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The Cleansing of the Temple

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition
or Roget's Thesaurus – **April 6, 2014**

Isaiah 56:6-7; Jeremiah 7:9-11; Mark 11:15-19

Introduction: This chapter is designated by many scholars as another glimpse of the times of Messiah, but we cannot accept such an interpretation; and, although there are certain portions of the chapter which indeed are definitely applicable to "**latter days**" in the kingdom of heaven, there are other portions of it which are thoroughly Jewish with no application whatever to Christians or times of the Messiah. This strange **mingling** of **separate subjects** in a single passage is often found in Scripture, the great example being that spoken by Christ himself in his prophecy of the destruction of the literal Jerusalem, which is also, at the very same time, a prophecy of the end of the world (Matt. 24).

Therefore, in this chapter, all references to "**the sabbath**" and to "burnt-offerings and sacrifices" are directed to Jews alone; whereas, the prophecy of that "**new name**," better than "of sons and daughters," and the acceptability of eunuchs and "foreigners," that is, "Gentiles," into the service of God is clearly a prophecy of the **Messianic kingdom**.

Failure to take account of this fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation led even great scholars like Albert Barnes to make this chapter a prophecy that the Sabbath Day would be incorporated as a binding obligation in the Church of Jesus Christ. The only trouble with such an interpretation is that it forces Isaiah to prophecy a lie.

In all the New Testament, or the whole Bible for that matter, there is never an instance in which the sabbath day was ever made a requirement for anyone except Jews. The apostle Paul commanded, "**Let no man, therefore judge you in respect of ... a sabbath day** ... For he (Christ) hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14,15).

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Isaiah 56:1-5, *Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that **keepeth the sabbath** from **polluting it**, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the **eunuch** say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the **eunuchs** that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of **my covenant**; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a **name** better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an **everlasting name**, that shall not be cut off.*

NOTE: The **name** here referred to is the **name**, **Christian**. Isaiah here prophesied that the name would be given, not by God's enemies, but by himself within his house and within his walls, that is, within the **church**, the church being the only house God ever had, certainly, not the Jewish Temple, which, from the beginning was contrary to God's will. Isaiah also prophesied that this memorial name would be a **new name** (Isaiah 62:2), and a **name** which the mouth of the Lord would give, and that it would be given after the kings

and the **Gentiles** had seen the **righteousness** of **God**, that is, after the **Church of Messiah** had been established and after Gentiles were accepted into it. (See the discussion of the name Christian, in Vol. 5, (Acts) of my NT Series of Commentaries, pp. 333- 336.) (Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Isaiah 56:6-8, *Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.*

NOTE: There is a very curious mingling of expressions here with applications both to the old Israel in such terms as "burnt-offerings and sacrifices" and to the New Institution in words like, "my holy mountain" and "my house of prayer." Certainly the Jewish Temple was never "a house of prayer for all peoples"; Jesus called it a "den of thieves and robbers."

"The assurances and promises here to the **foreigners** and **eunuchs** who had been **excluded** from the Commonwealth of Israel, are that they should be received to the full enjoyment of the richer privileges of the Christian Church; and a specific prediction is inserted respecting the ingathering of **Gentiles** generally.

Speaking of Isa. 56:8, here, McGuiggan stated that, "It is clear that 'outcasts' here does not mean '**all Jews**', but '**the righteous remnant**'."

The great promise held out for eunuchs in this chapter explains why the **Ethiopian eunuch** of Acts 8 happened to be reading in this part of Isaiah (Isa. 53) when he encountered **Philip** on the road to Gaza and was baptized into **Christ**.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Jeremiah 7:1-11, *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S (Yahweh) house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, **Amend your ways and your doings**, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.*

*Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in **this house**, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.*

NOTE: The sins enumerated (mentioned by distinct particulars) here constituted violations of the Decalogue (ten commandments) as given in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The specific commandments broken were the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, with the necessary inference that the 10th also was broken, stealing and adultery both being a direct result of the **covetousness** forbidden in the last commandment. As Green noted, "This amounted to a near-total breach of the covenant stipulations."

"Here is further and conclusive evidence of Jeremiah's deep anchorage in the Mosaic faith." **We are delivered...** Jeremiah 7:10). The Jews actually **believed** that merely because they frequented the temple and brought their sacrifices as usual, that, they were fully protected in the commission of **every crime** in the catalogue, all of this on the mere grounds of their external presentation of themselves **before God** at the place called by his name.

They deluded (deceived; led into error) themselves into thinking they were safe no matter what they did. ***Behold, I, even I have seen it, saith Jehovah*** (Yahweh)... (Jeremiah 7:11). Anchor Bible suggests a paraphrase here: God says, Look! I'm not blind! Of course, I've seen it! ***Is this house. become a den of robbers*** (Jeremiah 7:11)? These very words were spoken by Christ himself as a solemn indictment of the temple during his personal ministry, Ye made it (the temple) a **den of robbers** (Matthew 21:13). This is a reference to the blasphemous (irreverent) manner in which the Jews used that temple. The Hebrew word here actually means a **robber's 'cave,'** The figure is that of a den, or cave, or some other supposedly safe and secure place to which robbers retired after each of their crimes. What a terrible misuse of holy religion was this abuse by the Jews.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Mark 11:11-14, And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the **temple**: and when he had looked round about upon **all things**, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was **hungry**: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if **haply (no doubt)** he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, **No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.** And his disciples **heard it.**

NOTE: This is one of the most interesting of Jesus' great wonders, exceedingly rich with moral significance, and, in context, a miracle of great **mercy** and **power**. Like a bat in a cave at night, however, the unbeliever sees nothing at all in such an event as this. First, we shall note a few "objections" which have been offered.

Jesus is accused of "blasting fruit trees simply because they did not have fruit ready for him at the moment." Such a canard (fabrication,) as this, like Satan's lie in Eden, is merely a **denial** of what the **sacred text SAYS**. He did not wither the tree for fruitlessness but for FALSENESS, exhibiting leaves (which appeared AFTER the fruit, normally) yet having no fruit and being also an out-of-season **freak**.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Thought 1. Not knowing that there was no fruit proves, along with many other scriptures, that Jesus was not God, while in the earth. God the Son, Jesus, was made to be "a human," (John 1:1, 14) anointed by God the Father (Acts 10:38) to work as the Prophet of Deut. 18. And as a human prophet, he knew only what God revealed to him by his Spirit. And here, God saw fit to not reveal to Jesus the fact that the fig tree was barren.

Mark 11:15, And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the **temple**, and began to cast out them that **sold** and **bought** in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the **moneychangers**, and the seats of them that **sold doves**;

NOTE: Only by a denial of the historical gospels is it possible to suppose that only one cleansing of the temple occurred. The **first cleansing** (John 2:13-22) occurred quite early in Jesus' ministry and was marked by Jesus' order to those profaning the temple that they should cease and desist from their profaning action.

This **second cleansing**, coming in the **last week** of the **Lord's ministry**, contained no such order, because it was too late, the day of grace already having expired. This cleansing, here recorded totally within the narrative of cursing the fig tree, appears as a primary basis of the divine judgment against Israel. In the **first**, there was no statement that the leaders had made the house of God a **den of thieves** and **robbers**; but that charge was bluntly associated with the **second** cleansing.

The similarity between the **two cleansings** resulted from the fact that the profaners of the temple had not altered in any manner their desecration of the house of God. The **court** of the **Gentiles** had been turned into a **merchandising mart**; and, in the providence of God, that very court had been intended for use by devout Gentiles who worshiped God.

The **double gouging** of the multitudes who came to worship God was a lucrative abuse on the part of the temple concessionaires. Certain animals (or doves for the poor) were required in the Jewish sacrifices; but the difficulty of transporting livestock made it more convenient to purchase them in the temple. Moreover, "**Temple dues**" had to be paid in the **Tyrian coinage**, the Tyrian shekel being the nearest equivalent to the Hebrew shekel." Thus, through control of the available supply of **animals**, and of the **money** required for their purchase, **exploitation** of the multitudes was brazenly accomplished.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

John 2:13-17, And the Jews' **passover** was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a **scourge** of **small cords**, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; **make not** my **Father's house** an **house of merchandise**. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

Mark 11:16-17, And would not suffer that any man should **carry** any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the **house of prayer**? but ye have made it a **den of thieves (robber)**.

NOTE: Jesus closed the court of the Gentiles as a short-cut for the traffickers in merchandise and materials. The thorough **commercialization** of the place had made it, in fact, much like a street-market, despite the truth of its being, actually, a significant area within the holy temple itself.

Here Christ quoted from Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11. For discussion of the messianic implications of what Jesus did in both these cleansings, see comment in my Commentary on John, John 2. What Jesus did in each of these **cleansings** was to present a dramatic claim upon his own behalf as **God's Messenger** who had suddenly come to his temple. One may only be amused at a comment like that of Grant who said that "Den of thieves' ... does not necessarily imply **extortion** on the part of the merchants!" Is such a commentator ignorant of the fact that Jesus here used the word "**robbers**" (not "thieves"), and does he have any explanation of how **robbers** may be held "not guilty" of **extortion**?

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

Matthew 21:12-20, And Jesus went into the temple of God, and **cast out** ALL them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, **It is written**, My house shall be called the **house of prayer**; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the **temple**, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were **sore displeased**, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of **babes** and **sucklings** thou hast **perfected praise**? And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the **morning** as he returned into the city, **he hungered**. And when he saw a **fig tree** in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And **presently (instantly, immediately)** the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

NOTE: These events took place on Monday, although Matthew's account leaves an impression that it occurred on Sunday. Matthew did not pay much attention to strict chronological sequence but arranged much of his material topically.

The **chronology** of this event is as follows: The tree was cursed on Monday

morning as Christ was on the WAY to the **cleansing** of the **temple**. Matthew indicates that it withered **immediately**; but the following morning Peter observed that it was **withered** completely from its **roots upward** and totally dried up. It was probably not noticed by them on Monday evening as they returned to Bethany, due to its being twilight or dark. See **Mark 11:12-14, 20, 21.** (Source: *Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/*)

Luke 19:40-46, And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and **wept over it**, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! **but now** they are **hid from** thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou **knewest not** the **time of thy visitation**. And he went into the temple, and began to CAST OUT them that sold therein, and them that bought; Saying unto them, **It is written**, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a **den of thieves (robber)**.

NOTE: *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation;* in which the dayspring from on high had visited them with his personal presence, preaching among them, and working miracles; and yet they knew him not, but **despised** and **rejected him**; yea, after that they had put him to **death**, and he was risen again, he ordered his disciples to begin their ministry, and preach the Gospel, at Jerusalem; and they continued for some time only preaching to them, or at least rarely elsewhere, till they put away the Gospel from them. The time of the ministry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and his apostles in Judea, was the **time** of Jerusalem's **visitation** in a way of mercy; which not being taken notice of, and observed, brought another kind of visitation upon them, even in a way of **wrath** and **vengeance**. The Jews pretend to assign other causes of Jerusalem's destruction; but the true cause was their rejection of Jesus, as the Messiah. (Source: *biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/*)

Mark 11:18-19, And the **scribes** and **chief priests** heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they FEARED HIM, because all the people was astonished at his **doctrine**. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

NOTE: Note that it is not stated here that they "decided" to destroy him; that decision had already been made more than three years previously (John 5:18). Furthermore, Jesus, at the **first cleansing**, had associated his action with a veiled prophecy of his death and resurrection (John 2:19). Without doubt, Jesus' action in the **two cleansings** was a prime source of the motivation of the enemies who decided to destroy him. The principal concern of the chief priests, as revealed here, was exactly HOW they could bring about his death. Mark's very next verse suggests the possibility that they might have assassinated Jesus if he had not withdrawn from the city every night. That they really preferred **secret murder** to any public act against him is plain from Matt. 26:4.

(Source: *Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/*)

Luke 19:47-48, And he **taught** daily **in the temple**. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for ALL the people were very attentive to hear him.

John 12:17-19, The **people** therefore that was with him when he called **Lazarus** out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, **bare record**. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The **Pharisees** therefore said among themselves,

Perceive ye how ye **prevail nothing?** behold, the **world** is **gone after him**.