Women's Court. In the Court of the Women, women as well as men were permitted. In the Court of the Women were located 13 chests like inverted trumpets, into which offerings for the expenses of the Temple were placed. The western and larger area was known as the inner court which included the Sanctuary and the Stone Altar. "The inner court was also known as the Camp of the Divine Presence. The inner court was divided into three sections: The Court of Israel, the Court of the Priest, and the Area between the Hall and the Mizbeach"

In the center of these many courts within courts stood the Temple itself, raised 12 steps above the accessibility of the sanctuary. (Temple. *The Living Bible Encyclopedia in Story and Pictures*, vol. 16, H.S. Stuttman Co., Inc. 1968. pp. 2006-2007).

It was in the Outer Court, the Court of the Gentiles Jesus drove out the merchants, moneychangers, and animals.

I. Jesus' Anger at the Misuse of God's Temple: Jesus' anger was an expression of God's anger.

John 5:19 Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

John 14:9

Colossians 1:15

The priests were supposed to maintain the holiness of the temple. But they too abandoned holiness for greed, power, and material security. The priests repurposed the court of the Gentiles for their own selfish gain, bringing the wrath of Christ upon them. Repurposing the place and things of God angers God.

Examples:

Hophni and Phinehas the sons of Eli the priest who served in Shiloh desecrated God's sanctuary.

1 Samuel 2:12-17

1 Samuel 2:22-25

The sacred vessels taken from the Temple when Babylon sieged Jerusalem.

Daniel 5:1-5. 24-30

Jesus said in Matthew 21:13 ***"It is written," he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"***

Jesus quotes from two Old Testament Scriptures to denounce the corruption taking place in the Temple of God. The Temple of God was to be a place of prayer. Isaiah 56:7 ***"These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."***

2 Chronicles 6:19-21 ***Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you, that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where you have promised to set your name, that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.***

Jesus was angry because the people were doing business instead of praying. When the agenda of man takes center stage, and the agenda of God backstage God gets angry.

Jeremiah 7:11 *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*

Den of robbers

- II. Jesus' Actions Toward the Moneychangers and Merchants:** Jesus drove out the people who sold and exchanged money in the Temple. Drove out in Greek is *ekballo* meaning to cast out, drive out, send forth with force. It is to cause to depart in haste. The implication is of force overcoming opposite force. The moneychangers and merchants did not leave without resistance. Jesus drove out the animals, merchants, and money changers from the temple courts. It was necessary for Jesus to act in authority because it caused the cleansing of the Temple. Can you imagine Jesus walking up and saying calmly and politely, "Would you mind moving that table outside the gates?" People would have likely ignored Him because they were busy making money. Jesus' authoritative actions grabbed their attention. Jesus shows us that we are to be humble and gentle, but not timid and passive. Power, strength, and fortitude are required in servant-leadership.

- III. Jesus Healed after He cleansed the Temple:** With the temple cleansed, Jesus then healed the blind and lame. Jesus goes from a forceful disciplinarian to a compassionate healer. When purpose was reestablished miracles followed. This is a word for us, if we get back to the agenda of God, the business of God, miracles will follow. Jesus healed those who came to Him in the Temple.

Responses:

The children ascribed praise to Him, shouting Hosanna to the Son of David. They acknowledged who Jesus as the Messiah who came to save.

The chief priest and the teachers of the Law were angered by Jesus' work and the children's praise. They questioned Jesus asking if He heard what the children were saying of Him. Jesus replied by quoting from Psalm 8:2, which spoke of praise coming from the lips of children and infants.