



DEVOTION

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

By Greg Laurie on Apr 4, 2025

"When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace."

-Mark 11:15-16

On Palm Sunday, the people in Jerusalem mistakenly celebrated Jesus as the conquering Messiah, the King who would lead the Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire. On the following day, they got a glimpse of His true agenda.

After cursing the fig tree that produced no fruit, Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem. His focus was on the spiritual, not the political. Rather than worship or teach, however, He turned His attention to the money changers and merchants in the outer court. According to the passage above from Mark 11, He cleaned house.

The question is, why?

The merchants, the people who sold animals for sacrifice, served an important purpose. The temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship for all Jewish people. People traveled great distances to attend festivals and offer required sacrifices there. Those sacrifices often involved animals such as birds, sheep, goats, and bulls. Those who didn't raise animals themselves had to buy them somewhere. And transporting them all the way to Jerusalem was a complication many wished to avoid. So the merchants who sold animals near the Jerusalem temple provided a necessary service. Of course, they made a profit. But they weren't necessarily gouging their customers. At least, not all of them were.

The money changers were equally important. Many people offered money as sacrifices. However, the region of Judea, where Jerusalem was located, was under the rule of the Romans. The people who lived in Judea used Roman currency. That posed a problem because Roman coins were stamped with images of Roman rulers. And Roman people worshiped their rulers as gods. So Jewish people considered their images a form of idolatry—and inappropriate for sacrifices to God.

What's more, the Lord said to Moses in Exodus 30:13, "Each person who is counted must give a small piece of silver as a sacred offering to the Lord. (This payment is half a shekel,

based on the sanctuary shekel, which equals twenty gerahs)” (NLT). The money changers at the temple exchanged Roman currency for Jewish half-shekel coins.

The problem was that the merchants and money changers were infringing on worship at the temple. Their booths were originally positioned outside the temple complex. Over time, however, they moved into the outer courtyard of the temple, the area where Gentiles worshiped. The merchants and money changers were misappropriating worship space for business. That’s why Jesus drove them out.

In Psalm 69:9, David wrote, “Passion for your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me” (NLT). Jesus showed His followers what passion for God’s house looks like.

Jesus prioritized worship. And He wants us to prioritize it as well. It stands to reason that He would react strongly to anyone or anything that makes it harder to worship God. We can embrace that same attitude by removing the obstacles that hinder our own personal worship.

Reflection Question: How do you keep things from interfering with your worship of God? *Discuss this with believers like you on Harvest Discipleship!*