

Forty Days with Jesus: Widow in the Temple

John 2:13-22

This widow and approximately 2 million Jews were in Jerusalem for Passover—Judaism's most important holy time.

The scene here is from John 2:13-22 known as the Cleansing of the Temple. All four gospels record a temple cleansing: John's record is at the beginning of Jesus public ministry and the others record a cleansing after Jesus arrived in Jerusalem following His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. (Mark 11:15-17)

N.T. Wright - the Temple and Passover are central to the Jews.

John 2:13-14 begins by letting us know that Jesus was in town for the Passover, and he found livestock and money changers occupying a part of the Temple, the Court of the Gentiles. The Court of the Gentiles is the gathering space for both Jews and Gentiles alike could find access and acceptance. Why is this court so significant?

In Exodus 6:7, God established a special relationship with Israel; He would be their God and they would be His people. While this was an exclusive relationship, it was never meant to be an exclusive relationship based on physical descent. They were to call all peoples to the exclusive worship of God. This intent is implicit in God's call to Abraham. God promise to bless the nations through the patriarch. Genesis 12:1-3

Isaiah 56:1-8 - God desires for the Gentiles to be counted among His people. Isaiah foresees a day when foreigners to Israel will join themselves to the nation and worship the Lord. Like the Jews, they will pray in the temple, which will be "a house of prayer for all peoples" (v. 7).

The Jews never fulfilled their call to reach the Gentiles and invite them to worship the one, true God. The Court of the Gentiles was the Jews' symbolic way of saying that they did fulfill their mission.

The Gentiles, however, were not really welcome there. The Jewish mind-set hoped that the Messiah would cleanse the temple of all Gentiles. You see the Jew were willing to accept and emphasize that they were God's chosen people and ignore their calling to bring and lead all nations to the worship of God. Pick and choose religion.

Therefore, when the Gentiles came to the Court of the Gentiles, there was no welcome awaiting them. Instead, the court was filled with merchants who sold animals for worshipers to bring as sacrifices and money changers who exchanged Roman coins for shekels that had no image of the emperor on them and thus were fit for payment of the temple tax.

These two activities, which the chief priests sanctioned, were made available (marketed) as a convenience for the Jewish worshipers...and it was rife with corruption. There was no place for Gentiles to worship the Lord, and with that, the Jewish worshipers were being fleeced.

With this, the outer courts had become a short cut to the other side of town for some people.

These vile practices were staining God's temple and God's glory in the name of religion. This was a people who believed that keeping the rules and regulations of ritualistic religion, is how one pleased God, and not the attitude of the heart. The reverence and awe of God, a heart for God and a love for others was no where to be found! It was not about relationships: it was about rules and regulations. If we just do what God required of us in the rules and regulations of worship, regardless of our heart's attitude, God will be pleased with us. We are fine.

When Jesus entered the Court of the Gentiles, he saw His Father's House being turned *from* a place of prayer and worship into a den of robbers and thieves. The people of God needed to be rescued from the evil that had taken up residence in their midst.

John 2:15-17 – Christ's righteous anger rises inside of Him. He encounters is spiritual tyranny! Besides His anger and resulting actions, something else is being communicated: *He was the Messiah, who was coming in judgement!* He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies concerning God's judgement on sin, especially His people's attitude that following rules and regulations is what pleased God, and therefore, they believed they could hide their sinful attitudes behind the rules and regulations. (Going to church every Sunday but living like an unbeliever the rest of the week. Giving lip service.) Jeremiah 7:1-15

V 17 is an authorial comment, stating what the disciples remembered about this event sometime after the crucifixion: *Zeal for your house will consume me.* Taken from Psalm 69:9

Jesus was returning purity to the intent of the Temple. He was about to rescue and lead them into a new day of victory.

Jesus, by His actions and attitude, was also declaring that He was the Messiah, *the Savior of His people.* He was removing all barriers for all people of all tribes and all nations. Soon there would no longer be a need for ritual in the worship *when relationship with God was possible.* All were about to have access to God because the Messiah would lay down his life as the ultimate sacrifice and pay the ransom price for their sin debt that separated them from Holy God.

John 2:18-20 – The Jewish authorities and religious leaders wanted to know by what authority he had done such a thing. They wanted a sign. Jesus gave them himself and a statement of foreshadowing that they could not understand in the moment: *Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will rebuild it.* The religious authorities considered Jesus crazy; His answers and actions drove them to wanting to kill Him, but His popularity stopped them. They would not forget this moment; the wheels were in motion. Their desire to kill Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies to bring forth the final rescue of all His people from sin, Satan, death, and hell.

John 2:21-22 -- John clarifies what Jesus meant about the destruction of the Temple—the Temple was His body; He was talking about Himself. Destroy the lamb of God as the substitutionary atonement sacrifice once and for all, and three days later, by the power of God, he will be raised back to fullness of life. *The only way truly to cleanse the Temple was to become the Temple.* The word became flesh. The Temple became flesh. He dwelt among us. By His Spirit we now live by His power.

We all are one in Christ who have put our faith, hope, and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Once we have received His forgiveness, mercy, and grace, we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. He has brought down all barriers to worship him in spirit and in truth. There are no "off-limits" when it comes to approaching God in worship with our lips, gifts, and lives. All are welcome to come near who call upon his name; He has rescued us and given us hope to live a new life because of His death and resurrection. God came near to His people. All can draw near in His name. Worship is accessible because Jesus made God approachable. A rescue from a system to a Savior is for all to experience from now on. We have indeed been rescued.