

Sermon on Spiritual Cleansing Precedes Breakthrough

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Text:

John 2:13-23 ¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found men 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 area, 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! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous 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 The Jews 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. ²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

1 Introduction

If you have allergies and see an allergist, he will ask you questions about your living and working environments. He will ask you about your bedroom furniture, floor covering, mattress, blankets, sheets, comforters, pillows, and pillow cases. He is looking for things that harbor allergens – micro-creatures that cause allergic reactions. Then he would ask you to remove or change the furnishings in your bedroom to minimize or eliminate the allergens. He would also ask you to buy special bed covers and pillow covers and ask you to wash your sheets in hot water frequently to kill the allergens. Allergists know that it is your environment that makes you sick.

This is also true of spiritual problems. It is your spiritual environment that inhibits your breakthrough. It is not the devil that is doing you in, but it is the spiritual environment you have fostered that allows the devil to operate unimpeded to disrupt and destroy your life. To get your breakthrough you must allow Jesus into your spiritual environment to cleanse it and you must be

vigilant to prevent future defilement by the devil. So, you see, your spiritual cleansing precedes your breakthrough.

Is this true? This fact is demonstrated by Jesus in our main text.

2 The temple was designed by God for worship and offering

The Jerusalem temple was built by Solomon based on an architecture given to David, by God. God designed it to house the Ark of the Covenant, to be the residence of God's name on earth, and to serve as a place to worship Yahweh and make offerings to him. The temple consists of several courtyards. From the outmost going inward are the Court of Gentiles, Court of Women, Court of Men, Court of Priests which also has the Altar for sacrifices, and the Inner Court followed by the Holiest of Holies which houses the Ark of the Covenant. The temple was therefore where man went to commune with God, reading and hearing the Word, singing in praise and worship, and making offerings. It was not a casual gathering place for men for it is where the name of God resides. It was to be revered as holy and sacred.

3 The temple market economy evolved to support Levitical offerings

3.1 Animal market arose from animal sacrifices.

The Levitical laws of offering required animal sacrifices and offerings of special produce to God. The animals to be offered had to meet certain quality requirements: sheep without blemish, goat without defect, a young bull without defect, pigeons, and doves. An animal has defects if it is “blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores” (Leviticus 22:22) or if it is “an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut.” (Leviticus 22:24)

People came from afar to offer sacrifices at the temple and it was not convenient to drag the animals with them. Furthermore, because the animals had to meet the temple inspection

businessmen started selling animals that were guaranteed to be accepted by the priests. The selling, unfortunately, was done in the temple courts.

3.2 Produce market arose from produce offerings

The produce offerings included flour, grain, and salt for the grain offering, “cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil, ... cakes of bread made with yeast.” (Leviticus 7:12-13) For convenience to worshippers, these types of food were also being sold in the temple courts.

3.3 Currency exchange market arose from the temple tax

In addition to this there were special temple offerings in the form of the temple annual tax of ½ shekel for each male. The ½ shekel and shekel was not the currency of the day but were required for payment of the temple tax. To pay the tax, therefore, you had to exchange your money to get the shekel. This gave rise to “Forex” Bureaus in the temple courts.

3.4 The full-fledged temple market defiled the temple

Thus, the temple courts evolved into a market place. Just as any marketplace, I am sure there were also wholesalers and retailers, and agents who buy on behalf of worshippers. Just as any marketplace the sellers shouted to advertise their wares. If you have been to any open air market before, you find that the place is not clean. But consider that there were animals in this market. Consequently, there will be animal feed and animal feces. So, we see that the temple market distorted the purpose of the temple and defiled the temple.

4 Jesus cleansed the temple to restore its purpose and enable miracles

4.1 Jesus drove out the merchants and animals

The Jerusalem temple defilement called for righteous indignation. The only one who is righteous enough to be indignant is God himself incarnated as Jesus Christ. Jesus had come to Jerusalem before, at age 12 and I am sure at other times, but did nothing because his time was

not yet. So, we must also be careful to exercise great wisdom, discernment and patience to wait for the appropriate time before taking certain dramatic actions. But when the time was fully come, Jesus entered the temple court and “he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!’” (John 2:15-16)

4.2 No one was able to stop Jesus

You would have expected that while he was clearing the temple the merchants will physically challenge him. But they didn't and couldn't because this is God incarnate himself cleansing the place that houses his name. It is also interesting to note that Jesus cleared the entire market by himself, driving all the animals away by the whip. This was a Herculean task that required the God incarnate. Jesus also took the affront on the temple personal saying “How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!”

4.3 Jesus performed miracles after the temple cleansing

Our main text tells us that Jesus subsequently performed several miracles in Jerusalem. The coupling of the two episodes may indicate that he wanted to cleanse the temple before performing the miracles. The temple cleansing had eternal significance to restore true worship and the miracles were to justify his right to and establish his credentials for clearing the temple. The cleansing preceded the miracles.

5 Allow Jesus to cleanse your body-temple to get your breakthrough

5.1 You have allowed your body-temple to be defiled

The Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. That is, your body as a temple is indwelt by God just as the Jerusalem temple was indwelt by God. In this body-temple you are to worship and offer sacrifices to God as stated in Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,

holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.” But by the Adamic fall, your body-temple was defiled and sin created a marketplace in your body. Some have sold all or part of their minds to the devil, some have sold all or part of their hearts to the devil, and some have sold all of their soul to the devil. The purpose of your body-temple has been distorted and your body-temple has been defiled.

The spirit of lying has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of gossip has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of cheating has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of abuse has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of jealousy has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of uncontrolled anger has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of disobedience has opened a store in your body-temple. The spirit of dissension has opened a store in your body-temple.

What can you do about this situation?

5.2 Jesus is prepared to cleanse your body-temple

Thanks be to God, Jesus’ redemption mission on earth is to cleanse your body-temple. His righteous indignation at the way Satan and his evil spirits have defiled your body-temple was demonstrated in his zeal for the cross, whipping his way through the passion suffering all the way to death on the cross. Jesus took this affront on your body-temple personal. Through the cross Jesus won a class-action suit against the devil that frees you from the market rights to your body-temple that you gave to the devil. But just as in class-action suits, you have to file a claim to participate in the victory, so also you must allow Jesus to come in and cleanse your body.

When Jesus was washing the feet of the disciples he came up to Peter and Peter said to him, “Lord, you are my master and you cannot wash my feet.” But Jesus told him “Peter, there are some things that have defiled your body-temple, spirit of arrogance, spirit of anger, spirit of pride. And so unless I wash your feet, you will have no part of me because I cannot come and live in you.” Then Peter told Jesus, “In that case, Lord, don’t wash just my feet, but wash my hair, my head, my eyes, my ears, my face, my arms, my hand, my chest, my legs, my entire body.” O that we will act like Peter and ask Jesus to wash every part of our body-temple to pave the way for our breakthrough.

5.3 Jesus sometimes cleanses a person of evil spirits before healing

If an allergist gives you medicine, the medicine is temporary and relieves your symptoms but does not cure your sickness. The real cure is to cleanse your environment so that the allergens cannot grow and operate. So, the answer to your problems is to surrender your body-temple for thorough cleansing by God. Then and only then you will receive your permanent breakthrough. Your breakthrough comes only after your spiritual cleansing. In other words your spiritual cleansing precedes your breakthrough.

Jesus has traditionally coupled cleansing with miracles. His miracles of healing have been done in the context of driving out the spiritual merchants that occupy a body-temple: the madman called Legion and the deaf-and-mute boy. And when the body-temple is clean, the body-physical returns to health.

5.4 If you allow Jesus he would cleanse your body-temple and set you up for breakthroughs

When you allow Jesus, he enters your body-temple with authority. He takes as personal the messy condition of your body-temple. And then he boldly begins to drive out the animal merchant-type evil spirits who mess up your health with animal feces. He drives out the produce merchant-type evil spirits that corrupt your flesh with all kinds of evil and sinful desires. He drives out money changer-type evil spirits who steal your prosperity and success. He drives out the spirit of lying, the spirit of gossip, the spirit of cheating, the spirit of abuse, the spirit of jealousy, the spirit of uncontrolled anger, the spirit of disobedience, and the spirit of dissension. No one can stop him and he does not need help from any prophet or miracle worker.

After Jesus has finished cleansing your body-temple he establishes his own divine market called “Breakthrough Market.” The he begins to setup breakthroughs in your health, prosperity, work, marriage, career, relationships, family, and all areas of your life.

6 Conclusion

Arthritis wonder-medicine called Vioxx treated the symptoms but created serious cardiovascular side effects and had to be withdrawn from the market. Some prophetic ministries are occultic. If you go to these ministries their prescriptions will treat your symptoms but cause serious side-effects. This is because they transfer into your body-temple an evil spirit that is stronger than the ones bothering you. The stronger evil spirit suppresses the existing evil spirits and so you feel better. Sooner or later the strong evil spirit begins to mess up your body-temple and your situation becomes worse, destroying your relationships, finances, job, health, and many other areas of your life.

Alternatively, you can take the Jesus medicine by surrendering your life to him through the frequent practice of spiritual disciplines - prayer, fasting, bible study, and submission - and church attendance. When you do these things, Jesus goes into your body-temple, cleanses your body-temple by driving out the evil spirits. Then he takes residence in you, and keeps watch to prevent them from coming back. This constant watch is important just as your bedroom environment has to be constantly kept clean of allergens to prevent allergy problems. This is where many fail to maintain their breakthrough. If you allow Jesus to maintain this constant watch then, the devil can no longer mess with your marriage, your finances, your relationships, your job, your health, and any other areas of your life.