

**Joke:** A man walks into an empty bar. He orders a beer and sits at the bar.

Suddenly he hears a small voice saying: "That's a lovely shirt you're wearing mate. Suits your body type really well and the pattern is very stylish"

The man looks around but doesn't see anyone other than the bartender. He shrugs and goes back to his beer.

A few minutes later another small voice chimes in:

"Your glasses look amazing too, they really frame your face nicely. Not to mention your beard looks really well trimmed, you must have an amazing grooming routine to look as good as you do"

Again the man looks around but he doesn't see anyone else, so he flags down the bartender and asks: "what's with the small voices I keep hearing? They keep commenting on my clothes, my beard, everything"

The bartender shrugs and says: "Oh that'll be the peanuts, they're complimentary"

---

Widow in the temple: It feels like being rescued.

I'm going to give you an image, and I know it's the wrong season. But I want you to think of the movie A Christmas Story. Remember Ralphie wants a BB Gun and he begins a campaign to make it happen. Then the bully who has tormented Ralphie and his brother

really all the kids of the neighborhood and he nails Ralphie with a snowball right in the face and Ralphie, at his wits end, begins to cry. . .the bully he laughs. . .as for Ralphie's friends they run.

Randy, Ralphie's little brother he runs to get mom.

The bully is laughing. . .

Randy is going for help. . .

His friends have disappeared. . .

Ralphie is crying. . .

And then. . .

Ralphie loses it.

Got the image? Now let's leave that image there for a moment.

The story of Jesus driving the money changers from the temple occurs in all four gospels. It is the time of the Passover. This is the big celebration for the Jewish people. Imagine going to the mall and you see 3 to 4 thousand people wandering around. Plus live stock.

People would bring their bulls and cows and sheep and goats for the sacrifice.

The Pharisees were offended. They knew how to worship, where to worship, how long to worship, what to say, how to kneel, and how much it cost.

The Pharisees were the rule makers and the rule keepers. . .and the finger pointers. They would have been inside the temple showing people how it's done and letting them know if they didn't do it right. That was the Pharisees.

Then there's a noise from outside the temple. . .The people were awakened.

The Disciples thought this was the beginning. Some of them thought Jesus was going to take over and their people would be in charge.

So far. . .all he had done was tell some stories. Even during his best moments he would say, "Okay, you know that whole blind people getting sight thing? Let's keep that between us."

But this moment was like the disciples standing behind the chain link fence watching Ralphie beat up the school bully. They thought. . .THIS IS IT! This is the beginning!

And Jesus was saying "This is the beginning. . .of the end." Jesus is disrupting the old system, the old way of doing things and is bringing in a new system built on love and grace. And hear this church, it is a better promise.

Let me read off a few things and see if you can tell me what they have in common. Pagers, cassette tapes, rotary phones, dial-up internet. Know what they have in common? They are all obsolete. They have been replaced by something better.

And Jesus disrupts what the religious folks knew and is bringing in freedom from human rules. From the religious laws set up by man all 613 of them and bringing in a new way of grace.

Hebrews 8:6 (NLT): But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

Back to the temple. . .the Religious Leaders of the time would have taken their cut of whatever the money changers were taking in.

If you didn't have livestock you could buy one, if you didn't have the money for that you could purchase a dove.

But inside the temple they would only take local money. And people traveled from all over so they needed to exchange whatever they had to the temple currency.

So in the temple courtyard you had people who would trade your money for the proper currency so you could buy a dove or animal for the sacrifice. But the ones making the trade would often cheat people. They were the ones that set the rates. . .and the rates never went down.

As a matter of fact on festivities like this they would most likely have gone up.

Jesus was upset that people were being cheated in the name of worshipping his Father. Jesus was upset that the people coming to the temple were being ripped off and didn't have a way around it. Jesus was upset that the one thing that was supposed to make us

closer to God was being used to cheat people. They made worship dirty.

### **Watch video: [skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com) The Temple Cleansing**

A whole lot of people had a whole lot of time and money and reputation invested in keeping the system working just as it was. . .then along comes Jesus. And Jesus disrupts the system.

Jesus says, not anymore.

Jesus is saying God is going to do something brand new and He is going to do it through Me.

This is the announcement that says, God has not given up on you. Instead He has something better for you.

Jesus is saying “Wake up!”

And church, Jesus is calling each of us to “Wake up!”

That lot in life they told you was yours and you just had to live with it. . .Jesus says “No. No, you don’t.”

Greed, power, rules, corruption and intimidation have no power. . .not anymore. . .we’re going to do something else.

But. . .

When you challenge the system.

When you call on people to do things in a way they have never been done.

Sometimes you have to pay for it.

Sometimes it's with your own blood.

People believed they had to endure suffering in order to get rewards later.

Jesus is saying "this body" is coming back. I will raise "this temple."

People thought He was talking about a building, Jesus wasn't talking about the building.

The woman in the video says she wasn't afraid watching Jesus. . .she says it was like being rescued.

Jesus tears down the old and builds something new. Jesus gave her and us a new understanding about God.

Jesus says, "Not anymore. We're going to do something new.

Isaiah 43:18–19 (NIV): Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

And Jesus was bringing in a new thing, a better thing no longer an animal needed to be sacrificed. Jesus was bringing a new covenant and He was going to be that sacrificial lamb who gave His life so that you and I could have life.

If you have ever played monopoly you know as the game moves along the players accumulate properties and if you happen to be the one that is lacking in the game all you're hoping for is making it around the board landing on Chance and Community Chest so you can pass go and collect 200 dollars.

But here's the good news Jesus comes in clears the board and tells you to pass GO.

He given us new life, and remembers our sins no more.

These money changers are taking everything you have. I'm giving you relief. I'm giving you a new start. Everything you thought you knew is gone. This is where it starts.

This is about reassurance. When you've hit bottom. When you can't take any more. Jesus says, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it."

Resurrection is about now. I have come to bring a new life and new way of doing things.

For this widowed, single mom, that day in the Temple felt like she was being rescued. The reason she and most likely a couple of million other people were in Jerusalem and on their way to the Temple was to celebrate the greatest rescue in the history of the Hebrew people to that point.

They were in town to celebrate the Passover holiday that remembered how God had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt so many centuries ago.

The scene the widowed woman referred to is known as the “Cleansing of the Temple.” While all four of the gospels retell this story, the version she is referring to that identifies Jesus not only turning over the money tables and pouring the coins on the ground, but also using a whip to drive out the animals and corruption, is found in John 2.

This episode made quite an impression on all who were in town for the Passover that year.

John 2:13–22 (NIV): When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” 18 The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” 20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

It cannot be overstated how central both the Temple and the celebration of the Passover were to the people of God.



N.T. Wright suggests, “The temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn’t just a church on a street corner. It was the center of worship and music, of politics and society, of national celebration and mourning. . . But, towering above all these, it was the place where Israel’s God had promised to live in the midst of his people. It was the focal point of the nation, and of the national way of life.”

The fact that our story takes place during the week of Passover meant that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple itself would have been inundated with people. Pilgrims from all over would have been crawling around the countryside trying to be a part of this annual celebration of the rescue of the people of God from Egypt in the events of the Exodus.

The laws stated that those who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem had to return to celebrate each year. Because the Jewish people were spread throughout the entire populated world by this time, it was customary for all Jews to make at least one pilgrimage back to the focal point of their heritage during their lifetime; back to Jerusalem, back to the Temple, back to bring a sacrifice, back to worship.

During the time of Passover it is estimated that over two million people would flock to the city to celebrate. With this in mind, our text begins by letting us know that Jesus was in town for such a time as this.

John 2:13–14 (NIV): When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

Without getting into too much detail, the Temple was divided into different sections that enabled different groups of people different levels of access depending on race, ethnicity, and gender.

When initially walking through the gates of the Temple walls, one would enter a general area known as the Court of the Gentiles. In this gathering space both Jews and Gentiles, men and women alike could find access and acceptance.

Those traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover would have a destination of the Temple to offer a sacrifice and to give a monetary Temple offering.

Because there were different qualifications for what made a sacrificial animal acceptable and what kinds of coins could be used for the Temple offering, kosher animals and appropriate coin exchanges were set up in the Court of the Gentiles to make it more convenient for people to participate in their ritual acts of worship.

That's why we see the animal vendors and money changers. They were there to provide a service so that a person's worship was up to the acceptable guidelines.

What had started as a service of convenience had turned into corruption. God's Temple and God's glory had been stained by the vile practices of usury and crooked business practices in the name of religion.

The outer courts had even become a short cut through to the other side of town for some people. The reverence and awe of God was waning within the people who were into religious and ritualistic

rhythms. For many, it was about keeping a bunch of rules without really having a heart toward God.

Let me pause here just for a moment some of you wonder what the Lord's will is for your life, how many of you want to know that? Let me tell you what it's not. . .it's not keeping a bunch of rules thinking that will keep you in good graces with Papa. Would you like to know what it is for your life? Here you go. . .God's will for your life is this. . .to share the gospel with everyone, let your mind be renewed so that you bear fruit. Simply put it's allowing God to be expressed in you and through you.

Back to our story. . .

When Jesus entered into the outer gates of the Temple courts, the first thing he smelled was the stench of animals. The first thing he heard was the clatter of unscrupulous business practices. The first thing he saw was 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 rescuing again from the evil that had taken up residence in the House of God.

John 2:15–17 (NIV): So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The righteous anger began to rise inside of Jesus. The people who had come to worship were being fleeced by those who were

working the system; and the religious leaders of the Temple had endorsed it and were in on part of the take! This was injustice. This was oppression. This was unacceptable. And Jesus wasn't ok with that.

Although the text states that Jesus took or fashioned a whip to drive out the chaos of animals and money-changers, the early Christian biblical scholar, Jerome, thinks that the very sight of Jesus may have made the whip unnecessary. He wrote, "A certain fiery and starry light shone from his eyes, and the majesty of the Godhead gleamed in his face."

Jesus not only was cleansing the corruption from the Temple, but many scholars also believe he was making a Messianic statement and fulfilling prophecies of old.

Let me share one of those prophecies that come to mind with Jesus' actions as a Messiah cleaning the House of God.

Jeremiah 7:1–15 (NIV): This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 "Stand at the gate of the Lord's house and there proclaim this message: " 'Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. 3 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!" 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, 6 if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. 8 But

look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. 9 “ ‘Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? 11 Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord. 12 “ ‘Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. 13 While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. 14 Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors. 15 I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.’

That passage and so many others would have come to the minds of those in the Temple on that day and in reflection upon what took place by Jesus’ actions.

When Jesus was cleansing the Temple in this matter he not only was removing corruption, but also was announcing in his actions that he was the long awaited Messiah.

John 2:17 (NIV): His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

The passage quoted in this text is from Psalm 69:9 here’s what King David said. . .

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

In the minds of his disciples, the Messiah was in their midst. The Messiah was turning over more than just tables, he was returning purity to the intent of the Temple.

The Messiah was making a statement. The Messiah was making his move to right all the wrongs that unjustly had been imposed upon his people. He was about to rescue and lead them into a new day of victory.

This felt like being rescued. But Jesus was doing so much more than the people present could possibly understand. He was removing all barriers for all people of all tribes and all nations.

Soon there no longer would be a need for ritual in the worship when relationship with God was possible. From widows to wise men, all were about to have access to God because of the Messiah that would lay down his life as the ultimate sacrifice and pay the ransom price for their sin debt that separated them from Holy God.

Jesus' actions caused a disturbance, but not enough to mandate the Roman authorities to come and settle the people into peace.

Only the religious pick pockets had come to see who was disrupting their money making scam.

Verses 18-20 tell us. . .

John 2:18–20 (NIV): The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” 19 Jesus

answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” 20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

Jesus had drawn a line in the sand. 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 wrap their minds around in the moment.

To destroy the Temple that King Herod had started and took 46 years to build could not possibly be rebuilt in three days. This Galilean teacher must be mad. And his crazy talk drove the authorities insane on the inside so much so that they wanted to kill him.

However, Jesus’ popularity would cause a mob scene that quickly would involve the Romans if things got out of hand. So, they waited. But they did not forget this moment. They would form new schemes; not for money extortion, but for this so-called messiah’s extinction.

The wheels began to be put in motion to make sure Jesus would be removed from the scene and strung up for all to see before being put away in the tomb and out of site once and for all.

They thought, “The Temple will not fall, but Jesus will.” And so, without knowing it, they were fulfilling the prophecies of old to bring forth the final rescue of all people from sin, death, Satan and hell.

John 2:21–22 (NIV): But the temple he had spoken of was his body.  
22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he

had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

You've heard hindsight is twenty-twenty. True also is that the passage of time brings understanding and clarity. Jesus was not talking so much about the stone and rock of the Temple; 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.

So, the word became flesh. The Temple became flesh. He dwelt among us. And He now lives in us. By His Spirit we now live by His power. No matter how many times Jesus told his disciples what would happen and how clearly he would convey it, they would not understand it until after all was said and done.

But now they understand; and we need to as well.

There is no Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. 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, His 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, our gifts, and our lives. All are welcome to



come near who call upon his name; anybody, widow's included, who who need to feel like someone has rescued them too.

Because he has rescued them and given them hope to live a new life because of his death and resurrection.

God came near to his people. Worship is accessible because Jesus made God approachable. A rescue from a system to a Savior is for all to experience from now on. It is Jesus plus nothing. We have indeed been rescued. And. . .

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT): So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

**Show spring forward video**