

Stage III. The Early Judean Ministry

C. The First Passover of Jesus' Ministry

1. Jesus' First Cleansing of the Temple

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #036

JN 2.12-22

12 After this (the first miracle at Cana) he went down to Capernaum with his mother, brothers and his disciples. They stayed there for a few days.

13 The time for the Jewish Passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

15 He made a whip out of cords, and drove them all out from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he poured out the coins of the money changers and flipped their tables upside down. 16 To those who were selling doves he said, *"Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"*

17 His disciples remembered that it stands written: *"ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."* (Ps. 69.9)

18 The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

19 Jesus answered them, *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days."*

20 They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Capernaum, and the Temple in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April, 30 AD (Month Three)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage III: The Early Judean Ministry
	C. The First Passover of Jesus' Ministry
Title	I. Jesus' First Cleansing of the Temple

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COMMENT:

After climaxing the “first glorious week of disciple-making” with his first miracle in Cana, Jesus spent a few days in Capernaum with his disciples. This town would be his headquarters during the roughly two years of his Great Galilean Ministry in the future. It was also home for Peter, Andrew, and John, who cooperated together in a substantial commercial fishing business on the Lake. Jesus would call these brothers into full-time discipleship on the shores of the Lake at Capernaum a few months later. He delivered some of his most important teachings there, and in the Capernaum Synagogue as well. Jesus probably spent these days praying and preparing for his future ministry there.

It is interesting to note that Jesus’ family accompanied him from Cana to Capernaum. They had tasted of the fruit of his first miracle in Cana, but only Mary, the servers, and his disciples knew that an actual miracle had taken place. His “brothers (he had four) were yet to be offended by his Divine Messianic claims and miraculous manifestations of Divine power. At this point they felt comfortable accompanying Jesus. Later they would turn against him, thinking he had lost his mind.

At the end of March Jesus headed back down to Judea--this time to Jerusalem--to minister publicly for the first time during the week of Passover. The population of the city mushroomed with around 250,000 bustling pilgrims during the triple cluster of Spring Jewish Feasts: Unleavened Bread/Passover, First Fruits, and Pentecost. It was the perfect time for Jesus to engage the nation in public preaching and healing, which he did in the Temple.

Jesus’ first act after returning to Jerusalem was to take authority over the Temple by unleashing a cleansing raid on the Temple Courts. His eyes were ablaze with indignation as He deftly wielded an improvised whip to drive out sheep, goats, doves, and oxen from the courts. Then He flipped the tables of profiteering money changers upside down in His fury. What drove Jesus to such bold and fierce action?

The outer Courts of the Temple were called the “Courts of the Gentiles.” Only circumcised Jewish adult males were allowed past these Courts into the Inner Court of the Temple. The Courts of the Gentiles were provided especially for those gentile seekers who came to the Temple hungering to know the true God. Jesus was especially concerned about their ability to come into these Courts and gain the knowledge of the True and Living God, His own Father.

It was in these very courts that Jesus had spoken His first recorded words in the Gospels as He sat teaching and fellowshiping with the leading Bible Teachers of the nation: *“I had to be concerned with My Father's interests.”* Luke 2.49. These courts were to be *“a House of prayer for all the nations.”* Isaiah 56.7; Jer. 7.11 His Father’s interests were all wrapped up in the salvation of all nations through his Son.

So Jesus expected the courts to be a place of witness, testimony, and prayer for non-Jewish seekers from around the world, who were drawn to one of the most spectacular places of worship on earth. Jesus Himself tirelessly used these courts for evangelism when He was in Jerusalem. The early Church fulfilled this Scriptural mandate by using these Courts (after Pentecost) for that purpose. These Courts should have been the best place on earth place to come to know God.

However, Instead of being a place of evangelism and prayer, the High Priestly leadership had approved using these courts as a place of monopolized merchandizing, and they benefitted financially through this arrangement. Only Jewish coins could be cast into the offering-box, so the moneychangers were able to charge exorbitant rates to transfer coinage from around the world in to Jewish shekels. Likewise, only approved animals could be used for sacrifices, so a high premium was charged for the animals used for sacrifices. So the smell, sound, and space of these money-making operations dominated the Courts of the

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Gentiles, and created a massive barrier to God's purpose in providing a place for all Gentiles to come to know Him. This situation set Jesus on fire with zeal to correct it!

We have seen that the Old Testament ends with Malachi, who prophesied:

"The Lord, Whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple..." But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a Refiner's fire and like a fuller's soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, so they may present offerings in righteousness to the Lord." Mal. 3:1B-3

Jesus exerted massive authority over the Temple by bringing it all under His control in this shocking display of His Holy power. The High Priestly leadership was deeply offended by this act of rebuke against them. Jesus was claiming authority over "my Father's house" because he was of the same family—the Trinity—as His Father. The Temple belonged to him, as surely as it was his Father's house. Cleansing the Temple was a claim to have Divine authority.

The further proof of this truth came when Jesus called himself "the Temple" of God. This is the truth that John was thinking of when he wrote: *"The Word became flesh and was God's Tabernacle, living among us."* JN 1:14. Jesus was "GOD living in human flesh," much more so than the Temple made by human hands in Jerusalem. Jesus was the ultimate expression of God living among people. He was truly "the Temple of God."

Jesus then gave his own resurrection as the supreme sign of his authority as the Son of God. The greatest proof that Jesus could offer of this claim to Divinity was his power to raise himself from the dead. The self-initiated resurrection of Jesus is what GOD alone can do, for only God can say to his creation:

"Try to kill me. You can never succeed, because I AM the Creator of all life, including my own human body."

This kind of resurrection is the proof Jesus offers all people, so that we can believe in him as our Divine Savior with a fully satisfied mind. Jesus will keep on referring to this ultimate "sign" of his true identity throughout his ministry. It is a mind-boggling claim to be God!

APPLICATION:

Just as Jesus IS the "Temple of God," he turns every person who believes in him into a mini-Temple, too. That is, he gives us the same Holy Spirit that lives in him. When the Spirit comes to live in us, we become *"the Temple of the Holy Spirit."* As the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body."* I Cor. 6:19-20 We are both an individual Temple as a believer, and a collective Temple of the Spirit as the Church.

Just as the Temple was a place the Trinity has designed to draw all people to himself—especially the Gentiles—we as individual believers and collectively as the Church are the Temple through whom he works today. However, our sin and selfishness often creates barriers to evangelism in our lives—just like the merchandizing in the Temple Courts.

In the same way that Jesus cleansed the physical temple of his day, he also cleanses us individually and collectively as his dwelling place today, so that he can draw all people to himself through us.

What attitude or behavior pattern is Jesus seeking to cleanse you of in these days?

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He does not judge you in that—he already died in your place to take your judgement and punishment away forever. Jesus does however, convict us of the sin and selfishness that we need to yield up to him, and leave behind us as we follow him. Then he can work through us in evangelism and disciple-making.

Will you say “yes” to his cleansing work in you, today?