

The Cleansing Of The Temple.

Mark 11:15-19.

Sunday morning, July 6, 2008.

I. The enormity of the task. Vs. 15,16.

- A. The Lord came to the temple the Monday morning following the triumphal entry. He came from Bethany where Martha Mary and Lazarus lived; just 2 miles East of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.
On the way He had cursed the Fig tree.
- B. He would have entered the Temple complex through the Golden Gate. Once inside, He would have come upon a scene that resembled a crowded outdoor market in our day.
It was Passover and Jews from all over the land and the known world of that day were in Jerusalem. It was not practical to travel with sacrificial animals any kind of distance, besides, they might not be approved upon priestly inspection, so they brought money to buy them in Jerusalem; anything from doves to lambs and goats, to cattle
The only money accepted in the temple was the Jewish currency; besides, the Temple tax of half a shilling per year had to be paid in Jewish currency. So there were the money changers to accommodate the pilgrims.
Beside these there were a variety of vendors selling food and drink and a variety of wares that weary pilgrims might need.
- C. The Temple complex measured 1000 x 1000 feet. Most of it taken up by the Court of the Gentiles, where all this activity took place.
By comparison, the distance from Walnut Ave to Smithtown Ave. is 900 feet.
That gives us an idea how large an area the Lord had to clear.
- D. There were 8 gates leading into the Temple complex. Each gate would have had its own set of vendors, greeting incoming pilgrims with their wares.

II. The enormous authority of the Lord.

- A. Clearly there was a supernatural aspect to this enormous task of clearing this massive courtyard. The Temple had its own police force, and the temple guards might easily have arrested the Lord for disorderly conduct. It was this force that arrested the Lord a few days later. Nothing of the kind happened here.
- B. The voice before which demons fled caused the merchants to obey as well, and it caused the temple guards to stand back.
The voice that stilled the storm now cleared the temple grounds.
The voice that caused the grave to give back her dead could not be resisted here.
- C. All this was done without a display of carnal anger or even a carnal edge.
- D. Not only the sellers, but also the buyers were driven outside the temple gates to conduct their business there.
- E. He did not permit any to carry the wares they had purchased through the temple grounds.

III. The enormous love of the Lord.

- A. This awesome display of authority did not antagonize Him to the crowds; only to the chief priests and scribes.
- B. Having cleared the temple grounds, He gathers the people around him and teaches them. Probably under the spacious porch lining the outer walls of the Court of the Gentiles.
- C. A similar reaction is recorded at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The people are astonished at his doctrine, (for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes.)
- D. The love of Christ for the multitudes clearly radiated through his actions and drew the crowds to Him so He could teach them afterwards.

IV. The lesson taught.

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

A. “My house.” The place where the Lord made His dwelling among mankind. The place where He could be found.

B. “A house of prayer.” A house where petitions could be brought to the Lord by the worshippers from all nations. A most solemn undertaking requiring singleness of heart and purpose.

C. “Of all nations.” It was not right to turn the Court of the Gentiles into an outdoor market. The Court of the Women and the Court of Israel were kept apart from all the commercial activity, but not the Court of the Gentiles. The Lord, who was about to open the door of the gospel wide to the Gentile world, here cleanses their

court, and includes them in the blessings of temple worship. Here then we have a glimpse of New Covenant blessing.

D. “You have made it a den of thieves.”

You, meaning the priests who made a commission of the vendors for allowing them to do business in the temple; also the vendors who were not there to serve the worshippers in love, but to make merchandize of them, making hefty profits. Covetousness and greed drove the whole operation.

As anger is equated with murder in the Sermon on the Mount, and lusting is equated with committing adultery, so here the spirit of covetousness and greed is equated with stealing.

V. Things to take to heart.

A. The New Covenant temple no longer stands in Jerusalem. It was broken down long ago. The New Covenant temple is in the hearts of God’s people; individually 1 Cor. 6:19; collectively in churches 2 Cor. 6: 11-18; or universally

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Peter 2:1-10. God has constituted us such by sending His Spirit to dwell in us and to abide with us forever. John 14:16.

B. The need to seek the Lord single-mindedly remains the same however. How many vendors have set up their booths in your heart as you come to worship the Lord?

- C. Cleansing the temple is still a supernatural work; remember the authority and the love of Christ. Take your temple to Him for cleansing and then for teaching.