

Matthew 21:12-17: And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." ¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" ¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Intro: Last week, we saw King Jesus enter Jerusalem on His way to the cross as the soon to be crucified King; the all knowing King; the all providing King; the Scripture fulfilling King; the King Who is worthy of obedience; the King worthy of worship; the prophet King; the soon to be risen King; the soon to be returning, conquering King; & the King of all kings! The people cried Hosanna in the highest: please save us, we beg! Praise Your name! Many may have thought Jesus came to end the Roman oppression of the Jews, but Jesus came to save from sin, & in our text today, the target of His holy anger was not Roman oppression, but the way sinful men had perverted the religion of Israel.

Jesus cleans house! He cleans His house! He cleans His Father's house! For Jesus, judgment starts with the household of God, & He cleanses God's temple of lovers of money, shows mercy to the weak & needy, & accepts the praises of men as the God-Man Who came to save sinners. Jesus is the preeminent temple cleanser: the cleanser of the temple of Israel; the cleanser of the whole world temple; the cleanser of the temple that's your heart & mine & all the hearts of sinners who would ever turn & trust in Him; & He's the cleanser of the new heavens & the new earth temple!

1. A Brief History Of The Temple Jesus Cleanses

Matthew 21:12-13: And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

a. God commanded Solomon to build the temple: 1 Kings 5:4-5: But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. ⁵ And so I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to David my father, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name."

The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem & destroyed this temple. The second temple was built about 515 BC, under the leadership of Ezra & Zerubbabel. Later around 20 BC, Herod the Great renovated & expanded this temple, & it became known as Herod's Temple. This is the temple Jesus entered & cleansed.

b. There were six areas or courts of the temple: The Court of the Gentiles; The Sacred Enclosure; The Court of the Women; The Court of Israel; The Court of the Priests; The House of God: the Holy Place & the Holy of Holies.

c. God's presence, in a sense, dwelt in the temple: 1 Kings 8:11, 13: the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD . . . ¹³ I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.

d. But God can't be contained in a building or in heaven or anywhere!: 1 Kings 8:27-30: But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven & the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! ²⁸ Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry & to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, ²⁹ that your eyes may be open night & day toward this house, the place of which you have said, "My name shall be there," that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. ³⁰ And listen to the plea of your servant & of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. & listen in heaven your dwelling place, & when you hear, forgive.

Iain Provan: Though God will dwell in the temple, it is not to be thought of as the only place where God is, but as a special place where His name is, a place toward which His eyes are open. The hearing of prayer is done in heaven, which is the dwelling place of God. Even then, however, God cannot be limited to any one place; he cannot, strictly speaking, dwell in even the highest heaven. He cannot be confined by space.

e. Let's meditate on the purposes of God's temple: A. Rowland: 1) The temple was the place of sacrifice: **2 Chronicles 7:12:** Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice." (Peace offerings: 22,000 oxen; 120,000 sheep)
- **Josephus:** There were probably over 255,000 lambs slaughtered at the temple in Jesus' day during Passover!
- **Hebrews 10:4:** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
- **Hebrews 10:14:** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. **GOSPEL!**

2) The temple was the place of prayer and praise: **Isaiah 56:6-7:** And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant - ⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

- **Psalms 116:19:** in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

3) The temple was the place for setting apart (consecrating) people & things for God: **2 Chronicles 5:11-14:** when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, ¹² & all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, & Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, & lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; ¹³ & it was the duty of the trumpeters & singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise & thanksgiving to the LORD), & when the song was raised, with trumpets & cymbals & other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever," the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

4) The temple was the place for teaching God's Law (Word): **Deut. 33:10:** They [Levitical Priests] shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.

-**Ezra 7:10:** Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD & to do it & to teach his statutes & rules in Israel

-**Isaiah 2:3:** many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

-**Luke 2:46:** they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

-**Luke 19:47:** he was teaching daily in the temple.

5) The temple was the place of unity among God's people & all peoples: **2 Chronicles 6:32-33:** Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for the sake of your great name & your mighty hand & your outstretched arm, when he comes & prays toward this house, ³³ hear from heaven your dwelling place & do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name & fear you, as do your people Israel, & that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

6) The temple was the place for the revelation of God to be made known: **Ezekiel 43:1-7:** Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. ² & behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. & the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, & the earth shone with his glory. ³ & the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, & just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. & I fell on my face. ⁴ As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵ the Spirit lifted me up & brought me into the inner court; & behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ⁶ While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, ⁷ & he said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my

throne & the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. & the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name”

7) The temple was the delight of Israel’s eyes & the yearning of their souls: Ezekiel 24:16, 18-21: Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down . . . ¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning, & at evening my wife died. & on the next morning I did as I was commanded. ¹⁹ & the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?" ²⁰ Then I said to them, "The word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ 'Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, & the yearning of your soul'"

2. There Are Other Temple Cleansings In The Bible

a. The Garden of Eden: Gabriel Fluhrer (Temple Cleansing: A Biblical-Theological Sketch): Recent scholarship has argued, persuasively in my judgment, that the Garden of Eden was a miniature replica of the cosmos; the cosmos itself being created as a giant temple of the living God. On this view, the entire universe is the heavenly temple & Eden is a replica of this temple. Seeing Eden in this way sheds light on a familiar Old Testament passage. In Genesis 2:15, Adam is placed in the Garden to “work it and keep it”. Fascinatingly, [Greg] Beale notes that when these two verbs occur together elsewhere in the Old Testament, they have reference to priestly service in the temple. It is fair to conclude, then, that Adam was not simply [an ancient] farmer (though he certainly worked the land) but the first priest in God’s microcosmic sanctuary. One of the main functions of the priests in the Old Testament was to discern what was unclean & what was clean. Part of Adam’s sin was his failure to keep what was unclean out of the garden-sanctuary; he failed in his priestly duty when he did not immediately strike down the wicked, questioning snake. Satan himself thus entered in & polluted God’s temple-sanctuary [in Eden], making unclean that which was clean & holy. The sad record of sin, brokenness, & strife that has marked out Adam’s race since the fall bears damningly eloquent testimony to the effects of our first father’s priestly lapse. Accordingly, Genesis 3:8 [& following] records the first temple cleansing in human history . . . God proceeded to do what Adam failed to do & cast out that which was unclean from the Garden-sanctuary. But, [just like in] the rest of the Old Testament, grace was given in the midst of judgment, for God promised the fallen priest that one day a Deliverer would arise who would cleanse the world-temple finally & fully by crushing the serpent’s head.

b. The temple cleansing in Nehemiah 13:7-9: I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. ⁸ And I was very angry, & I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber. ⁹ Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers

c. The exile of Israel as a cleansing: G. Fluhrer: Since Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), the destruction of Jerusalem & the resultant destruction of the temple during the exile were a kind of temple cleansing. Indeed, the exile was a type & shadow of the coming cosmic temple cleansing. One of the primary reasons God cast his people out of the land & destroyed the temple was because of the idolatry committed there (Ezek. 8:1-18).

d. Temple cleansings in the New Testament: G. Fluhrer: The first temple cleansing (after a fashion) recorded in the New Testament is John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The word translated “dwelt” is better translated “tabernacled.” By “taberncling” among us, Jesus Christ, the true tabernacle-temple, comes to cleanse God’s image & ultimately his creation-temple from the defilement of sin that God’s first son, Adam, brought into the world. The wonder of the incarnation is that God would now not simply dwell in the Holy of Holies but among his people personally in the Lord Jesus Christ. As God in the flesh, Jesus reveals God to us & inaugurates the final temple cleansing. Thus, when Jesus cleansed the temple during his earthly ministry, there were at least two purposes. First . . . our Lord was fulfilling Malachi 3:1 (among other passages): “& the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.” He is Yahweh come in the flesh (Is 40:1; Mal 3:1; Mark 1:1-3) & thus he alone has the authority to cleanse the temple. Second, Jesus’s cleansing of the temple had an [end times] purpose. He was, in effect, pointing forward to the day when all manner of defilement would be finally removed from God’s presence.

e. We are God's temple who have been cleansed, are being cleansed, must cleanse ourselves, & will be finally & fully cleansed: 1) Individual believers in Jesus Christ are God's temple: 1 Corinthians 6:19: Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

2) The church of gathered believers in Jesus Christ is God's temple: Ephesians 2:19-22: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

3) Believers in Christ have been cleansed: Acts 15:8-9: God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ & he made no distinction between us & them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

4) Believers in Christ are priests: 1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

5) Believers in Christ are being cleansed: 1 John 1:7, 9: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin . . . ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6) Believers in Christ must cleanse themselves by the power of the Holy Spirit: 2 Corinthians 7:1: Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body & Spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

7) Believers in Christ will be cleansed: Revelation 21:1-2, 22-27: Then I saw a new heaven & a new earth, for the first heaven & the first earth had passed away, & the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . ²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty & the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, & its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, & the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ & its gates will never be shut by day - & there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory & the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 5:9-10: And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

G. Fluhrer: So we can see why Jesus's temple cleansing during his earthly ministry was a thoroughly [end times] event, for these reasons: 1) It pointed beyond merely driving out idolatrous money-changers to the great cosmic restoration of all things. 2) It gives us a graphic picture of sanctification in this present life. 3) It gives us hope as we look forward to the day when God completes what he began after he cleansed the garden-temple [in Eden].

f. Conclusions from G. Fluhrer: First, God alone cleanses the temple. God sovereignly accomplishes the salvation of his people, which is . . . the cleansing of his temple-bride . . . like every aspect of our glorious salvation in Christ, the triune God alone is the [One Who does it]. To be incorporated into the cleansed temple, Christ's body, & to experience ongoing cleansing in this life, are both the result of God's astonishing grace alone.

Second, seeing our sanctification as a sovereign temple cleansing provides a powerful theological category to pursue that holiness without which no one shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). [There is a] priority of God's

gracious activity in both justification & sanctification. However, seeing sanctification as a temple cleansing is demanded by the New Testament texts themselves & provides a Biblical-theological base from which to further explore how sanctification is, as Richard Gaffin put it, “100% our work & 100% God’s work.” Viewed in this light, the individual believer can be strengthened in his own walk with Christ when he has the unshakable confidence that his own growth in grace is as certain as the past event of Jesus’s cleansing of the temple. In other words, the historical event of our Lord’s ministry provides the present day believer with the [genuine] comfort of knowing that he or she will be sanctified because the temple has been cleansed. The former is as certain as the latter.

Third, the Christian can fight sin & pursue holiness with joy & assurance of ultimate victory. There will be lapses, perhaps even grave lapses into sin, but, like a few money-changers that may have made a desperate attempt to grab some coins as they ran, those besetting sins will eventually be driven out by Jesus. Nevertheless, as those who are cleansed in Christ, as those who are a kingdom of priests united to our great High Priest who has succeeded where Adam failed, let us be busy about guarding the sanctuary. We must see sanctification as a form of sanctuary guardianship. Therefore, let us refuse to let unclean thoughts enter our minds & drive them out when they do. Men, let us guard our marriages from any unclean thing defiling our marriage beds, from pornography to other partners. & let us guard the sanctuary of our churches, so to speak, by exercising godly church discipline.

Let us do all of this with joy for we are united to the One who has pronounced us clean because he himself was numbered with us, the unclean, outside the city, outside the temple, banished from God’s presence. We will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, his cosmos-engrossing temple, because we have been sprinkled clean by the great High Priest’s blood. In this way, we have come to “Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, & to innumerable angels in festal gathering, & to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, & to God, the judge of all, & to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, & to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, & to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

We have all of this mercy because Jesus Christ, the ultimate TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD, Who was & is God, took all of our abominations & sins & idolatry & love of money & greed & every other iniquity & bore it all in His body on that tree & was not cleansed but crushed & cursed & destroyed so that we might be called, cleansed, consecrated, & conformed into the image of Jesus Christ!

John 2:19-21: Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

g. Jesus is the true & better temple: 1) The temple was the place of sacrifice: Jesus is the true & better sacrifice!
2) The temple was the place of prayer & praise: Jesus made it possible for us to pray to God anywhere! Jesus gives us access to God! And Jesus causes us to praise our God, & we praise Jesus as well!
3) The temple was the place for setting apart (consecrating) people & things for God: Jesus was the only Man Who ever lived Who was fully & perfectly set apart & consecrated to God – holy, sinless, clean, & undefiled! And He alone made it possible for us to be set apart & consecrated to God as well!
4) The temple was the place for teaching God’s Law (Word): Jesus is God’s Word, come in the flesh! He spoke God’s Word; fulfilled God’s Word; trusted God’s Word; obeyed God’s Word; delighted in God’s Word, & He enables us to be changed by God’s Word & trust, obey, & delight in God & His Word as well!
5) The temple was the place of unity among God’s people & all peoples: Jesus is the temple Who shed His blood to save people from every tribe & language & people & nation, in order to make us unified as one, even as He & His Father are one!
6) The temple was the place for the revelation of God to be made known: Jesus Christ is the ultimate & final revelation of God – Who is God come in the flesh! **Hebrews 1:1-3:** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

7) The temple was the delight of Israel's eyes & the yearning of their souls: Jesus is the delight of our eyes & the yearning of our souls! **Psalm 73:25!**

h. The church in Christ Jesus is also a kind of true & better temple: 1) The temple was the place of sacrifice: As the church in Christ, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices!

2) The temple was the place of prayer & praise: As the church in Christ, we gather together for prayer & praise!

3) The temple was the place for setting apart (consecrating) people & things for God: As the church in Christ, we are the saints & set apart for God! We are His children!

4) The temple was the place for teaching God's Law (Word): As the church in Christ, the church is a pillar & foundation of the truth. We gather to hear the Word preached!; To pray the Word!; To sing the Word! We preach the Word! Trust the Word! Obey the Word! Delight in the Word! Love the Word! And we go out & spread the Word!

5) The temple was the place of unity among God's people & all peoples: As the church in Christ, we are one in Him from every tribe, tongue, & nation!

6) The temple was the place for the revelation of God to be made known: As the church in Christ, we gather to hear what the Spirit of God says to Olney Baptist Church! We have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us to teach us the truth!

7) The temple was the delight of Israel's eyes & the yearning of their souls: As the church in Christ, we are the delight of God's eyes, & He yearns for us with love! We are the apple of His eye! He sings over us with love!

Christ Jesus Is The Temple Praise
The God-Man Truth His Life Conveys
Zeal For God's House He Loves, Obeys
He Toppled Tables In A Blaze
Of Righteous Anger For Their Craze
For Money And Their Sinful Ways
The Temple Is For Prayer And Praise
Of Him Who Sent His Son These Days
To Die And Rise So We Could Raise

Hosannas To Our God Always
Now Every Nation To Him Prays
He's Healer, Wonderful's The Phrase
That Captures What He Is Amaze
All Hail! All Hail! The King Of Praise
Who Is Our All, Our All Always
Who Saved Us From Our Sinful Ways
So He'll Forever Be Our Craze!