

We are to be a House of Prayer
Jesus and the Cleansing of the Temple
by Mary L. Dubler

“And He said to them, ‘It is written, MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER...’”
Matthew 21:13 (NASU)

Twice we find in Scripture accounts of Jesus driving the money changers and sellers of beasts from the temple:

- 1) John 2:13-22
- 2) Matthew 21:12-13

John 2:13-22—“Stop making My Father’s house a place of business.”

The first time Jesus cleanses the temple is shortly after His public ministry begins. The Passover time comes and Jesus travels to Jerusalem. He finds in the temple the money changers and sellers of animals for the sacrifices. He drives everyone out, man and beast alike, and declares, “Stop making *My Father’s house* a place of business.” [Emphasis mine]

Matthew 21:12-13—“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”

The second time Jesus cleanses the temple is near the end of His ministry on earth and right after he entered Jerusalem on a colt with the crowd yelling, “Hosanna.” He again drives out the money changers and sellers of doves and tells them, “*My house* shall be called a house of prayer...” He is quoting Isaiah 56:7d which says, “For my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

By what authority could Jesus do this?

Each time Jesus cleansed the temple the Pharisees challenged His authority to do this (John 2:18, Matthew 21:23). From the beginning to the end of His ministry on earth Jesus clearly revealed by what authority He cleansed the temple. He was the Son of Man having authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:24), He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and even raised the dead. He had His Father God’s authority.

But the people, especially the Pharisees, were blind to what Jesus was doing and they rejected Him. In response, Jesus speaks to the people many things against the Pharisees (Matthew 21:28 through 23:36). Then He says, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together they way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold *your house* is being left to you desolate!” (Matthew 23:37-38)

What has happened to the temple?

Take note that prior to this time Jesus had called the temple “My Father’s house” and “My house.” His manifest presence had been there, even then in the flesh! But now He says only “your house.” Because of their wickedness and unbelief, because they did not truly desire to follow the things of God, *He departed*. God had left—the temple was desolate. Ultimately the temple would be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD to fulfill Jesus’ prophecy (Matthew 24:2).

Now WE are the temple of the Holy Spirit!

When we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. (John 14:16-17; 20:22) We are the temple where God dwells: “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16) Also II Corinthians 6:16.

God has chosen to live in us rather than in a temple made with hands.

As we are the temple of God, we are supposed to be a “house of prayer.” How do the money changers and sellers of beasts creep into our temples? How does our temple become a “house of business” rather than a “house of prayer?”

- Focusing on worldly things rather than on God. “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (I John 2:15-16) The love of the world crowds out any love of God we might have. He is no longer the priority, but our possessions or money or people or position take His place.
- Allowing distractions to take our attention from our times of quiet with the Lord. These distractions hinder our ability to hear from Him.
- Giving greater priority to works or service than to prayer, Scripture memory, study of the Word and listening to God. (Remember Martha? Luke 10:38-42)

How then can we be a “house of prayer?”

1. We are to “**Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks;** for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (I Thess 5:16-18) Also Colossians 4:2: “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” To pray without ceasing does not mean that you have to be on your knees all the time, but keeping alert in your spirit for God’s leading and the revelation of answers.
2. “**Be anxious for nothing** but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7) We are to give our requests to God and trust Him with the answers—then we have peace. See also Matthew 6:25-34.
3. We must also believe. “And all things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22) “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, **believe** that you have received them and they will be granted to you.” (Mark 11:24) Also Romans 4:20-21.

4. We are to eagerly watch for the answers. "...in the morning I will order my prayer to you and **eagerly watch**." Psalm 5:3
5. To be a holy house of prayer we must also forgive others the wrong they have done to us. "Whenever you stand praying, **forgive** if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will forgive you your transgressions." (Mark 11:25) "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12) If we do not forgive, our temple will be defiled with anger and bitterness.
6. We must also have the **right attitude** in prayer, not showy or with meaningless repetition (Matthew 6:5-13), but in secret with the Father in simplicity, humility and love.

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