

Jesus Clears Merchants from the Temple

John 2:13-22

Strict regulations guided the activity that was to take place in the Temple. This was to remain a holy place, the dwelling place of God. According to Isaiah 56:7, it was to be a house of prayer.

Unfortunately, the Jewish leaders, who strictly upheld laws that were convenient for them, saw an opportunity for profit in the animals to be sacrificed at the Temple. Any animal to be offered as a sacrifice was to be perfect, free from blemish. And people bringing animals for sacrifice surely chose the best from the flocks and herds. But when Jewish pilgrims brought their animals for sacrifice, the Temple inspectors always found something wrong with them. Then they would conveniently offer animals they had approved—for 25 times the going price outside the Temple.

They also were exchanging money—giving people the Temple currency in exchange for their Roman or other foreign coins. The Temple currency was required for paying the Temple tax. From Jesus' disdain of this practice, it is easy to assume that people were also being cheated in this process.

John paints a dramatic picture of Jesus clearing the Temple. With a whip he drove people and animals alike from the Temple courts. The Greek word used here to describe Jesus' action suggests the use of strong force. One might even suggest that Jesus physically threw the merchants out of the Temple. We don't know if only the animals felt the sting of his whip or if the people did too. We do know that Jesus completed his mission and didn't try to escape afterward.

Jesus had seen the conditions in the Temple the night before (Mark 11:11). So it's likely that Jesus' response was not a purely emotional outburst. He saw what was going on in the Temple, he decided overnight what to do about it,

and then he took appropriate action. Jesus was angry, and rightly so, but not out of control.

The Jews' response is interesting. They didn't deny that they had been doing wrong. No one asked Jesus why he did what he did. No one angrily struck back at Jesus out of righteous indignation. Their only response was to ask, "How can you prove you have the authority to do this?" When people know they're in the wrong, they often resort to legalistic maneuvering to try to blur the clarity of their guilt. It happened with the Jews then, and it still happens today.

What does God require of us? "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: Jesus' passion in this account reveals that he desires a *real* relationship with his people. Nothing—no money-changers or legalism—can get in the way of his love for you!

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Does Jesus need to "drive out" wrong worship from your life? How have distracting thoughts, efforts to appear spiritual, or focus on self hindered your own sincere worship? Take a moment to physically bow down before God. Spend time silently clearing out the "temple courts" in your life and praising God with a sincere heart.