21st Century Temples- Part Two

# This Temple Belongs to Jesus

## (Matthew 21:10–16)

Welcome, we are continuing in our series 21st Century Temples, looking at what it means in our day to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. This morning, we are going to examine the temple physically, spiritually, and mentally, with a focus on cleansing the temple.

Let’s begin by reading Matthew 21, starting in verse 10:

“When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’ The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’

Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a den of robbers.’

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant.

‘Do you hear what these children are saying?’ they asked him.

‘Yes,’ replied Jesus, ‘have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise”?’” (Matthew 21:10–16).

This passage gives us a picture of what happens when Jesus enters his temple. He confronts what doesn’t belong. He restores prayer. He heals the broken. And he receives their praise.

I believe the same Jesus who cleansed the temple in Jerusalem still comes today to cleanse his temple so that his Spirit can fill every part of our lives.

For us to understand that, let’s take a closer look at the setting of this story. The temple in Jesus’ day had been renovated by King Herod the Great and was divided into different courts: first the Court of the Gentiles, then the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel for the men, the Court of the Priests, and at the very center the Holy Place with the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could enter once a year.

For our study today, the outer court is extremely significant, because God had designed his temple to be:

“A house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7).

It was in this outer court—the Court of the Gentiles—that outsiders and non-Jews could come and seek him. It was meant to be a welcoming place, a place of prayer, a place of drawing near to God’s presence.

But by the time of Jesus, the priests had allowed that court to become corrupted. Instead of being a place of prayer, it had become a place of profit. They leased out space for booths, set up markets where animals could be bought for sacrifice, and allowed money changers to operate like it was a marketplace. And so, the outer court became noisy, chaotic, and crowded with merchants instead of worshipers.

It was in that very place, in the outer courts among the outcasts, that Jesus stepped in. He didn’t go straight to the Holy of Holies. He didn’t stop at the Court of Israel. He went to the outer court—the farthest place from the altar, the place reserved for the marginalized—and he drove out what didn’t belong. He overturned the tables, scattered the coins, chased away the merchants, and cleansed the temple.

This is a powerful picture of what Jesus does in our lives, because he doesn’t wait until we are perfect or until we reach the “inner courts.” He comes right into the messy, noisy, cluttered spaces of our hearts—the places that feel pushed aside, compromised, and unworthy—and he begins his cleansing work there. He began overturning tables, driving out the merchants, and removing everything that didn’t belong.

Now, the religious leaders were disturbed by his actions because they were comfortable with the chaos, it was profitable, and they did not want any disruption. I believe the same is still true in our lives today, because whenever Jesus begins to cleanse his 21st-century temples, it disturbs people. When the captives are set free, people are tempted to criticize and demonize the ones doing the work of deliverance instead of embracing those who have been set free.

I want you to notice what Jesus was saying through his actions because in cleansing the temple, he was declaring, “This is not normal or acceptable.” What the people had normalized—turning worship into profit, turning prayer into business—Jesus came to cleanse, and that’s what he still does today.

Yet many people continue to normalize the very things that Jesus took to the cross, things he died for, things he wants to cleanse us from. Destructive thoughts, uncontrollable urges, cycles of addiction, torment in the mind—our culture shrugs and says, “That’s just life. That’s just who you are.” But Jesus comes into his temple and says, “No. That doesn’t belong here. That needs to go.”

Jesus introduced the ministry of deliverance, reclaiming his temple, declaring:

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

“You belong to me!”

No sin, no darkness, no wickedness has the right to remain on property that belongs to Jesus Christ. You may have normalized it, you may have tolerated it, but Jesus came to abolish it and drive it out.

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

That is the power of the cross. Jesus doesn’t condemn the temple; he cleanses it. He doesn’t disown his temple; he delivers it. For the Bible says,

“The Son of God appeared to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8).

It is important to recognize the contrast between the work of Jesus and the religious leaders of his day. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were more concerned with covering up sin and decorating tombs than they were with purifying the temple. In fact, Jesus accused them of being hypocrites, saying:

“You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean” (Matthew 23:27).

But tombs don’t need cleansing; they need resurrection. The spiritually dead don’t need reformation or behavior modification. Jesus declared that they need to be born again (John 3:3).

But for those who belong to him, those who are his temple, what they need is cleansing. And so, that is where many Christians struggle, because they assume that wrestling with temptation, mental torment, or oppression must mean they aren’t truly saved. But that is not true, because the Lord said:

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25–27).

So just because the Court of the Gentiles was trashed, that didn’t mean it stopped being the temple. Jesus never said, “This is no longer my house.” Instead, he cleansed it and declared:

“My house will be called a house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13).

In the same way, you can be a believer—a twenty-first-century temple of the Holy Spirit—and still have areas that need cleansing. You can love Jesus, walk in faith, and still need freedom.

What I want you to understand today is that Jesus doesn’t walk away from his temple. He doesn’t condemn his temple. He comes to cleanse his temple, which is why the Bible says:

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

So I want to encourage you today—this is the hope of the gospel: Jesus is not ashamed of your pain, your torment, or your struggles. But he comes right into the outer courts of your life, into the messy and marginalized places, and he says:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19).

In other words, “I came to deliver you, to heal you, and to set you free.”

And so, when Jesus walked into the temple courts and began cleansing them, he was reminding everyone that the temple was his. The merchants might have been doing business there, but they didn’t own it. They leased the space, they set up shop, but the deed still belonged to God.

That is exactly how it is in your life. Demons may try to operate in certain areas, they may torment, harass, or oppress, but they do not own you. You are a blood-bought child of God, the property of Jesus Christ, and the Bible says clearly:

“You are a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9).

So even if your family background included witchcraft, even if doors to the occult were opened in your past, even if your ancestors made sacrifices to demons, you are now owned by Jesus.

“He bought you with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

And he holds the title deed to your body, your soul, and your spirit.

That is why cleansing the temple is possible—because there is an owner who comes to enforce his authority. You may be tormented by demons or wrestling against strongholds, but they are trespassing. They may try to operate, but they do not own you. And when the true owner shows up, they have no choice but to go.

You see, you have a choice in whom you will obey. The Bible says:

“When you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness” (Romans 6:16).

So let’s settle this in your heart today: you belong to Jesus. You are his temple. You have been bought with a price, and Jesus will not share what belongs to him.

And so, when Jesus entered the Court of the Gentiles, with all the buying and selling, the chaos and the noise, it had all become normal. The priests had allowed it, the people expected it, and everyone went on as if it were acceptable. In the same way, some of us have lived with certain struggles for so long that we’ve started to call them normal—intrusive thoughts that torment your mind, nightmares that steal your sleep, fears that paralyze you, addictions that keep resurfacing, temptations that keep repeating.

The world shrugs and says, “Such is life.” But Jesus steps into his temple and declares, “That doesn’t belong here.” He refuses to call normal what his Father never intended.

So we cannot domesticate what Jesus came to drive out. We cannot keep coping with what we were anointed to conquer, because the things of this world don’t belong in the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Stop making excuses and normalizing the things Jesus came to abolish.

The Bible is very clear about rejecting the things of this world—what it calls “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” The Holy Spirit speaks directly to this, saying:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

And so, we need to stop calling it “my personality, this is just my weakness, it’s just how my family is.” Because Jesus says, “No, this is my temple, and I am cleansing it.”

Now, for the remainder of the message, I want to get really practical, because when Jesus cleansed the temple, he gave us a pattern for how he still works in his people today. The very first thing he did when he came in the temple was:

“He drove out all who were buying and selling there” (Matthew 21:12).

In other words, he drove them out because they didn’t belong in the temple. They belonged in the world, among the spiritually dead, but not in the holy place. So Jesus cast them out—just like his will is to cast out every spirit of fear, immorality, pornography, perversion, addiction, or witchcraft.

But the thing is, he won’t do it unless you want him to. That is why he said to the church in Corinth that was entertaining things that were offensive to him and to the gospel:

“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

You see, none of this stuff of the world belongs in you. You are not a marketplace; you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus will not share his temple with demons.

The second thing we see is that: “He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves” (Matthew 21:12).

In other words, there are things the enemy has set up in our minds. He drove the merchants out, but there were still strongholds—lies, thought patterns, and expectations—that remained even after they were gone. So the Bible says we must: “Demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

These strongholds may show up as anxiety or fearful thinking, self-hatred, or hopelessness. And Jesus wants to flip those tables and replace them with truth.

After he had cleansed the temple, the Bible says:

“The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them” (Matthew 21:14).

In other words, the mighty deliverance of the Lord paves the way for healing—emotional, physical, and spiritual. This is important because many of us carry wounds from the past: abuse, rejection, betrayal, and abandonment. But even when the spirit behind the pain is driven out, the wound still needs to be healed. And so, Jesus not only delivers; he heals and restores all things.

Once the temple was cleansed, when they saw all the wonderful things he did, the children began to cry out:

“Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:15).

In other words, freedom for the captives and release from darkness isn’t just about what leaves—it’s about what fills the temple afterward. Praise must replace oppression. Prayer must replace anxiety. Worship must replace complaining. God must be glorified in all things. He set you free so your mouth could be filled with prayer and praise as a weapon.

Finally, Jesus filled the temple with his word. The Bible says the next day:

“Jesus entered the temple courts, and he was teaching” (Matthew 21:23).

This is critical because deliverance must be followed by discipleship. Freedom must be sustained by truth. It is the word of God that keeps the temple clean. When your mouth is full of praise and your heart is full of his word, you don’t just stay free—you walk in dominion. You don’t go from deliverance to deliverance; you go from deliverance to victory.

Jesus cleansed the temple, and this is the pattern: demons were cast out, strongholds were cast down, the people were healed, praise was restored, and the Word was taught. And that is exactly what Jesus wants to do in his 21st-century temples today.

In conclusion, Matthew 21 reminds us that when Jesus comes into his temple, he doesn’t come to condemn it; he comes to cleanse it. He removes what doesn’t belong, he restores what was broken, and he fills it again with his glory. And that is exactly what he wants to do in you today.

But maybe you are here, and you’ve become comfortable with things in your life that Jesus is ready to abolish. Maybe there are areas where the merchants have set up shop—tables and strongholds of fear, shame, addiction, torment, and compromise. Without even realizing it, these things have stolen your peace and crowded out your worship. But I am here to declare today that you are no longer a tomb; you have been redeemed. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. You have not been abandoned; you are owned, and Jesus is zealous for the purity of his temple.

Jesus came to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and I believe today is a day of deliverance. Today is a day for Jesus to drive out what doesn’t belong and make more room for his Spirit to dwell. If you know there are areas in your life that need cleansing—places where you have tolerated what Jesus came to remove—I want to invite you to step forward in faith. Don’t be ashamed and don’t hesitate, because this is not about condemnation; this is about freedom. If Christ has set you free, you are free indeed.

Come and let Jesus reclaim his temple. Let him overturn the tables of fear and doubt. Let him drive out temptation, torment, and oppression. Let him heal wounds and restore praise in your mouth. Let his word take root in you so that you can walk not only in freedom, but in victory. Lift your hands and say with me, “Lord, cleanse your temple. Start with me.”

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