

Give Us Clean Hands

When you think about Jesus, what image comes to your mind? Paintings, videos, and films usually portray Him as a fair skinned, sometimes blue-eyed guy who looks like He never did a day's work in His life.

The truth is, He was an olive skinned, probably black-eyed, middle eastern Jew, with hard working, calloused hands. He didn't stand head and shoulders above everyone else, in fact Isaiah prophesied: For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

Our mental image of Jesus is often distorted. And just like our ideas about His appearance are often bogus, so are our concepts about how He handled Himself in public. We tend to picture Jesus as meek and mild, always gracious, and ever the gentleman.

We love the picture of Jesus the Good Shepherd putting the lamb on His shoulders and carrying it to safety. We love the soft image of the Baby in the manger. We love the story about Christ feeding the hungry multitudes with bread and fish. When we think about Jesus dying on the cross to pay for our sin, we're deeply moved.

Today we want to look at another side of Jesus. Today we want to see Him in a different light. Jesus was meek, and yet He was very jealous for God's glory to be shown. He didn't hold anything back when He saw God's holiness being assaulted.

I. Jesus Cleansed The Temple Because It Was The Home Of God **Read vs. 45 & 46**

Luke 19 is giving us the events of the last week in Jesus' life. At this point He has entered Jerusalem in the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. Now He enters the temple area. This is the time of the Jewish feast of Passover.

The Passover, which falls on April 16 this year, has been kept for over 3000 years. It was one of three Jewish worship times in which all males were required to come to Jerusalem.

Actually thousands came whether they were required to or not. Israel was occupied territory and Jews were scattered but feasts like Passover gave them as sense of unity.

The aim of every Jew, no matter where he lived was to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. According to the ancient historian Josephus, as many as 2 1/4 million Jews made it to Jerusalem some years.

When God first gave instructions for the special worship days of Israel in Leviticus 23 he uttered these words to Moses: "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.'"

The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Tabernacles were all called Feasts of the Lord. They were created by God and dedicated to God. But something had happened over the years.

By ignoring the truth of the Passover and making it into just another religious ceremony the people of Israel had changed God's feasts into mere religious ritual.

When Jesus arrived in the crowded, bustling, city this is what He found: Those who bought and sold in the temple. John says: He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.

There was a tax called a temple tax, which every male adult Jew had to pay. It was a tax that helped finance the temple sacrifices and upkeep.

That tax was 1/2 shekel, which was equivalent to almost two day's wage for a common laborer.

For all ordinary purposes in Palestine any type of currency was valid. Silver coins from Rome, Greece, Egypt, Tyre, Sidon were all in circulation and were all used in everyday life.

But the temple tax had to be paid in what was called "shekels of the sanctuary." These were Jewish coins so they were considered clean. All foreign currency was considered unclean and so it couldn't be used to pay a debt to God.

Now, pilgrims arrived from all over the world with all types of coins. In Acts 2, at the first feast after the crucifixion at least 14 countries are named as homes for pilgrims.

So in the temple courts money changers set up their booths. Certainly there wasn't anything wrong with this practice. The Jewish Talmud even allowed for these men to charge a small fee.

The problem was, more than a small fee was being charged. Sometimes up to a full day's wage was charged just to change money.

The wealth that accrued from the temple tax and from the money changers was fantastic. When Crassus captured Jerusalem and raided the temple treasury in 54 BC he took the equivalent of \$20 million.

Besides the money changers there were also the sellers of oxen and sheep and doves. A visit to the temple meant a sacrifice; especially at passover time. The whole Jewish way of life was built around appropriate sacrifices.

The temple area itself was comprized of courts and buildings. The outer court was called the Court of the Gentiles and surrounded the temple proper. There was a wall that separated it from the inner court and warnings were posted to tell non Jews that the punishment for going past this wall was death.

It was in this outer court with its pillars and roofs to provide shade that the animals were sold. All sacrifices in the temple were peddled by sellers and inspectors.

Rabbinical literature tells us that the inspectors spent 18 months on a farm learning to distinguish between a suitable and non suitable animal. They supposedly even learned to identify an animal that might one day become unclean.

If the inspectors didn't want to approve an animal it couldn't be brought in for sacrifice. Extortion and pay-offs were common in the temple area and it was said that the high priest was behind the whole operation. Commentators of that day dubbed the temple "the bazaars of Annas." They knew that the high priest sold franchises for the money changing booths and for the stalls to sell animals.

All of this was done in the name of worship of the true and living God. All of this was done to celebrate what was supposed to be The feast of the LORD.

When Jesus entered into the temple he found a religious circus. He saw sheep

and oxen and birds and all the sounds and smells that go along with them. He saw huckstering, bartering, and haggling over the weight of coins. He saw people pushing and shoving and shouting.

And Jesus responded, not by walking away passively and shaking his head but he became angry.

Turn to Mark 11 pg 981 Read vs 15-16

Jesus shouted above the crowd - tables crashed, money rolled across the floor.

Jesus described himself as "meek and lowly of heart." He said "blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

At his crucifixion he displayed the ultimate humility.

Peter said "when he was reviled, did not revile in return, when he suffered he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously."

But to have a balanced picture of Jesus we need to see him becoming angry.

In Math. 23 Jesus called the pharisees "serpents and a brood of vipers."

When he was questioned about healing a man on the sabbath day Mark tells us he "looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their heart."

Psalms 7:11 says "God is angry with the wicked every day."

To make a blanket statement saying that anger is sin is false. Anger isn't sin or Jesus and the Father would be both guilty of sin.

All of our emotions have been given to us by God including anger. It isn't anger itself that is sin, it's how we deal with anger.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians saying "be angry and sin not." Anger isn't resentment, holding on to anger quickly allows it to turn into resentment but anger itself isn't resentment.

Anger isn't losing your temper. I have no doubt that parents should discipline in anger, but never when they are out of control. Children need to see that sin makes their parents angry, just like we need to realize that sin makes God angry. Parents just need to make sure that they're angry at sin and not just annoyed because their kids caused them a problem.

If you allow anger just to break out, in an undisciplined manner, by saying or doing whatever comes into your mind without weighing the consequences, then you're violating God's commands.

Prov. 14:29 says "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding but he who is impulsive exalts fully."

When Jesus Christ pushed over those tables, he was as fully God and as perfectly holy, as when he stood on the Mt. of transfiguration or when he hung on the cross.

His anger was a righteous anger - a proper anger. It wasn't because someone did something to him. It wasn't because he was being taken advantage of somehow, and he reacted in pride. I believe there were clear reasons why Jesus responded like he did.

1. He acted and responded with anger because God's house was being desecrated. In the temple there was worship without reverence. The purpose of the temple was to glorify God. It was the place where God's glory rested. It was the meeting place between God and his people.

While the religious authorities of Jesus Day loudly proclaimed the holiness of God they denied it in practice.

Jesus' anger was turned against what detracted from the communication of God's glory, especially in worship.

Israel gloried in their temple - but no one was bold enough to rebuke the desecration of the temple. It was to be a place of prayer. The temple was a place of communing with God. They had made it a den of thieves.

2. A second reason that Jesus was angry was because of the sacrificial system itself. God instituted sacrifices to show his people spiritual truth.

The sacrifices showed God's hatred for sin, that sin brings death, that an innocent substitute can take the place of the guilty, they pointed to Jesus as the ultimate and final sacrifice.

The Jewish people had taken the sacrificial system and had made it an end in itself.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea had all spoken against the routine, ritual sacrifices of Israel.

In Isaiah chapter 1 God spoke through the prophet and said "hear the words of the Lord you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God you people of Gomorrah."

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me says the Lord? "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle.

I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats..bring no more futile sacrifices...they are a trouble to me, I am weary of bearing them."

It wasn't that God despised the sacrificial system. He was the one who set it up. What God despised was the fact that Israel thought that the sacrifices themselves made them right with God and their own faith and life style didn't really matter. That's why they could allow this blatant practice of extortion and covetousness to go in in their most holy place.

Its interesting that at the end of Colossians 3:5 the apostle Paul calls covetousness "idolatry." And the reason the Bible equates those two is because we either worship God or worship self. If we truly worship God we'll desire to do what pleases him. If we worship ourselves, we'll do what pleases self.

And if we bow at the shrine of self we are putting self before God - idolatry.

See how this reveals the emptiness of Israel. The nation prided itself upon its monotheism. They didn't worship multiple God's like the heathen. The Jews boasted that they were free from idolatry. Yet idolatry - covetousness - was the very thing the Son of God found in his father's house.

3. Then there's a third reason why Jesus became angry. All of the buying and selling was going on in the court of the Gentiles.

The temple consisted of the court of the Gentiles, then the court of the women, then the court of the Israelites, then the court of the priests. At the very center was the temple proper and the holy place.

When a Gentile came to worship God he was limited to the court of the Gentiles. Any Gentile who had been touched by God and wanted to meditate and pray and find out about the one true God.

The thing was, no one could worship in all that racket and clamour. What was going on in the court of the Gentiles actually shut non-Jews out from the presence of God.

Jesus had good reason to be angry.

Back to Luke 19 Read vs 47-48

Up until now we've seen the antagonism of Israel's leadership growing. Now Jesus has gone too far. For several days Jesus would come into the temple to teach and every day the religious notables would get more and more agitated. They didn't just want Jesus to go away. Now they were plotting to destroy Him.

Obviously this is important historically to understand. It's important for us to see why Jesus was hated. But what about us? What does this have to do with us? What does this have to do with our everyday lives?

I. Jesus Cleansed The Temple Because It Was The Home Of God II. We Should Cleanse Our Body Because It Is The Temple Of God

Turn to I Cor 6 pg 1102 Read vs 18-19

The Bible teaches that we're alienated from God because of sin. It clearly demonstrates that God is holy and we are not. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). That's a hard concept for us to grasp onto but we are sinners.

Actually all you have to do is commit just one sin and you fail to meet God's standard of perfection. Because God is holy, He cannot allow any sin to enter His heaven. The Bible says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23) So how can anyone overcome the penalty of sin and go to heaven?

Religion says, Do something. Going to church, being baptized, and practicing good morals are good, but they don't satisfy God's holy demands. According to the Bible, a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2:16)

God Himself has Provided the Answer. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin. He died on the cross to pay for our sins, all of them. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Jesus shed His blood and paid for all our sin at the cross. Hebrews 9:22 says without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness of sin). On the third day after His death, Jesus rose from the dead, demonstrating His divine power over sin and death. This is God's great gift to every person: complete payment for sin. All we can do is receive the gift.

The Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)

Believing means that after you realize you are a sinner, you completely trust in Jesus and what He did for you as payment for your sin.

That results in New Life. All your sins are forgiven and you can be confident of eternal life. The Bible says, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) Out of gratitude to God, your desires, actions, will, your entire life - all begin to change. He loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.

One of the 33 things the Bible says happens the moment we believe is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity comes to live inside us.

Our body becomes God's temple.

Under the Old covenant if you actually wanted to meet God personally you went to the temple in Jerusalem. The glory of God resided in the holy of holies.

When Jesus died on the cross and rose again a new age was inaugurated. God doesn't dwell in a building now, he lives in His people.

This building we're in isn't the House of God. We don't call this room "the sanctuary." This is so important to understand. Believers are God's sanctuary. Our bodies are the holy place. We are God's house. We don't go somewhere to meet God. He lives in His people through His Spirit.

If our bodies are God's temple that's got some tremendous implications. One of them is given right here in I Cor 6. Flee sexual immorality.

Why? Because you might get pregnant? Because you might catch AIDS? Because you'll ruin your life?

All those things are certainly possibilities, but that's not the most essential reason believers are to flee immorality. We're to flee immorality because we're God's holy place. We're God's temple. And God's temple is reserved for pure and holy use.

Look at Eph 2 pg 1125 Read 19-22

Not only our individual bodies temples of the Holy Spirit, but we're also building blocks. All of the individual temples come together as part of a great temple. As we fit together we grow into a holy temple in the Lord.

If I don't care about my temple. If I willful and repeatedly disobey God, not only am I personally defiled, but I'm defiling the holy temple made up of my brothers and sisters. Later on in Ephesians were given some practical admonitions about keeping our temple holy.

walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath... (Ephesians 4:26)

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good... (Ephesians 4:28)

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification ... (Ephesians 4:29)

do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:30-32)

This is real, down to earth, practical holiness. We should be as zealous for the purity of our lives as Jesus was for the temple in Jerusalem.

Let me ask you, do you get angry at sin? Not, do you get angry at people who sin against you, but do you have a righteous anger that moves you to throw the things which defile you out of your life?

I'm talking to those who have trusted Christ now.

John it says that after Jesus cleansed the temple *Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."*

Does a zeal for the purity of God's temple consume you with a holy passion?
Does it move you to quit playing games with God and excusing sin?

- I. *Jesus Cleansed The Temple Because It Was The Home Of God*
- II. *We Should Cleanse Our Body Because It Is The Temple Of God*
- III. *We Should Cleanse Our Heart Because It Is The Holy Of Holies*

Turn to Proverbs 4:23 pg 607 Read vs 43

The innermost part of the Jewish temple was called the holy of holies. That's a Hebrew way of saying the holiest place of all. There was only one man who could enter into that holy of holies, that was the High Priest. And he could only go in once a year on Yom Kipper.

Our temple has a sacred place too. It's what the Bible calls, our "heart." Our heart is our innermost being. It's who we really are. If we want to honor God then we need a pure heart.

The Bible says: *Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...* (I Timothy 1:15)

** Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (I Timothy 2:22)*

** Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart... (I Peter 2:22)*

David wrote in Psalm 24: *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him... (Psalm 24:3-5)*

Have you trusted Jesus Christ, the holy savior, for your forgiveness? If you haven't remember the anger Jesus showed in the temple is just a foretaste of the wrath of God to come. Receive Him and enjoy the freedom of God's forgiveness.

If you are a believer I would ask you how's your heart. Last week we saw Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and we asked the question, is Jesus weeping over the condition of our hearts?

Are you keeping your heart with all diligence? Do you have clean hands and a pure heart, so you may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or may stand in His holy place?

Are there some things you need to overturn and throw out of your life this morning. Are there some things you've let go that are polluting the holy place? Are you zealous for God and His truth?

Jesus Cleansed The Temple Because It Was The Home Of God. Are you cleansing your heart and life of the defilements that would keep you from being all that you could be for God?