

Cleanse the Temple!

John 2:12-17

Thought for the Day. As we observe the Lord's Supper, it is a good time for us to examine our hearts and lives before the Lord, confess and repent of our sins, and purify ourselves of all that is displeasing to Him.

Following the performance of His first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11), Jesus traveled to Capernaum and then on to Jerusalem for the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Filled with anger, He drove out those who were desecrating the temple, His Father's House (John 2:12-17).

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

- Capernaum was about 16 miles from Cana. Situated on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, it was approximately 1,335 feet lower in elevation.
- It became His home base during His ministry in the northern province of Galilee.
- Capernaum was located on a major trade route; a Roman garrison was stationed there; it had a customs station for collecting taxes.
 - There, Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector, to be one of His disciples (Matt. 9:9).
 - Also the home of several of the other disciples that Jesus called (Matt. 4:13-19).
 - Jesus later condemned it because of the people's unbelief (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15).

13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

- From the northern province of Galilee to the southern province of Judea, a journey of about 80 miles as the crow flies, farther on the ground.
- Jerusalem was 3,634 feet higher in elevation than Capernaum.
- In Jerusalem, Jesus began the first phase of His ministry recorded in 2:13 to 3:21.
- Jesus' public ministry began and ended with a cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem during Passover (cf. Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-46).
- Passover was an annual feast commemorating the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12).
 - Every Jewish male was expected to be in Jerusalem during this time (Deut. 16:16).
 - The Passover celebration took place on the first day, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted the rest of the week.
 - Sadly, for many Jews, the Passover had become a mere holiday devoid of spiritual reality, much like some people today who celebrate Christmas and Easter without recognizing God's place in those holidays.

14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

- Jesus found that the Temple, which had been dedicated to the worship of God, had been turned into a marketplace, dedicated to the worship of money.
- "The temple" included the courts surrounding the temple: the Court of Jewish men, the Court of Jewish women, and the outer Court of the Gentiles.

- It's likely that the Court of Gentiles is where these people had set up business, thus hindering the Gentiles from worshipping God.
- Originally the people of Israel were to bring their best animals from their own flocks for sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:5-7). This made the sacrifice very personal.
- Over time, the temple priests created a market for buying sacrificial animals so the pilgrims would not have to bring their animals on the long journey.
 - The provision of a local animal supply was probably well intended, but it had gradually become institutionalized until it took up the very place of worship.
 - In order to purchase animals and pay the required temple tax, travelers would need to convert their money into local currency.
 - Both the merchants and money changers took unfair advantage of the people. They sold the animals at great profit and exchanged money at exorbitant rates.
- "They were making a mockery of God's house of worship... No wonder Jesus was angry!" *(The Life Application Commentary Series)*

15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

- Jesus' response to the desecration of the temple was "violent" ("Marked by the use of harmful or destructive force." --*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)
- This messianic purging of the temple was prophesied in Malachi 3:1-3.
- Jesus' cleansing of the temple is a picture of the greater judgment He will bring upon the world at His Second Coming.
- "This cleansing was significantly appropriate during Passover because that was the time when all the Jews were supposed to cleanse their houses of all leaven (yeast—symbolic of sin). Yeast was used in making bread, but as God was preparing his people for their hasty exodus from Egypt, he told them to make bread without leaven because they would be eating quickly and would not have time to wait for bread to rise. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, no leaven was used in any baking and, in fact, was not even to be found in the Israelite homes (Exodus 12:17-20)." *(Life Application Commentary Series)*

16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

- The poor were allowed to substitute pigeons (doves) for their sacrifice.
- "Jesus saw the temple as belonging to his Father. His own rightful claim to ownership was unmistakable. But the religious leaders of that day were trespassers — turning it into a place of business and money-making. People had created an environment that, in essence, put a price on what God intended to be free. Access to God is not for sale. Giving the impression that God's favor can be bought shows disrespect toward both God and those he loves." *(The Life Application Commentary Series)*

17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

- "We should remember that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Lord Jesus was anxious that the temple in Jerusalem be kept pure, so we must be careful that our bodies be turned over to the Lord for continual cleansing." *(MacDonald, p. 1430)*