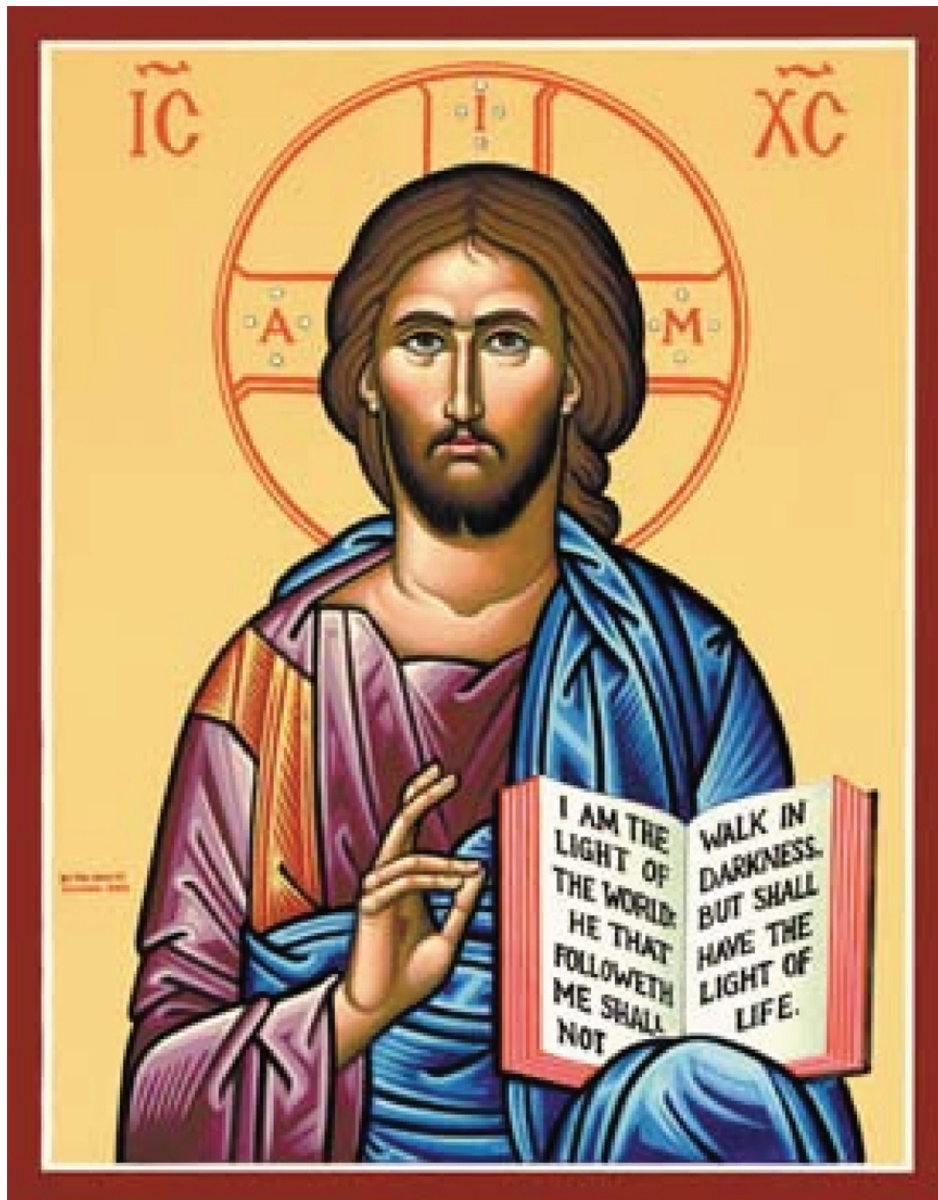


Life of Christ

A Study of the Four Gospels



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Session 40 | Theme: Passion Week (1) Palm Parade, Cleansing of the Temple

(The Triumphal Entry, Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem, The Cleansing of the Temple)

- *Prayer*
- *Questions from last week's session*
- *Finish sections of the lesson not completed last week*

XIII. The Final Ministry in Jerusalem

- See pages 234-254. Put these pages between your fingers. These pages form a cohesive unit.
- We will study each of the individual units in this section, beginning with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on page 234. Page 255 begins a new section of study.

#269. The Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-9, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19

Notice that all four gospels list this event in the same place in the story of Jesus. The Bible verses in all four gospels are printed in dark print, indicating that the four gospel authors agree on the placement of this story in the life of Jesus.

-The next day, a great crowd who had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. (Only John). In the Gospel of John, the previous day was Saturday when Jesus ate evening dinner with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. During that meal, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with costly oil. That means, in the Gospel of John, the day of the triumphant entry was Sunday, or the first day of the week.

Passion Week was eight days long, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

Today, Palm Sunday is the first day of Passion Week.

Today, Palm Sunday is also called Passion Sunday.

-When they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives. See the map below and locate Bethany (2) and the Mount of Olives.

Location of Jerusalem, Bethany, and the Mount of Olives



Today, there is a cemetery on the hillside at the ancient Mount of Olives. We remember that Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12) It seems fitting that there is a cemetery on the location from which Jesus ascended into heaven.

“Bethphage is a small village close to Bethany near the top of the Mount of Olives on the road that leads East from Jerusalem to Jericho. From here Jesus began his last ride into Jerusalem, often called the Triumphant Entry.”

-Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them,

-Go to the village opposite you and immediately, as you enter it, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately. Notice that this is a single colt, a young jackass. The gospels are insistent that it is a young colt, but there does not seem to be any apparent theological reason for this. It seems simply to be a memory of a historical event.

-You will find an ass tied and a colt with her. (Only Matthew) Notice that Matthew has two animals, an ass and its colt. In Matthew’s account of this incident, Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on *two* animals rather than one, thereby fulfilling the details of an Old Testament prophecy.

Notice that Matthew’s account of this story is influenced by Matthew’s need to substantiate actions in Jesus’ life by proving that he was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies.

-This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet saying, “Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on an ass and on a colt, the foal of an ass.” (Only Matthew) This is a quotation from Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. We remember from our first lessons early in this course that Matthew was like a Jewish rabbi/author from New York City who was writing to other Jewish people on the East coast. Matthew was a Jewish author who understood his Jewish audience. He knew what logic would appeal to his Jewish audience. His Jewish audience appreciated Jesus’ actions being confirmed by Old Testament prophecies. Matthew consistently quoted the Old Testament to support his understanding that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.

-And they went away and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street, and they untied it. Notice the graphic detail in Mark’s account (from Simon Peter’s remembrances before Peter died in Rome. Simon Peter shared his reminiscences with John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark).

Luke and Matthew omit this juicy little detail about a door and an open street.

We love juicy little historical details that we often find in Mark and John’s gospels. Both Mark and John feel like they are eyewitness accounts of many of the stories from Jesus’ life.

-Those of them who stood there said to them, “What are you doing untying the colt?” And they told them what Jesus had said and they let them go. The two disciples tell the owners of the colt that Jesus had foretold them what was to happen. In the four gospels, Jesus always knew the future.

-They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments on it and he sat upon it. The two disciples put their garments onto the colt. Again, it is the descriptive detail of this event. We can see the two unnamed

disciples “throwing” their garments on the back of the young colt.

-And many spread their garments on the road and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. We appreciate the detail. Nowadays, children are often asked to bring a leafy branch from a tree in their back yard for Palm Sunday services.

-They take palm branches and went out to meet him. (Only John) Circle the words, “palm branch.” This verse is the source of the Christian tradition of having palm fronds as part of the Palm Sunday worship services.

-And those that went before them cried out, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming.”

-The king of Israel. (Only John.) Jesus was the king of Israel. Later, a sign, “This is the king of the Jews” would be placed on the cross.

-Hosanna in the highest.” Praise the Lord.

-And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, if these (my disciples) were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Only Luke). John has a similar occurrence in his gospel, “The Pharisees then said to one another, ‘You see that you can do nothing wrong. Look, the world has gone after him.’”

Paintings of the Palm Sunday parade



[The Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#)



[Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, Gustave Gore](#)



[The Entry into Jerusalem, Isabella Colette](#)



[Entry into Jerusalem, Pedro Orrente](#)



Discussion Question:

For you, what is the most important part of the Palm Sunday parade and why?

From a sermon, *The Palm Sunday Parade*

“Hey sanna, ho sanna, sanna, sanna, hey sanna, ho sanna sanna sanna , ho sanna, hey sanna, Hey, hey JC, JC won't you smile at me. Jesus Christ, if you're divine, turn my water into wine. Prove to me that you're no fool. Walk across my swimming pool. Hey sanna, ho sanna, sanna, sanna, hey sanna, ho sanna.”

With these words, Webber and Rice's rock opera, “Jesus Christ Superstar” have captured the glimmer of that first Palm Sunday parade; that nationalistic religious fevered carnival of “Hey

sanna, ho sanna, sanna, sanna, hey sanna, ho sanna; Jesus Christ if you're divine, turn my water into wine."

What a day. You couldn't believe it. It was like a carnival. It was like a circus. It was like a parade. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were jammed into the holiest of holy cities. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were jammed into those narrow little streets. It was like a carnival. Shoulder to shoulder. Arm to arm. Body to body. You couldn't walk. You couldn't squeeze through this mob of people crammed into those little narrow streets of Jerusalem.

It was Passover time and the city was jammed. It was like a mob at Mardi Gras. Just jammed. And you were there. The hockers were hocking their wares, "Lambs for sale. Lambs for sale." "Good deal on matzo. Matzo here in our tent." "Come and have your Passover dinner with us. Great food."

What a mad house. Dirty streets and dusty mules. Dusty streets and dirty mules. Camels baying off in the distance. Pilgrims chanting their prayers. Roman chariots and Roman charioteers riding back and forth. Just like it the movies with John Wayne, Charlton Heston and Cecil B. DeMille, and you were there. What a mad house. What a mess. But it was a great week for business and a great week for making money. And the kids? They loved it. They loved all the commotion.

The reputation of Jesus had already spread. You see, the day before, Jesus Christ had produced the mightiest miracle he had ever done. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He had actually raised Lazarus from the dead yesterday, and then coming into town, Jesus healed two blind men, and they were now able to see. The masses of people had heard about these miracles, and everyone wanted to see if he could pull off another trick like that. The crowd wanted to see more miracles. They wanted to see a deaf person hear. They wanted to see a blind man be given sight. They wanted to see the skin of a leper made pure. Just like on television. They wanted to see the healer in action, this mighty miracle worker. And if they saw a miracle, let me tell you, if they saw a man actually raised from the dead, they would believe. If they actually saw a blind man be given sight, they would then be true believers. If the Houdini of the Holy Land could pull another trick out of his bag, they would believe.

"Hey, hey, JC, JC won't you smile at me. Jesus Christ if you're divine, turn my water into wine. Prove to me that you're not fool, walk across my swimming pool."

There are people who are like that, you know. They will only believe if they see a sign.

That is the way it was on that first Palm Sunday parade. There was that group of people there to see the Houdini of the Holy Land in action. It was the Big Top, the Big Tent, the Big Show, a carnival, the center ring in action. That was one group who was present on that first Palm Sunday. These people said, "Lord, if you give me a miracle, then I will believe." ... Have you ever been like that?

Then there was a second group of people that day. This second group didn't want a religious carnival; they weren't looking for the Houdini of the Holy Land; they weren't looking for one more magic trick. These people were *much more* serious. They were looking for a political revolution. It was like a mass political rally, with all its intense fanaticism. Imagine yourself in Iran or Iraq. And your great political leader and savior has been exiled in France, and you read in all the newspapers and see it on all the television news that your Khomeni is flying back home to Iran after many years of exile.

What a mob at the airport. What a mob in the streets. What a mob everywhere because the great political leader was returning to save his nation. That is the way it was on that first Palm Sunday. There was a mass political revolution, and to understand Palm Sunday, one needs to understand this rising, nationalistic fervor.

In other words, it was political pandemonium. It was chaos. The town was ready to blow up with any spark. We are told that two-three million people were jammed into that town, and it was ready to ignite.

“Hey sanna, ho sanna, sanna sanna hey sanna, ho sanna, Jesus Christ, if you’re divine, throw out those bloody Roman swine.”

And so there were two groups on that first Palm Sunday. There were the religious fanatics who said, “Jesus, give me a miracle and then I will believe.” And then there were the political fanatics who said, “Restore our freedom and get rid of the Romans.” *Both groups* chanted, “Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna to the Son of David. The king of Israel has come.” And that is the way it was. It was a carnival. It was a circus. It was revolution on the move.

What was Jesus doing? What was Jesus doing with this mass of humanity around him? What was Jesus doing in the midst of this psychedelic kaleidoscope of madness? Was he standing up on the back seat of his chariot and waving to the crowd like some politician? Was he riding on that chariot with arms upward and outward and his fingers spiking a “V” sign for victory? Was he waving at all those people in their second story windows as they were throwing confetti on him? Was he pumping them up with political oratory to get the political revolution moving? No. Here in this cacophony of craziness, Jesus didn’t say a word. He rode in silence. Silence.

Jesus rode on a jackass into town. The crowds wanted him to ride on a tall white horse, dignified in the sunlight or on a chariot of war, glistening in its golden trim. But Jesus rode on an animal of peace, not of war. The crowd wanted him to grasp a sword in his hand and wave that sword to show what he and his followers would do to the Romans, but he had an olive branch of peace in his fingers. The crowds wanted him to give enflamed and impassioned oratory to inspire them into revolution; they wanted the shouts of soldiers but they heard only the songs of children. And Jesus? Jesus didn’t say a word. Not a word as he rode into that city.

The crowd was chanting at the top of their lungs, “Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna to the King.” And slowly, and gradually, the Hosannas became quieter and quieter and quieter. Then nothing. By afternoon, another chant had begun, almost in a whisper, “crucify him,” softly, softly, louder, louder and finally bursting with power, “Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify that man. He’s a bloody imposter. A fake. He’s no king, that’s for sure.”

They had wanted a warrior on a warhorse and instead they got a carpenter on a jackass, and so they killed him and put a poster above his head, “King of the Jews.” Big joke.

That’s the way it was on that first Palm Sunday, on that first Passion Sunday.

It is interesting to me that there were two times in the Gospel of John where the crowds tried to force Jesus to be king. Only twice. Once, in chapter six, where Jesus had fed the five thousand people. When Jesus caused that much food to be freely available, those people wanted to make him king. “Free food? Much food? Yes, let’s make that guy king.” The crowd tried to force Jesus to become king after feeding the five thousand, but the Bible says he would not be their king and he withdrew into the country.

The second time that the crowd tried to force Jesus to be king was on Palm Sunday. Jesus had worked big miracles, raising Lazarus from the dead and then healing the two blind men. If Jesus had that kind of power to heal, the crowd wanted to make him king. So once again, the crowds tried to force him to be their kind of king, and he refused. Jesus disappointed them twice.” End of this portion of the sermon.

#270. Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

Luke 19:41-44

-When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it. Today, Jesus overlooks the city of Jerusalem and weeps at the divisions there.

Jesus looks at Jerusalem and ponders its future pain and his own.



Jesus Looks Over Jerusalem and Weeps

Carving, Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem



Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem, Carving

-Saying, “Would even today you knew the things that make for peace.” Those words are still true for lives. In this war torn world of ours, with its innumerable ethnic and religious conflicts, we can still imagine Jesus weeping over this “city of man” with all of our persistent craziness and killing. We, as human beings, often pray the same words in quiet desperation: “O, that we knew in our hearts the things that make for peace.”

-But now they are hidden from you eyes. It seems as if the things that make for peace are still hidden from our human eyes today.

-For the days shall come upon you when your enemies shall cast up a bank about you and surround you and hem you in on every side and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in. Jerusalem was destroyed and leveled by the Romans in 70 CE.

In every century, communities have been surrounded by their enemies and their community and way of life destroyed.

-Because you did not know the time of your visitation. Maybe “didn’t want to know.” For example, many people in Europe, facing the inevitable advance of Hitler’s armies, put “their heads in the sand,” hoping that coming clouds of Hitler would miraculously disappear. We are often the same.

#271. 273. Cleansing of the Temple

Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:14-22

- Mark’s sequence of events is as follows:
 - Triumphant entry on a colt.
 - Goes to the temple, looks around, and walks to Bethany.

- The next day, comes back from Bethany to Jerusalem.
 - Curses the fig tree.
 - Cleanses the temple.
- Matthew's sequence of events is as follows:
 - Triumphant entry on a colt.
 - Cleanses the temple.
 - Curses the fig tree.
 - John locates the cleaning of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, immediately after Jesus turned the water into wine at a Jewish wedding and immediately before the story about Nicodemus.
 - The important issue is not *when* this particular story is located in Jesus' ministry. It is not important whether this event occurred at the beginning of his ministry or occurred during the last week of his ministry.
 - Nor is it important that there were theoretically two cleanings stories, one early in John and the second story later in the other gospels.
 - The important issue is this: What is the meaning of this event? What is the message that God is communicating to us through this story?
 - The gospels of Mark and John are most descriptive of this scene.

#273. The Cleansing of the Temple

Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:13-17

-**The Passover of the Jews was at hand.** (Only John). All four gospel authors include the story of the cleansing of the temple. All four gospel authors have this event occur just before the Passover.

Only John *explicitly* mentions that the cleansing was just before the Passover.

In the first three gospels, the cleaning of the temple occurs as part of the Holy Week story.

The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus went to three Passovers. The first Passover in John is recorded here in John 2:13. The second Passover is mentioned in John 6:4 and the third one is found in John 11:55.

-**He (Jesus) entered the temple** In the diagrams below, locate the Court of the Gentiles where many Biblical scholars assume that worshippers purchased animals for sacrifices. Focus on the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple and imagine that the following scene occurred there.

However...all the paintings of Jesus cleansing the temple imagine Jesus within the building of the temple and not in the courtyard of the Gentiles.



[Diagram of the Temple](#)

and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple.

-In the temple, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers at their business. (John) We can easily visualize the money changers, the oxen, sheep, pigeons and the general chaos in the Temple area, especially in the Court of the Gentiles.

We recall that the historian Josephus informed us about the “bazaars of Annas.” We recall that Annas was the old man, the high priest, and that he had four sons and one son-in-law (Caiaphas) who were also high priests. This family made big money off the temple business. It was the biggest racket in town. People would bring their Roman and Greek coins with images of the emperor on those coins. Such coins were inadmissible in the temple because they were religiously “unclean” due to the pagan image of the Caesars on those coins. Those coins with the image of Caesar would have to be exchanged for Jewish “kosher” coins. The money-changers made good profits. Larger animals like oxen and sheep were also bought and sold, as were pigeons for the sacrifices for poorer people.

In equivalent dollars of today, Annas had an annual \$170 million dollar business going. Yes, Annas and his high priestly family, had the best and biggest business in the country, and it was concentrated in the temple.

-He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. In later pictures, we will see paintings of Jesus overturning the chair of a person selling pigeons. We will see paintings where money changers were counting their coins.

“These people were in the Temple because of the Passover festival. Greek and Roman coins had a human image on them, so the half-shekel temple tax had to be paid in silver didrachmas of Tyre which had only the designation of value. Animals were kept in the Court of the Gentiles for the first time in 30 ad. “...The merchants and money changers would have been confident of the justice of their position....These people were not only licensed by the temple authorities, they had no reason to have a bad conscience with respect to their occupation—without which the payment of the temple tax and the temple cultus could not be carried out.” (Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 190) [Lent 3](#)

-And making a whip of cords, he drove them all. (Only John) This image of the whip is mentioned only in the Gospel of John. Jesus with a whip becomes a primary image for painters of this scene. We will view several paintings of the “cleansing of the temple” and Jesus will always have a whip in his hand. A reader can feel the anger of Jesus in this scene, unlike almost any other scene from the gospels. A reader can feel the red hot anger of Jesus towards those people corrupting the temple by selling sacrifices at exorbitant prices and charging ridiculously inflated prices to change money.

Paintings of the cleansing of the Temple

[Cleansing of the Temple, Giordano](#)

What do you see in this painting? How do you feel about the artist's rendition of Jesus' anger? What do you think Jesus was angry about?

[Cleansing of the Temple, Bernardino Mei](#)

In the above painting by Bernardino Mei, we focus on Jesus with his red cloak. We focus on his right hand with its whip and his left hand pushing a pigeon from a commonly, aging woman's right arm. We notice a man behind her counting his money to make sure that he didn't lose any. We see a woman with an ashen face of fear carrying a basket of birds in her outstretched hands, trying to make sure that she didn't lose any. We notice a well dressed woman on the right with a basket of bread carried on her head. The painting is filled with tension.

Cleansing of the Temple, Bassano

In the above painting by Bassano, a viewer can get the feeling of the chaos of the scene. Numerous people are trying to escape from the anger of Jesus (again dressed in the color red that symbolizes his hot anger): money changers, men, women, sheep, cows, dog, pigeons. The violent movement is of people trying to rush out of the temple. We are reminded that these scenes of the temple presuppose Jesus was in a temple building and not out in a courtyard adjacent to the temple

Cleaning of the Temple, Jordaens

In the above painting by Jordaens, a person can see the detail e.g. the pigeons at the bottom in the pigeon cage. In the center bottom, a viewer can see a man being turned over in a chair such as when Jesus turned over the chairs of the pigeon sellers. You can see a cow/oxen, two sheep and a donkey which apparently were being sold. The scene is pure chaos.

Cleaning of the Temple, El Greco

We again focus on Jesus (dressed in reddish purple) the center of the painting. We can see the elongated bodies which was the style of El Greco. We can see the money changer on the upper left, clutching his bag of money. As Jesus utilizes a whip, it appears that he is using the whip to scare people who are selling goods in order to move these people out of the temple. We can see a table turned over in the foreground.

Cleansing of the Temple, Rembrandt

In this Rembrandt, the viewer cannot help but focus on the stern and angry eyes of Jesus. He has a whip in his right hand. The man next to Jesus is clutching his money bag. A viewer also focuses on the money at the bottom left. The man is grabbing his loose change so as not to lose it.

Merchants in the Temple, Mafa

In Mafa's paintings, Jesus is always dressed in the color "red." In this painting, we can imagine Jesus out in a courtyard rather than inside a glorious temple.

-He would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple (Mark).

-He drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple. (John) The sheep and oxen were large animals, which were to be used for sacrifices.

-He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who sold pigeons, "Take those things away." (John) We can visualize Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers. In an earlier verse, we hear of Jesus knocking over the chairs of those who sold pigeons.

"Those who sold animals suitable for sacrifice provided a much-needed service to those who had traveled from great distances, as did the moneychangers. Temple sacrifices were only accepted in Jewish currency and many of the travelers came from places where other currencies were used.

Why, then, did Jesus drive the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple premises? Some commentators believe that Jesus was attacking the extortionist practices of many of those who sold animals and exchanged money. Others believe that the outrage was over the irreverence of the traffic

on Temple grounds. Still others believe that Jesus was outraged because this trafficking took place in the court of the Gentiles, thus hindering them from approaching God in worship. The latter view is supported by the second cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15-17) where Jesus proclaims that the Temple should be a place of prayer for all peoples.”



http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item_id=7442&loc_id=9,612,48

-He taught and said to them, Circle the word, “taught.” We remember that Mark emphasized that Jesus was a teacher. See page 215, #251 and Mark saying that crowds “gathered to him again and, as was his custom, he *taught* them.”

-“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers. It is written in the Old Testament, Isaiah 56:7, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

This is the issue: The temple is to be a house of prayer, not a house of profit.

That is what our Christian temples are to be: houses of prayer.

-“You shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” (John) Jesus was thinking of God as his Father and that his Father’s house had been violated.

Similarly, when our own homes have been broken into, robbed, vandalized and violated, we naturally become intensely angry at those destructive thieves who have ransacked our houses. We feel personally violated. We often become intensely angry at those people who have smashed up and defaced our homes and committed wanton, destruction of our property. Similarly, Jesus thought of the temple as his Father’s house and it was being vandalized and violated, defaced and destroyed by people who did not respect or revere as he did.

-His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for thy house shall consume me.” (only John)

In this verse, focus on three themes: 1) zeal; 2) your house; 3) consume me.

Yes, we can feel the zeal of Jesus in this scene. Jesus was quoting from Psalm 69:9. Focus on the word, “zeal.” Zeal implies intense passion.

Focus on the two words, “your house.” The temple was and is the Lord’s house. It is not that the Lord God confined his presence to the temple but that the temple had been dedicated to God. The house was the Lord’s house.

Focus on the third theme: “Consume me.” Consume me” means to “eat me up.” This intense passion of Jesus overwhelmed him.



Discussion Question:

What does the story of the cleansing of the temple mean to you?



Discussion Question:

What does it mean for our sanctuary to be a house of prayer?

Closing Prayers

Assigned Readings for Session 41: Passion Week (2)

Day 1 #280	On Paying Tribute to Caesar
Day 2 #281	The Question about the Resurrection
Day 3 #282, 283	The Great Commandment, The Question about David's Son
Day 4 #284	Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees
Day 5 #285	Lament Over Jerusalem
Day 6 #286	The Widow's Mite
Day 7	No assignment. On the seventh day, God rested and commanded us to rest.

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Appendix



<http://new-birth.net/contemporary/hr5.htm>

The following quotation is from the above link:

“The so-called “House of Annas” was the owner of a great part of the sales stands for animals, of money-changers’ business, etc. The sales frequently occurred at exorbitant prices, sucking the last copper coin from the worshippers, especially from the poor and naive peasants. The House of Annas had converted religion into big business, lacking spirituality, but they called themselves “the spiritual leaders of Israel.”

The Sadducee High-Priest Yosef Kayafa, Annas’ son-in-law, who had been High-Priest previously, transferred the selling of animals from the markets on the mount of Olives to the court of the Gentiles, a recent innovation to guarantee a temple monopoly on animals offered for sacrifice, over Pharisaic objections. One may even consult the Mishnah’s story of R. Gamaliel’s later drastic action against overcharging for sacrificial animals.

Inside the Temple walls, there opened a great columned hall or portico, facing the north side, like a cloister. The hall’s size was impressive, and so it was called the Royal Portico. Four rows of pillars divided it into three long aisles. Each pillar was 27 feet high and so thick that three men standing with arms stretched out could just encircle it. The tops of the pillars were carved with rows of leaves and the ceiling with leaves and flowers.

It was in this splendid portico, where the moneychangers’ tables stood, and the traders had stalls and cages to sell animals and birds for sacrifice.

Every Jew was expected to pay a tax to the Temple each year. The amount was set at half a shekel of silver, the amount laid down in the Law of Moses for the atonement of every Israelite, in Exodus 30:11-16. In the first century half a shekel was reckoned the equivalent of two Greek drachmas or two Roman denarii. A laborer could earn that amount in two days.

The priests decreed that payment should be made in coins of the purest silver. Only one sort was acceptable, the silver coins of the city of Tyre.

Many of the traders charged very high prices, taking shameless advantage of the pilgrims who came from the countryside and from foreign lands. The traders had to pay for permission to have their stalls in this area, and they had to pay the leading priests.

Later Jewish tradition even remembered one place as ‘the Bazaars of the sons of Annas’. Again, you find here the reference to the abuses of the ‘House of Annas’.

It can be estimated that the amount taken to the Temple each year was about half a million shekels. The Tyrean shekel was worth four denarii, so the annual income of the Temple would be equivalent to wages for two million man-days of work, or 5480 man-years of work, on a basis of 7 working days per week.

Let’s say the average yearly income of a North American today would be 30,000 dollars. Then you could calculate the Temple income

almost as 170 million dollars. And a good part of this, constituted personal revenue for Annas and his friends. The Temple was not the spiritual center any more, it had become big business!"



<http://www.elijahnet.org/The%20High%20Priests%20who%20Co194.html>

The following quotation is from the above link:

Josephus remarks: "As for the high priest Ananias, he increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree...for he was a great hoarder up of money...he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that (some of the) priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food..."

"A sedition arose between the high priests, with regard to one another; for they got together bodies of the people, and frequently came from reproaches to throwing of stones at each other; but Ananias was too hard for the rest, by his riches,--which enabled him to gain those that were the most ready to receive. Costabarus, also, and Saulus, did themselves get together a multitude of wicked wretches... but still they used violence with the people weaker than themselves. And from that time it principally came to pass, that our city was greatly disordered, and that all things grew worse and worse among us."