

How to Make God Really Mad 4-4-04

Matthew 21:12-17

¹²Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" ¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. ¹⁶"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'" ¹⁷And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night. (NIV)

It was just five days before Passover. This was the day that families selected their lamb for the Passover Feast. Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims from all over the known world. But this Passover was different. The crowds were alive with speculation about a prophet from Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth. (John 12:17-19)

A month or so earlier, Jesus had already left the main area of His ministry, Galilee. Herod, who ruled that region, had been looking for Him, (Luke 13:31) so Jesus and His disciples escaped to Perea on the other side of the Jordan. The crowds were quite large there. (John 10:40-42) They came seeking healing and to listen to His teaching. Jesus received an anxious letter from His friends, Martha and Mary, and journeyed in to Bethany. Everyone was amazed when Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, because He had been buried for four days. (John 11:43-45) That miracle was enough to convince many that this truly was the Messiah. It was also enough to convince the religious leaders that they needed to kill Jesus before there was an uprising that would cause them to lose power. (John 11:57)

Jesus retreated to the wilderness and then went back down the Jordan. The time had come for the lambs to be selected. Jesus made His way toward Jerusalem again, this time with the crowds that were gathering to worship at Passover. The disciples followed with amazement and fear. (Mark 10:32) Little did they know that the healing of the eyes of the blind along that road would be the last miracle outside Jerusalem before Jesus would be executed. He warned them of what was to happen, and they knew they were headed into danger. (Mark 10:33-34)

(Show DVD clip of the Triumphal Entry)

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, those who had seen Him raise Lazarus recognized Him and spoke to the crowds about Him. People ran to get palm branches. The crowd stopped moving in its steady procession to Jerusalem and waited for Him to pass. What a sight, as Jesus approached the crest of the Mount of Olives! Now the crowd began waving the palms and shouted "Hosanna". That means "Save us!" (Mark 11:8-10) Would He now raise an army and oust the Romans? Would He call down fire from heaven and consume the occupation army? Surely if He could raise Lazarus from the dead, any soldier that served Him would be invincible.

Commented [notes1]: ¹⁷Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"
John 12:17-19 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ³¹At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."
Luke 13:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ⁴⁰Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed ⁴¹and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true."
⁴²And in that place many believed in Jesus.
John 10:40-42 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."
⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.
John 11:43-45 (NIV) ... [1]

Commented [notes5]: ⁵⁷But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.
John 11:57 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ³²They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him.
Mark 10:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ³³"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."
... [2]

Commented [notes8]: ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
... [3]

As Jesus reached the crest of the hill, the city of Jerusalem lay before Him. Luke records that He began weeping audibly. ⁴²*If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.* ⁴³*The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side.* ⁴⁴*They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.*" Luke 19:42-44 (NIV)

The people were dreaming of a new age predicted by their prophets, an age in which their Savior will defeat all enemies, but Jesus was prophetically seeing the destruction of the city. They were hailing Him as a king, but He knew their shouts would soon turn to asking for His death and demand for the release of a man who would use the sword, Barabbas. How differently Jesus sees the world around us!

I wonder what the people thought as they saw Him weeping with a broken heart while they are hailing Him as their Savior. I wonder what the disciples thought while at this moment of seeming fame and acceptance Jesus was weeping. If I realized what was about to happen, I might have reacted with disgust for the shallowness of the crowd who would praise Him today and deliver Him to death just a few days later, but Jesus had compassion on them. His heart was broken over their shortsightedness. May God give us a heart like our Savior's!

A Jewish tradition believed the Messiah would arrive on this day, five days before the Passover, so the Temple Gate was left open for His arrival. He entered in with the crowds shouting His praise. Now Jesus was about to do what He had done two years earlier. He is about to clear the outer temple court, the place designated as a place of prayer for all nations. In that day it was referred to as Annas' Bazaar. The Romans chose a high priest who would cooperate with them. They kept his vestments to be sure he stayed in cooperation with them. Annas had served years earlier, and we can assume that it was at that time he established some kind of relationship with merchants to exchange coins and sell sacrificial animals in the outer court known as the court of the Gentiles. Excavations of Annas' home show him to be quite a wealthy man. After he left the office, all the successive high priests were related to him, up to Caiaphas, his son-in-law. The people knew of all the money that changed hands and so renamed the courtyard, Annas' Bazaar.

Jesus had ruined his moneymaking schemes before, and He was about to do it again. But there is something different about this time. This time He had predicted things would turn out differently, and spoke of His death. This time He was pulling no punches and calling the religious leaders hypocrites. The people loved it. He was doing what many of them secretly wanted to do but did not have the nerve to carry out. Why didn't anyone stop Him? It's because He was respected as a prophet uncorrupted by Roman money and unafraid of any man. (Luke 20:21)

¹²*Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those*

Commented [notes9]: ²¹So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Luke 20:21 (NIV)

selling doves. ¹³"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

He did this once before on His first Temple visit with His new disciples. (John 2:13ff) During the last Passover of His earthly life, He did it again.

What has Him so worked up? Sure, there is corruption going on, but isn't this a little over the top for meek and mild Jesus? It's as if He is inviting them to a confrontation that He has already predicted He will lose. Let's look at His words to see what is going on in His heart.

He first quotes Isaiah 56:7, "...My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations."

The outer court was the one place the gentiles of the world could come to worship the God of Israel. It was full of the shouts of merchants and moneychangers competing for one another's business. Who could pray with all that business going on?

(Scan from book of outer court)

This is a rendering of the outer court from archeological study and historical accounts. This is an enactment of John 2:14-17

(DVD clip – disk one – third section)

Imagine this taking place in the huge outer court that could hold some 240,000 people at one time! You would have heard a commotion at one end of the courtyard, and all eyes would have turned to see what the disturbance was. Surely there would have been people yelling their complaints as they scattered before Jesus' fury. The only time we see anything remotely similar to the two Temple cleansings is a mere look of anger at the religious leaders who wanted to condemn Him for healing on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:5)

So what is this all about? God's house of prayer for the world was being turned into a place where robbery was taking place. Instead of drawing the world to God, it was repelling people from God. Jews who traveled from far off countries would have to change their money for Jewish coinage to pay the Temple tax. The tax was an equivalent to wages for a day and half of labor. It is estimated that two and a quarter million people gathered in Jerusalem for Passover. The moneychangers would sometimes make as much as a day's income on one exchange! Imagine how you would feel if you wanted to give an offering today and we said you could only use pesos. You've come to worship God and want to give the equivalent of \$100. Out in the foyer and on the patio we have a few dozen moneychangers. They all would charge you the equivalent of \$175 dollars to get \$100 worth of pesos. You'd get out of a worshipping mood real quickly.

But that isn't all. The people often wanted to offer a sacrifice, a thank offering. The Law said that no animal with a blemish could be offered, so the priests appointed inspectors. Let's say you've brought a pair of doves from your home a week's journey away. The inspector says he sees a blemish. You have to pay him a quarter of a days wage to tell you that they can't be offered. At home, these two doves cost \$4. Here in the temple, you can get a couple doves already inspected, but they cost \$75! Now you are really in the mood to worship, right? Still want to thank God?

Commented [notes10]: ⁵He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.
Mark 3:5 (NIV)

Do you see what was happening? Religion had become a big business that was making some people very wealthy, but it was turning people off to God. Tell me it isn't any different today or at anytime in history. If you want to get God really upset with you, turn the worship of God into a money making scheme. Turn people off to God because of your greed. God has such a heart to be in relationship with you that these kind of roadblocks and misrepresentations of who God is invites His wrath. That is why Jesus quoted the prophets as saying that they had made it a den of robbers. That is the obvious problem that was happening, but there is something deeper still.

Where is the temple of God today? It's you! (Ephesians 2:22) Where is your outer court? It is your body. Touch the person next to you and say, "My outer court just touched your outer court." It is the part of you that comes in contact with the world. What is going on there? Is it drawing people to God, or pushing them away from God? Does it make them want to sacrifice to God, or is it repelling and disgusting them with the thought that you are a Christian? (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Do you want to get Jesus really upset with you? Tell people you are a Christian and then take advantage of them in a business deal. Drop the fact that you attend church at Wayside and then fight tooth and claw for every last penny you can get from them. Do you see the analogy? Say you are a follower of Christ and then act in some selfish way in total contradiction to who Jesus is. Leave the waitress a tract instead of a tip.

You say, wait a minute. I don't think that was on Jesus' mind when He was about to clear the Temple. No? I do! I do because He was just crying as He looked into the future and saw the destruction of that Temple. If that wasn't on His mind, and yet He knew this Temple was soon to be leveled, then you are telling me He was weeping over a system that was about to perish? His death on the cross would make the whole system of sacrifice and Temple tax unnecessary. Does anything else in Jesus' life indicate to you that He was shortsighted? On the contrary, His vision is always on eternal things. When He was weaving those cords to drive those money-grubbing, compromising thieves out, He was thinking about us, about our hearts!

The disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal for my house is eating me up!" (Psalm 69:9) That word "zeal" is a white-hot passion. Paul writes that in Christ you are joined together and rise to become a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:21-22) You are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. God is passionate about that. That anger that flashed in Jesus' eyes when the religious leaders were watching to see if He would heal the man in the Capernaum synagogue was over the same issue. (Mark 3:5) What is more important, religious ritual, or needy souls? How people see our outer court, our actions, our words, can affect their attitude toward worshipping God. Let's not get Jesus upset enough to get the whip back out. Let's be inviting people into worship and assisting them by our actions and words. Let's be more concerned about the lost and needy souls around us than whether things are done to our liking or not. Let us always consider the eternal soul of a person before our own needs and desires. Can I get an "Amen"?

Commented [notes11]: ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
Ephesians 2:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: ²Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
2 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ⁹for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
Psalms 69:9 (NIV)

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²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
Ephesians 2:21-22 (NIV)

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¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. ¹⁶"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'" ¹⁷And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night. Matthew 21:14-17 (NIV)

(Scanned picture from book)

This is just what Isaiah predicted the Messiah would do, give sight to the blind and heal the lame. (Isaiah 35:5-6) The crowd had followed Jesus into the temple with shouts of praise. The Roman fortress of Antonia joined the temple. Guards stood on the wall looking over the Temple grounds. On this day, the Romans would have been on high alert. You can imagine the chief priests and teachers of the law glancing up at the soldiers and looking back at Jesus and the crowds of worshippers, back and forth, wondering if the Romans were going to react. "Jesus, tell them to pipe down!" they pleaded. "Don't you know what a situation we have going on here." As usual, Jesus corrects them right out of the word of God. (Psalm 8:2) It is ordained that children would bring Him praise. Another Gospel records Jesus is saying something like this, "No, you don't understand the situation. If they keep quiet, the stones of the temple will erupt into praise!" (Luke 19:40)

Are you a stone whose life shouts out praise to God, a building block for the temple in which He lives by His Spirit? Or does Jesus need to come and clean out the temple? Is the message of your life the love and grace of Christ or a contradictory message? What are people reading when they read you? Is it bringing joy to the heart of God or making Him angry? It all depends on who is Lord in your heart. This Palm Sunday we too can wave the palms and a few days later choose someone or something else that we selfishly prefer, or we can surrender our heart that He might touch the world through us. His zeal for you, temple of God, is eating Him up. How will you respond?

Commented [notes16]: ⁵Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Isaiah 35:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: ²From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. Psalms 8:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: ⁴⁰"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Luke 19:40 (NIV)

Page 1: [1] Commented [notes4] notes

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

John 11:43-45 (NIV)

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³⁴who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

Mark 10:33-34 (NIV)

Page 1: [3] Commented [notes8] notes

⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11:8-10 (NIV)