

Cleansing the Temple

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Jesus twice “cleansed” the temple (actually the court of the temple) in Jerusalem by driving the merchants and moneychangers from it. The first time was near the beginning of His work (John 2:14–16) and the second was near its close (Mat. 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46). It is obvious that He strongly disapproved of those practitioners and their practices.

When brethren decide they do not like some activity that is being practiced in the church building they will sometimes say, “We need to cleanse the temple” and cite these examples of the Lord. A case in point is selling good, true-to-the-Bible books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs in the church building. Is this parallel to what the merchants and moneychangers were doing? No, and here are some reasons why:

1. Selling at a reasonable price books and audio/video recordings that promote the Gospel is both innocent and honorable, whereas the behavior of the temple money-changers and merchants was neither. Historians say they were charging Passover pilgrims exorbitant prices for necessary sacrificial animals and for changing their foreign money. Their abuse was so great that the Lord called them “thieves” (KJV) or “robbers” (ASV). Selling a five-hundred-page hard cover book for \$16.00 or a CD containing several Gospel sermons for \$5.00 is hardly exorbitant, much less robbery.
2. One who thinks it is a “defilement of the temple” when such good materials are sold at reasonable prices on church property is greatly confused. The church **building** is not the temple (dwelling place) of God. God dwells not in a building made by men (Acts 7:48; 17:24), but in the people who make up His church (1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19–20).
3. Since God’s temple is the **church** (not the building), if we would “cleanse the temple” we must cast out whatever defiles God’s **people** (e.g., false doctrine, immorality, etc.). If the “temple cleansers” are really earnest about that necessary work, let them join those of us who for some years have been exposing and refuting false teachers and their damnable false doctrines and practices. Let them join us in calling for the Scriptural purging of the church of those saints who have yielded to the works of the flesh. Here is the real temple cleansing that needs to be done.

No, selling good, faith-building materials on or in church property desecrates nothing sacred. This is why sound and scholarly brethren have been doing it and allowing it for many years. Making good books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs conveniently available to members of the

church actually helps keep the temple (church) undefiled (pure). If anything, we need not less, but more of it.

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