

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ deo ◇ gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Cleansing of the Temple

November 7, 2004

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ The History of the Temple
 - **Solomon's Temple**
 - Completed in 959 B.C.
 - Destroyed in 586 B.C.
 - **Zerubabel's Temple** (Second Temple)
 - Completed in 515 B.C.
 - Desecrated (but not destroyed) in 167 B.C.
 - **Herod's Temple** (an expansion and renovation of Zerubabel's Temple)
 - Began in 19 B.C.
 - Completed in 64 B.C.
 - Destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans

(below is, in part, taken from *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to the Temple*, by Robert Backhouse)

- Israel's First Place of Worship: The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was first set up at Mount Sinai by the Israelites after their escape from slavery in Egypt. Through it God taught them how they were to worship him. When Moses entered the tent, "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend." Exodus 33:11

Construction

The outer boundary of the Tabernacle area was made up of curtains hung over a metal framework, and measured 150 feet by 75 feet, and 7 ½ feet high.

The Tabernacle was a large tent measuring 45 feet by 15 feet. The idea of “God’s tent,” a portable structure, was specifically suitable for the Israelites as they traveled through the Wilderness. It had two rooms: an outer room, the Holy Place, where only priests were allowed; and an inner room, called the Holiest Place, or Holy of Holies, only entered once a year by the high priest. Here stood the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Ten Commandments.

Outside in the courtyard stood the altar on which sacrifices of goats, lambs, bulls and other animals were burnt, and an bronze washing basin, or laver.

At the Tabernacle God’s people met with the presence of God.

○ Israel’s First Temple:

Solomon’s Temple

King David was not permitted to build a Temple, though he collected money and materials for its construction. His son, Solomon, took seven years to build the first Temple in Jerusalem. It was twice the size of the portable Tabernacle which it replaced and on which it was modeled. (The Tabernacle had been brought to Jerusalem: 1 Kings 8:1-5.)

Solomon used the forced labor of 80,000 quarrymen and 70,000 porters to cut and transport huge stones for building the Temple; and 30,000 Israelites collected cedar and juniper wood from Lebanon. The Temple was paneled with cedar, on which skilled Phoenician craftsmen carved cherubim, flowers and palm trees, before the whole interior was overlaid in gold.

Outside the Temple stood a three-tiered bronze altar and a great bronze basin (the laver) for ritual washing, supported by twelve bronze oxen, three at each point of the compass.

The double doors of cypress wood, which opened into the Holy Place, were flanked by two pillars, on the right Jachin, and on the left Boaz.

Solomon’s Temple, a fulfillment of King David’s dream, was a monument to the glory of God (1 Kings 6-7; 2 Chronicles 3-4)

○ Israel’s Second Temple:

Zerubbabel’s Temple

Under the leadership of King Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua, the Israelites rebuilt Solomon’s Temple, but on a far inferior scale. When the foundation stone of this Temple was laid, many of ‘the older priests wept aloud’ in disappointment (Ezra 3:7-13).

The prophets of the Old Testament encouraged the returned Jewish exiles to complete the restoration of the Temple and worship God faithfully there. The prophet Haggai asked pointedly, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house [the Temple] remains a ruin?" (Haggai 1:4)

The Second Temple was probably improved and more elaborately adorned during the third and second centuries BC, but we know little about this period in its history.

○ Israel's "Renovated" Second Temple: **Herod's Temple**

Herod, King of Judea from 37 BC to AD 4, was not a Jew by birth, but a descendant of the hated Edomites, and a member of the Idumean dynasty. Herod was very corrupt and was loathed by the Jews. Therefore, in order to appease the Jews of his time [as a political move], Herod began the task of expanding and renovating the Second Temple. This was a massive building project.

The Construction of the Temple

Made of marble and gold, Herod's Temple shone so brightly in the sun that it was difficult to look directly at it. Built on the exact location of Solomon's and Zerubabel's Temple, it could accommodate hundreds of thousands of pilgrims at one time and was twice as large as the largest temple enclosure in Rome.

One thousand (1,000) priests trained as masons by Herod worked on the temple, as did ten thousand (10,000) highly skilled laborers using ten thousand (10,000) wagons. Some limestone blocks of the supporting platform weighed more than five hundred (500) tons.

An area of about **36 acres** was enclosed by a **massive wall nearly one mile in total length**. It is said that the Temple grounds (inside the Court of the Gentiles) could hold as many as **210,000 worshippers at one time**. Some of the stones in these walls measured from **20 to 40 feet in length** and **weighted more than one hundred tons each**. Inside the four walls were porches, that is porticos or cloisters. Over the porch areas were flat roofs, each supported by three rows of Corinthian pillars, each pillar being cut from a single block of marble, and each pillar being **37 ½ feet high**. The Royal Porch on the south was supported by 160 pillars arranged in four rows of 40 pillars each.

The Court of the Gentiles

Within the walls and their porches was the court of the Gentiles - an area, paved with marble, to which all people were welcomed, both Jew and Gentile.

Western Wall (modern day "Wailing



Porches

Eastern Wall

Proper reverence and decorum were expected of all, and there were signs, in Greek and Latin, warning Gentiles not to enter the Temple building itself (the courtyard area immediately surrounding the Sanctuary) or risk losing their lives.

The Eastern Wall

The Eastern wall followed the original line dating from Solomon's days. The main feature in the wall, the Eastern Gate, was the original eastern entrance to the Temple Mount. At one point, the walls of the temple rose more than two hundred twenty-five (225) feet above the bottom of the Kidron Valley.

The South Wall

This wall was more than 900 feet long and more than 150 feet high. Pilgrims entered the temple primarily through this entrance — the Double Gates — after climbing the Southern Stairs, a broad staircase more than 200 feet wide.

The Western Wall

A common gathering place during Jesus' time, this wall featured various architectural wonders and gates. Massive ashlar, hand-shaped stones brought from the quarry nearly a mile away, were featured near the Western Wall as well. One 45-foot-long stone weighed nearly 600 tons.

The North Wall

The Antonia fortress was located here. Built by Herod the Great, this fortress guarded the northern side of Jerusalem and held Roman troops during Jesus' time who watched the temple activities.

The Sanctuary (containing the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies)

The Sanctuary and surrounding courtyards rested on top of the hill on which the city of Jerusalem stood. Herod began work on the Temple in about 19 BC, and finished the Sanctuary in 12 B.C. The entire project was not completed until 64 A.D.

The Sanctuary building (which contained the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) was **fifteen stories high**. The veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was, likely, **ninety feet tall!**

Worship in the Temple was based on that of the Tabernacle, only everything was on a far grander scale.

The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans.

❖ The Temple was the center of the **SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM**

- There were FIVE major sacrifices in the Jewish sacrificial system:

NOTE: All Scripture references are in Leviticus

i. Whole Burnt Offering (Ch. 1)

1. Procedure
 - a. Must be a healthy male animal (bull, ram, or dove for the poor)
 - b. Lay hands on the animal (and confess their sins)
 - c. Worshipper slays animal
 - d. Sprinkle blood all over the altar
 - e. All parts are burned
2. Purpose: Voluntary act of worship; atonement for unintentional sin in general

ii. Grain Offering (Ch. 2)

1. Procedure
 - a. Grain prepared in a cake along with oil and salt
 - b. No leaven can be used
 - c. Part is burned at the altar
 - d. Other part given to priests
2. Purpose: gratitude to God

iii. Fellowship ("Peace") Offering (Ch. 3)

1. Procedure
 - a. Animal slaughtered
 - b. Part burned on the altar
 - c. Part eaten by worshippers and priests
2. Purpose: mutual celebration of thanksgiving (7:12)

iv. Purification ("Sin") Offering (Ch. 4-5)

1. Procedure
 - a. Animal slaughtered
 - b. Blood sprinkled around
 - c. Part burned at the altar
 - d. Part burned outside the camp
2. Prescribed for Four Groups
 - a. Priests: bull
 - b. Congregation: young bull
 - c. Ruler: male goat
 - d. Individual: female goat/lamb

3. Why every group?

- a. Every one has sinned and needs atonement and forgiveness.
- 4. Purpose: mandatory atonement for specific unintentional sin; confession of sin; forgiveness

v. Reparation ("Guilt") Offering (Ch. 5:14-6:7)

- 1. Procedure: same as Purification
 - a. Restitution is required - 120%
- 2. Purpose: atonement and restitution

❖ The Temple was the center of the **PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS**

❑ **Verse 12**

- Jesus was in Capernaum in Galilee.

❑ **Verse 13**

- It was Passover

- ❑ Passover was the first of the seven prescribed Feasts of ancient Israel, and marks the beginning of the Jewish religious year. It is based on the rituals of ancient Israel preserved primarily in Exodus 12-14 in which Israelites celebrated their deliverance by God from slavery in Egypt. The term Passover refers to the 10th and final plague God brought upon the Egyptians to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go, the death of all the firstborn of Egypt. In obedience to God's instructions, those who believed placed the blood of a lamb on the door posts of their homes, so that God would "pass over" those homes. The festival actually celebrates the entire sequence of events that led to the Israelites' freedom from slavery. While thoroughly based in those historical events, the celebration encompasses much more as it becomes a vehicle to celebrate the very nature of God and His gracious work in the world. It is in this larger dimension that Jesus adopted the Passover service as a sacramental remembrance of God's new work of deliverance in the Christ.
- ❑ There are three (3) Passovers mentioned in John [four if you count 5:1].
- ❑ Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of Nisan (at the March-April full moon), and it was immediately followed by the week-long festival of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (15-22 Nisan).

- The Passover spoken of here was likely in 28 A.D.
- The Seven Feasts / Festivals of Israel are as follows:
 - **Passover**
 - Exodus 12
 - Celebrated: the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan, the first month of the biblical year (March / April)
 - **Feast of Unleavened Bread**
 - Exodus 12-13
 - Celebrated: It began on the fifteenth day of Nisan and continued for one week (March / April)
 - **Day of Firstfruits**
 - Leviticus 23
 - Celebrated: on the day after the Sabbath of Passover week (March / April)
 - **Feast of Pentecost**
 - Leviticus 23
 - Celebrated: The day after the seventh Sabbath after the Day of Firstfruits [fifty days after the Sabbath of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread] (May / June)
 - **Day of Trumpets**
 - Leviticus 23
 - Celebrated: The first day of the seventh month (Tishri), the sabbatical month (September / October)
 - **Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*)**
 - Leviticus 16
 - Celebrated: The tenth day of the seventh month (September / October)
 - **Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths)**
 - Leviticus 23
 - Celebrated: The fifteenth through twenty-first of the seventh month, with an eighth day added as a climax to all the feasts (September / October)

○ **JESUS CHRIST IS THE PERFECT FULFILLMENT OF THE JEWISH FEASTS!**

○ Why is this important?

○ Jesus was in Capernaum in Galilee, which was north of Jerusalem

○ This passage said that Jesus went *up* to Jerusalem

□ Jerusalem was higher in elevation than Galilee

- Historically, Jerusalem was the capital city, the holy city
 - Just as people go *up* to London all over Britain
 - John reports this temple cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry
 - The Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) report it at the end of Jesus ministry
 - In the Synoptics, the cleansing of the temple is "the last straw" for the religious authorities, and, to some degree, gave them ample reason to arrest Jesus (before putting him on trial and crucifying him)
 - There were, likely, two cleansings of the temple
 - This cleansing was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and he was not well known throughout Judea and Galilee yet
 - Therefore, he was not yet seen as a threat to the religious establishment in Jerusalem
- **Verse 14**
 - The temple was the center Israel's worship
 - The temple was the center of the Jewish **Sacrificial System**
 - The *oxen, sheep and pigeons* were used in the sacrificial worship in the temple
 - *The money changers [were] sitting there*
 - Thousands of worshippers were converge upon the temple in Jerusalem during the time of Passover. Many would come from all over the Roman Empire.
 - #1: As a service of "convenience," the temple leaders offered different animals for sale to be used by pilgrims as a sacrifice.
 - It is also possible the temple priests would judge other sacrifices (not purchased in the temple) "blemished" or "unacceptable as a sacrifice" in order to force worshipers to purchase the animals in the temple (and for the temple's profit)
 - #2: In order to purchase the animals, the worshippers had to use the

proper currency / coinage. Different coinage was used throughout the Roman Empire. Therefore, worshippers had to **exchange** money and convert it to the proper Temple currency. In order to exchange the money, the temple leaders would charge a percentage for their service (the same as an exchange rate for foreign currency today). Some have suggested that the rate could have been 12 ½ %.

- #3: Every male twenty years of age or older had to pay an annual half-shekel temple tax (for the maintenance of the temple) around the time of Passover. This tax had to be paid in Tyrian coinage (because of the high purity of its silver). Interestingly, the Tyrian coinage had pagan symbols on them.

❖ **This was a hugely profitable business!**

- What individual was the one who benefited the most?
- Why is this important (with regard to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus)?

- All of this occurred in what was known as the Court of the Gentiles.

- **Verses 15-16**

- Jesus' cleansing of the temple was likely an allusion to Zechariah 14:21 and Malachi 3:1,3:
 - Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite (also translated *merchant*) in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day.
Zechariah 14:21
 - "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

"He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to

the LORD offerings in righteousness.
Malachi 3:1,3

- Andreas Kostenberger states:
 - “there is one ... important abuse that is targeted by Jesus’ display of righteous outrage: the fact that the temple had in Jesus’ day become a Jewish ‘nationalistic stronghold,’ a place where Gentile worship was obstructed rather than facilitated and encouraged. This was contrary to the vision underlying Solomon’s construction of the original temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:41-43). As the prophet Isaiah expresses God’s desire, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations,’ not merely Israel (Isaiah 56:7). By selling sacrificial animals and setting up their currency exchange in the court of the Gentiles, the outer court of the temple, the merchants in effect torpedoed Gentile worship in the only place where it was possible. And *that* flew in the face of God’s, and Jesus’, desire for the temple to become a place of worship, not just for Israel, but for people from all the nations.”

- In the account in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus calls the temple area, “a den of robbers”

- **Verse 18**
 - Likely, the *Jews* who questioned Jesus were temple authorities or members of the Sanhedrin
 - That the Jews requested a miraculous sign indicates that they had at least a suspicion that Jesus was a prophet of God

- **Verse 19**
 - The destruction or desecration of a temple or place of worship was a capital offense in the Graeco-Roman world
 - The word *temple* here (and in the next verse) is probably referring to the sanctuary proper, not the entire complex

- **Verse 20**
 - **Notice:** The temple authorities were focusing on the physical only.

- **Verses 21-22**

- John often gives a commentary, as he does here, to explain the theological significance of a certain event.

- **Jesus Christ was the perfect fulfillment of the following Jewish institutions:**
 - **THE TEMPLE**
 - **THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM**
 - **THE PRIESTHOOD**
 - **THE JEWISH FEASTS**
 - Now, salvation is for everyone – Jew and Gentile!

- **Verse 17**
 - This passage is a reference to Psalm 69:9
For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.
 - It was the zeal for the things of his father that consumed Christ
 - Literally, it killed him
 - What “consumes” us today?