

Easter Week-Monday: What Do We Need to Throw Out?



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As we begin this holy week of Easter, I'd like to focus on some of the activities that happened between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. I'm not necessarily addressing them in the order they happened; just reflecting on these events and why they seem important.

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Have you ever thought about how fleeting popularity and public opinion can be? In one short week, Jesus went from the heights of adoration as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey with multitudes of people worshipping Him and then plummeted to the depths of despair when even His friends deserted Him—and it felt like His Father did too—as He was taken prisoner and crucified. Let's look at some of the things that happened during this week.

So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Mark 11:15-17 (Chronological Study Bible NKJV)

Wow. This is a little different picture of Jesus than what we usually see. This is a picture of a man indignant about the way His father's holy house is being treated; so indignant as a matter of fact, that he physically flips over tables and chairs and drives out the people who were running their businesses. What was it about this whole setup that made Jesus mad?

Well, first of all it helps to understand a bit about the temple. The temple where the Jews worshipped had four different courts. Each court was restricted to only certain people who could worship in it. The large outer court that everyone could attend was the Court of the Gentiles. This was the only court that the non-Jews could worship God in. The next court was the Court of Women. Both Jewish women and men were allowed here. The third court was the Court of Israel. Only Jewish men were allowed to worship in this court. Finally, the most restricted court was the Court of Priests. Only the Jewish priests could enter to offer sacrifices for the people.

The actual court that Jesus cleansed was the Court of the Gentiles. You see, all the people were headed to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual Passover celebration. (Remember, the day before many of them had worshipped Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.) Each spring about 100,000 pilgrims made their way to Jerusalem for this. And, they all needed to purchase an animal for slaughter. Being that many of these pilgrims were from out of town, moneychangers made a tidy profit because they needed to exchange all the foreign currency for the pilgrims purchasing from the animal dealers. With 100,000 people needing to purchase sacrifices, you can imagine what a ruckus it must have been in the Court of the Gentiles where the animal dealers and moneychangers had set up shop. Probably the cheating that was going on and the fact that the Gentiles now really had no place to worship were two things that Jesus could not ignore in His Father's house, so He threw them out.

Jesus took a definitive stand on the atmosphere and the

conduct which should be at the temple—and it wasn't the conduct that He was seeing around him in the chaotic Court of the Gentiles.

Thinking about this story makes me think of how I should be preparing myself for Easter throughout this week. Just as the pilgrims were preparing for Passover, I should be preparing for Easter. I need to take an honest look at myself and in prayer ask God, What is there in my life that I should be throwing out because it doesn't belong here? What is disrupting the holy atmosphere I need to be cultivating this week?

As often times Easter falls at a busy time of the year, often coinciding with vacation and spring break, it seems that I get caught up in the details of what I need to get done, and before I know it, Good Friday has arrived and I've done little to prepare myself for the week.

I think one of the things I want to do this week is to "throw out" any frivolous reading I do and use that time to read the Bible or other Christian works to help me set the right tone for Easter. I want to be sure I take the time to sit down and pray and focus my heart and mind on what is really important this week. I'm sure there are other things God wants me to throw out, too, so I'll keep an open heart as I go through the week.

I know these are personal decisions to make, but if God speaks to you about something you need to change this week as you prepare for Easter and you feel like sharing it, feel free to leave a comment; you may even encourage someone else to do the same!

Look for another Easter week topic tomorrow and until then, pray on!