

The Mind of Christ My Father's House

INTRODUCTION:

- I. The most event-filled week in the life of Jesus was His FINAL week.
 - A. That week began on Sunday morning of Passover week when Jesus made a triumphant entrance into the city of Jerusalem.
 1. It is certainly no coincidence that Jesus chose to enter the city of Jerusalem during the great Passover.
 - a. The city was filled with devout Jews from all over the Roman Empire who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover – the most sacred of all Jewish feast days.
 - b. This was a time of the year when religious devotion among the people was at its highest.
 - B. But this was also an extremely dangerous time Jesus – His enemies were looking for Him and had every intention of taking Him prisoner, and kill Him.
 1. In **John chapters 11 and 12** John tells us that the Pharisees and the chief priests were deeply troubled over Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.
 - a. In fact, we're told, "*... from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.*" (**John 11:53**)

- b. But perhaps the most amazing thing is that, "... *the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.*" **(John 12:10-11)**
- C. Knowing that His enemies were hunting for Him, we would normally think Jesus would enter Jerusalem secretly and keep to the back streets. However, this is JUST THE OPPOSITE of what Jesus did.
 1. He chose to enter Jerusalem in such a way that EVERY EYE would be focused on Him.
 2. In fact, Matthew records, "*And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved...*" **(Matthew 21:10)**
 - a. The Greek word for "moved" is the same word from which we get the English word "seismic" – a word used to describe an earthquake and the shockwaves that often follow.
 - b. In other words, Matthew says the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem sent a SHOCKWAVE through the city.
 - c. EVERYONE in the city either witnessed this event or at least heard about it – especially the enemies of Jesus.
- D. When Jesus entered the city, Mark tells that He went directly to the Temple.

1. Mark writes, "*And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.*" **(Mark 11:11)**
 - a. Bethany was a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem, about 1½ miles away.
 - b. Bethany was also the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha – who were all among the closest friends of Jesus.
2. However, the next morning – the morning after Jesus made His triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem – He returns to the city and performs one of the most spectacular events of His three-year long ministry. He cleanses the Temple.

BODY:

- I. Before we look at the things Jesus did and said when He cleansed the Temple, we need to understand WHY He took such a bold step.
 - A. In a previous lesson about the enemies of Jesus, we learned that the priests and chief priests had reached the height of spiritual corruption during the days of Jesus.

1. They had not only failed to properly TEACH the people about the true significance of worshipping Jehovah, they had turned the worship of Jehovah into a HUGE MONEYMAKING BUSINESS!
- B. The priests and chief priests had developed MANY ways of making money off the people who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.
1. For example, if you were an adult male Jew (not one of the priests), you had to pay an annual Temple tax of a half-shekel. This amounted to nearly two days pay for the average working man.
 - a. If that tax was NOT paid, you couldn't offer your sacrifice.
 - b. However, the priests demanded that the Temple tax had to be paid with JEWISH currency.
 - c. Why? The Jewish priests said all foreign currency was a violation of the Ten Commandments – specifically regarding engraved images.
 - (1). **Exodus 20:4-5** – *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to*

them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. . ."

- d. Since FOREIGN currency (GREEK and ROMAN COINS) bore the engraved image of some Greek deity or of the Roman Emperor, it was considered by the priests to be a violation of one of the Ten Commandments.
 - (1). So, you had to EXCHANGE your FOREIGN currency for JEWISH currency.
- e. Therefore, to accommodate the THOUSANDS of worshippers like you, the priests set up booths within the Temple courts for the money changers.
 - (1). This might seem to be a rather innocent practice – after all the priests were making it convenient for you to get your money exchanged right there in the Temple courts.
 - (2). But there was another problem – and that was the RATE OF EXCHANGE charged by the money changers.
- f. The money changers typically charged a fee that amounted to about a half-day's wage for the average working man like you. In other words, you had to pay nearly TWO DAYS PAY

just to pay the Temple tax and ANOTHER HALF DAY PAY to pay the rate of exchange demanded by the money changers.

(1). In a day when people like you lived from day to day with your meager income, missing a day's pay would be like one of us missing a WEEKS pay.

(2). And this loss of 2 ½ days pay was just to pay the Temple tax just so you could make your sacrifice.

g. But there are other ways the devout worshippers like you were fleeced out of your money by a corrupt priesthood.

2. The priests ALSO allowed booths to be set up for those who sold lambs and turtle doves for sacrifice. Like the booths of the money changers, these booths were ALSO set up in the Temple courtyards.

a. Keep in mind that thousands upon thousands of devout Jews like you would travel GREAT distances to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover – and Passover required the offering of a sacrifice.

b. Of course, traveling hundreds or thousands of miles with an animal you intended to sacrifice would be difficult at best, if not impossible. Therefore, the priests and chief priests

authorized sacrificial animals to be sold in the Temple courtyards for your convenience.

- (1). In most instances this sacrifice would be a lamb. But for those of you who are too poor to afford a lamb, you could substitute two turtledoves or two pigeons.
 - (2). Of course, if you bought a sacrificial animal from one of the vendors operating INSIDE the Temple courtyard, you paid a premium price. Why? These animals had already passed inspection by a priest so they could be declared to be without spot or blemish.
 - (3). According to the Law of Moses, all sacrificial animals had to be without spot or blemish. So, they naturally had to be carefully inspected by one of the priests – who naturally charged for the service.
 - (4). But since these animal sellers wouldn't accept Roman currency, you had to go back to the money changers to exchange your Foreign currency into Jewish currency just to buy your animal.
- c. However, no one was OBLIGATED to buy their animal from one of THESE vendors INSIDE the Temple courtyard, you

COULD buy an animal from any of vendors operating OUTSIDE the Temple grounds.

- (1). The only problem is that you STILL had to have the animal inspected by a priest – who charged for the service.
 - (2). And, of course, they didn't take Foreign currency, so you had to go back to the money changers to exchange your Foreign currency into Jewish currency.
3. Needless to say, the money changers AND those who sold sacrificial animals in the Temple made a FORTUNE!
- a. Since they operated in the Temple courtyards they were required to pay HANDSOME COMMISSIONS for the privilege of doing business there.
4. And who do you think made money off all these business enterprises?
- a. The common people had come to call all these dozens and dozens of booths "The Bazaar (or the Marketplace) of Annas."
 - b. These booths were the private business of the family of Annas, who was the former high priest, and who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas – the current high priest.

- c. While Caiaphas would condemn Jesus and insisted that He be taken to Pilate, it was Caiaphas' father-in-law Annas who was the power and the driving force behind Caiaphas.
- II. Now with all this background, let's turn our attention to the actual events that took place when Jesus returned to the Temple the day after He made His triumphal entry into the city.
- A. While this event is recorded in all three synoptic gospels, let's take a close look at Matthew's account first.
 1. **Matthew 21:12-13** – *Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*
 - B. When Jesus cleansed the Temple, this one act reveals several important things that we might overlook.
 1. First, the actions of Jesus clearly show that He was acting as a **SPOKESMAN OF GOD**.
 - a. He cleansed the Temple as if it belonged to Him – as if it were His own personal house and dwelling place.

2. Second, the actions of Jesus clearly show that He was acting as THE MESSIAH.
 - a. We looked at a few of the Apocryphal writings of the Jews – uninspired writings during the time we typically call “between the Testaments” – and we took special notice of what the Jews believed the Messiah would do when He came to Jerusalem.
 - b. Among those writings are numerous references to a purging of Jerusalem – in other words, the Messiah was expected to first purge Jerusalem of all spiritual corruption.
 - c. Of course, the first people to go would be the priests, chief priests and especially the high priests.
 - d. So, the cleansing of the Temple was a DIRECT ATTACK against the corrupt priesthood, and SPECIFICALLY against Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas the high priest – the very men who had LITERALLY turned a house of prayer into a den of robbers.
- C. But there’s another DEEPER meaning to this act of Jesus.
 1. The statement of Jesus in **Matthew 21:13** – *“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a*

'den of thieves.'" – was quotes from TWO Old Testament prophecies.

2. The first quote is from **Isaiah 56:6-7** where the Lord said, "*For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*"
Including, says the Lord, "*the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants.*"
 - a. A clear reference to Jews and Gentiles coming together in the house of the Lord to worship and serve God.
3. The second quote is from **Jeremiah 7:8-11**, where the Lord is condemning the Jews of Jeremiah's day who lived wicked lives during the week, and then come and hypocritically stand before the Lord in His house, and believe the Lord is going to deliver them from the penalty of CONTINUING to live a wicked life.
 - a. **Jeremiah 7:8-11** – *Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? Has this house,*

which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD.

4. The religious leaders, and eventually the people, in Jeremiah's day believed that if they simply DID all the REQUIREMENTS of the Law – that is, make all the REQUIRED SACRIFICES under the Law – then they could continue living sinful lives.
 - a. They had come to believe that God was more interested in SACRIFICES OF ANIMALS and FIRST FRUITS than He was in people living SACRIFICIAL LIVES.
 - b. They believed that as long as they went through the EXTERNAL ACTS or the FORM of worship, God wasn't all that concerned about the INTERNAL CONDITION OF THE HEART.
5. Therefore, they believed they could *"steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,"* and then come and stand before Jehovah in HIS house which is called by HIS name, and say, *"We are delivered to do all these abominations"* – in other words, by simply going through all the PERFUNCTORY ACTS OF WORSHIP, they were forgiven and could then go back to living sinful lives.

6. The religious leaders in Jeremiah's day had turned the house of God into a den of thieves because they had robbed God of the worship He deserved – worship that came from a heart devoted to God.
 7. Jesus said the religious leaders of HIS day (primarily the priests and chief priests) were NO DIFFERENT from the religious leaders in the days of Jeremiah.
 8. The priests and chief priests had so corrupted the worship of Jehovah that they were merely drawing NEAR to God with their MOUTH, and honoring Him with their LIPS, but their HEART was FAR from Him.
- D. Let there be NO MISTAKE about this. The Lord is JUST AS DISPLEASED TODAY with worship that is offered WITHOUT THE HEART. The Lord WILL NOT TOLERATE HEARTLESS WORSHIP!
1. In **Romans 12:1-2**, the apostle Paul told the saints in Rome that they needed to be, *"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

2. When WE refuse to become a LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, and we choose instead to BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, and THEN COME HERE and sip a little GRAPE JUICE and eat a pinch of CRACKER, and sing a few songs and bow our heads while someone else prays, and THEN go back to living a worldly and ungodly life, we will have ALSO turned THIS HOUSE into a HOUSE OF THEIVES – because we've come here and ROBBED GOD of the heartfelt worship and sacrificial lives HE DESERVES!
3. Listen to the words of Jehovah as He speaks to the corrupt priests in Malachi's day (**Malachi 1:6-10**) – *"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' "You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" says the LORD of hosts. "But now entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to*

us. While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably?" says the LORD of hosts. "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands."

4. How TRAGIC! God was SO DISPLEASED and OFFENDED by their worship that He wished there would be someone who would at least have the courage to SHUT THE DOORS so that they could no longer worship God in vain – in an EMPTY MANNER.

D. Are WE guilty of this same sin?

1. When we refuse to become a LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. . .
2. And when we DRAW NEAR to Him with our MOUTH, and HONOR HIM with our LIPS, but our HEART IS FAR FROM HIM...
3. And when our worship is SO VAIN AND EMPTY that we offer to God worship that is so MECHANICAL AND HABITUAL that it is UNACCEPTABLE TO GOD. . .
4. Then we SURELY we shouldn't be surprised if Jesus were to storm through the doors of THIS auditorium, rush down the isle, grab the communion table by the corner and flip it over, sending communion trays and collection plates crashing to the floor,

staining the carpet with grape juice, and then turn to US and say, “MY HOUSE shall be called a House of Prayer, but YOU have made it a DEN OF THEIVES!”

5. When we offer to the Lord ANYTHING LESS THAN **ALL** OF OUR HEARTS in our worship, then don’t be surprised if the Lord were to plead for someone HERE to padlock the doors of THIS building so that WE can’t offer VAIN AND EMPTY WORSHIP to the Lord any longer.

III. Be ASSURED – this ONE act of Jesus cleansing the Temple SHOOK the Pharisees and the chief priests SO BADLY that they were ALL THE MORE determined to put Him to death.

A. They were ALL deeply afraid of Jesus.

1. In fact, in **Mark 11:18**, Mark tells us the reaction of the scribes and chief priests when they heard Jesus make His statement. Mark writes, “*And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.*”
2. The people were becoming EVEN MORE convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

- a. Sadly, the people also completely misunderstood the Messiahship of Jesus, and believed that He had come to purge Jerusalem of an evil priesthood, drive the Romans from the land, and reestablish the nation of Israel to the grandeur it had in the days of David and Solomon.
- b. And THIS is what the priests and chief priests feared most. They were afraid that the people, who believed Jesus to be the Messiah, would raise up in armed rebellion against Rome, and that the Romans would come in massive strength to not only CRUSH the rebellion, but CRUSH the religious and political leadership of Israel in the process.
- c. This is why, following the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees got together to plot the death of Jesus.
- d. In **John 11:47-48**, John says, *Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."*

IV. By cleansing the temple in this manner, Jesus made a public display of His disapproval of the corrupt priesthood. But this may not have been the first time that Jesus did this. Jesus may have actually cleansed the Temple twice.

A. In **John 2:13-25**, John tells us the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple, but John's account indicates that Jesus also cleansed the Temple in the same manner at the BEGINNING of the ministry of Jesus.

1. **John 2:13-17** – *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."*

B. Some commentators say John's gospel account is not intended to be chronologically organized, but to simply show the evidence that proves the deity of Jesus.

1. Therefore, they believe that there was only ONE occasion when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

C. However, most Biblical scholars believe there were actually TWO occasions when Jesus cleansed the Temple – one at the BEGINNING of His ministry and during His FIRST visit to Jerusalem, and the other at the END of His ministry and during His LAST visit to Jerusalem.

1. And so, Jesus demanded the SAME PURE HEARTFELT WORSHIP to Jehovah at the BEGINNING of His ministry as He did when He cleansed the Temple at the END of His ministry.
2. Three years earlier, no one knew who He was. They knew He was ACTING like they expected the Messiah to act, and so they mockingly asked Him to give them a sign that would validate His authority for disturbing the peace of the Temple as He had done.
3. But three years later, when Jesus demonstrated His power by raising Lazarus from the dead, and then entered the city of Jerusalem as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and then cleansed the Temple a SECOND TIME – EVERYONE knew WHO He was, and WHAT He was – the Messiah.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Do YOU know Jesus?

- A. Do you know WHO Jesus is, and do you know WHAT He is?
1. Do you know that Jesus is the SON OF GOD who came to this earth in the form of man for YOU?
 2. Do you know that Jesus is the SAVIOR, the One who willingly died on the cross and voluntarily shed His blood as the sacrifice for YOUR SINS?
 3. Do you know that Jesus is also the LORD, the One who has the right to reign and rule as the Lord of YOUR life because of the sacrifice He made on behalf of YOU?
 4. Do you know that Jesus will also be your JUDGE, the One before whom we will ALL stand on the judgment day to give an account?
- B. We can NO MORE ESCAPE the fact that Jesus will be our JUDGE than we can escape the fact that He is also the SON OF GOD, the SAVIOR, and the LORD.
1. But, how Jesus JUDGES us in that day will depend entirely upon whether or not WE believe He is the Son of God, and whether we accept the salvation He offers as our Savior, and whether we are then willing to truly make Him the Lord of our life.
 2. In other words, Jesus WILL BE your Judge. But if you've obeyed the gospel of Christ and are living as faithfully as you can, then you don't have to worry about that judgment.

3. But if you HAVEN'T obeyed the gospel, and if you AREN'T living as faithfully as you can, then you need to be VERY concerned about that judgment.
4. So, why not do whatever you need to do – at this VERY MOMENT – to become a faithful child of God?