



Jesus and the First Cleansing of the Temple

Story Elements

- **Text:** John 2:13-22
- **Setting:** circa AD 27 in Jerusalem
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, and his disciples
- **Plot:** Jesus demonstrates his divine authority by casting moneychangers, merchants, and their goods out of the temple.
- **Key word(s):** “my _____ house” – This phrase shows us Jesus’ holy passion for the Father’s will and worship. It is also a bold proclamation of his Sonship to the Father, and therefore of his divine authority.
- **Climax:** *John 2:19* Jesus answered and said unto them, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* This verse brings our attention to the ultimate purpose of the Messiah – atonement through death and resurrection. The Jewish leadership assumed Christ spoke of Herod’s Temple, but Jesus spoke of his body.

Reforming Purge

- (v 13) This Passover¹ is the first of _____² that Jesus will celebrate during his earthly ministry. Matthew Henry notes: “the evangelist takes notice of all the passovers he kept henceforward, which were four in all, the *fourth* that at which he suffered (three years after this), and half a year was now past since his baptism.”³
- (v 14) When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, he aimed at reforming two blasphemous practices in the temple:
 - “those that sold oxen and sheep and doves” - selling animals for the Passover was allowed in the Law. It was difficult for most out-of-towners to travel with their sacrificial animals, so they were usually purchased in town, but in Jesus’ day these markets were located on the temple grounds.
 - These markets were called by contemporary Jews “the _____ of the son of Annas” because their profits were used to enrich the high priest’s family.⁴
 - Alfred Edersheim affirms that, because of the layout of the temple, this market “was undoubtedly somewhere in the ‘Court of the _____.’”⁵
 - “the changers of money” - Devout Jewish males over the age of 20 paid an annual _____ tax (Exo. 30:13-14). Only Jewish currency was accepted, and so foreign coinage (including Roman) had to be exchanged.

APPLICATION ➔ Not only were these practices sacrilegious, but they were also subject to abusive practices, i.e., price and rate inflation. Here we see our Savior doing battle with both **sacrilegious worship** and **abuse** of God’s people (cf. Eze. 34:4)

- (vv 15-16) Jesus made a whip of cords which he used to drive out the livestock. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers and poured out their money, and he commanded the sellers of doves to *take these*

¹ Jewish males were expected to travel to Jerusalem every year to observe the feast that commemorates Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery. (Exo. 23:14-17)

² Many commentators say that Jesus’ earthly ministry involved three Passovers which are mentioned in John 2:14, 6:4, and 11:35. I’m inclined to agree with Henry that there were four spanning his 3.5-year earthly ministry. Though a fourth Passover need not be mentioned explicitly, it very well could be the feast of the Jews that John references in John 5:1.

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1926.

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1971) 371.

⁵ Ibid., 370. Gill concurs

things hence. Thus, he effectively cleansed the temple of its bazaar atmosphere and returned it to the reverent place of _____ it was intended to be.

4. (v 16) With his command, Jesus added a rebuke: *Make not my Father's house a house of _____*. Herein he reminds them of the purpose of the place (it is the Father's house) and the reason for his jealousy (he is the Father's Son). John Gill notes that Jesus preached his Sonship to God, did "as none of the prophets that went before him did; and in such sense as neither men nor angels are; and which carries in it a reason why he was so much concerned for the honour of God, and so much resented the profanation of his house, because he was his Father."⁶
5. (v 17) The disciples, knowledgeable of the scriptures and believing that Christ is the Messiah, connect his actions in John 2:15-16 with the words of the Messianic psalm, ***Psalms 69:9*** *For the zeal of thine house hath _____ me up.*

APPLICATION➔ Gill reminds us, "it becomes us, in imitation of our great master, to be zealous for his truths and ordinances, and for the discipline of his house, and not bear with either the erroneous principles, or the bad practices of wicked men."

Resurrection Prophecy

6. (vv 18-21) The religious leaders were offended at Jesus' interference and demanded a sign to show by what authority he made such reforms. Jesus responded, *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.* They thought he spoke of Herod's Temple, but he spoke of his _____.
 - (a) As with his parables, Jesus spoke in veiled terms to hide the message from scoffers but to reveal truth to his _____.

Matthew 13:10 *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

- (b) Jesus' enemies used his words as accusations against him (Mark 14:58), and at his crucifixion, they quoted his words _____ (Mark 15:29-32). Christ's enemies were poisoned in their minds with their own stubborn unbelief, and the truth was hidden from them.
- (c) (v 22) But Jesus' disciples understood he spoke of his body, though it wasn't until after the resurrection of Christ that their minds were opened to a _____ understanding of truth. (cf. John 14:26; 16:13)

Answer Key: Key word(s): "Father's" • 1. four • 2. a) i. bazaars; ii. Gentiles; b) temple • 3. worship • 4. merchandise • 5. eaten • 6. resurrection; a) disciples; b) mockingly; c) fuller

⁶ John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*, <https://johngill.thekingsbible.com/CommentaryVerse/43/2/16>