

The Second Cleansing of the Temple

Here is a **Full Breakdown** of the **Cleansing of the Temple** as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels:



Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Matthew 21:12–17 | Mark 11:15–19 | Luke 19:45–48

This moment happens during Jesus' final week in Jerusalem and is one of His most dramatic public acts.



Parallel Gospel Overview

Event Detail	Matthew 21:12–17	Mark 11:15–19	Luke 19:45–48
Jesus enters the temple	v.12	v.15	v.45
Drives out buyers/sellers	v.12	v.15	v.45
Overturns money changers' tables	v.12	v.15	—
Quotes OT Scripture	v.13 (<i>Isa. 56:7, Jer. 7:11</i>)	v.17 (same)	v.46 (same)
Heals blind and lame	v.14	—	—
Children praise Him	v.15–16	—	—
Chief priests and scribes offended	v.15–16	v.18	v.47
Jesus departs city	v.17	v.19	—



Historical & Cultural Background



What Was Happening in the Temple?

The outer court of the temple—**Court of the Gentiles**—was used for selling animals for sacrifices and exchanging money.

Passover crowds were massive; these merchants were **authorized by the temple authorities**, often exploiting pilgrims with inflated prices and unfair currency exchange.



Money Changers & Sellers

Worshipers had to pay a **temple tax** in **Tyrian shekels**, so money changers profited by charging fees to convert Roman coins.

Sellers of doves, sheep, and oxen also charged high prices for "acceptable" sacrifices.



Key Greek Words

Greek Term	English Translation	Meaning
ἐξέβαλεν (exebalen)	"He drove out"	Strong verb; implies forceful ejection
κατέστρεψεν (katestrepse)	"He overturned"	Literally "to overthrow, destroy"
ἱερὸν (hieron)	"Temple"	Refers to the entire temple complex
οἶκος προσευχῆς (oikos proseuchēs)	"House of prayer"	From Isaiah 56:7

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Old Testament Connections

OT Passage	Fulfilled / Quoted
Isaiah 56:7 – "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"	Quoted by Jesus
Jeremiah 7:11 – "Has this house... become a den of robbers?"	Jesus directly applies this prophetic rebuke
Malachi 3:1–3 – "Suddenly the Lord you seek will come to his temple..."	Implied in Jesus' sudden arrival in judgment

Theological Themes

Theme	Explanation
Judgment on Corruption	Jesus exposes temple leaders' hypocrisy and exploitation of worshipers
Messianic Authority	He acts with kingly and priestly authority over God's house
Inclusion of Gentiles	By quoting Isaiah 56:7, Jesus reclaims the temple as a place for all nations to worship
Purity of Worship	True worship is to be holy, just, and accessible , not commercialized or oppressive
Fulfillment of Prophecy	Jesus fulfills Malachi's expectation of the Lord suddenly coming to purify the temple



Unique to Matthew: Healing & Praise (MT 21:14–17)

Jesus heals the blind and lame in the temple – something the Law restricted priests from allowing (Lev. 21:17–20).

Children cry out "Hosanna to the Son of David!" – echoing the Triumphal Entry. When the chief priests object, Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2, affirming even children recognize God's Messiah.

💡 Irony: The **children** and the **disabled** respond rightly to Jesus, while the **religious leaders** plot His death.



Narrative Flow by Gospel

Matthew 21:12–17

Focus: **Healing + Messianic praise + Scriptural defense**

Emphasizes the **power and innocence** of children and marginalized people



Mark 11:15–19

Most **chronological**, set the day after the Triumphal Entry

Structured like a "**Markan sandwich**" with fig tree events around it (judgment theme)



Luke 19:45–48

Shortest and **most prophetic**

Emphasizes Jesus' **teaching in the temple** and the **leaders' fear** of His popularity

The crowds are "**hanging on His words**" (v.48)

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Messianic Implications

Prophetic Fulfillment: Jesus acts like a prophet (Jeremiah), a priest (Malachi 3), and a king (Messiah). His bold entrance into the temple signals that God Himself is reclaiming His house. This act contributes directly to the leaders' decision to kill Him.



Timing (Based on Mark)

Day	Event
Sunday	Triumphal Entry, temple inspection (Mark 11:11)
Monday	Fig tree cursed, temple cleansed (Mark 11:12–19)
Tuesday	Fig tree found withered, temple teaching continues



Summary

Jesus' cleansing of the temple is **not just a moral protest**—it is a **prophetic, messianic act** fulfilling Scripture and pronouncing judgment on a corrupt system of worship. By disrupting the marketplace, healing the marginalized, and receiving praise from children, Jesus **reclaims the temple as a place of holiness, justice, and true communion with God**.

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There is quite a bit of historical information about the **temple tax** and the **money changers** in Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. This was more than just convenience — it was part of a **religious, economic, and political system** that Jesus directly confronted.



What Was the Temple Tax?

- Every **Jewish male over 20** was required by Torah (Exodus 30:13–16) to pay an **annual half-shekel tax** to support the temple.
- This continued during Second Temple times as a **religious obligation**, used to maintain the temple and pay for daily sacrifices and other services.
- The amount was **half a shekel** according to the **sanctuary standard** — which had specific purity and weight requirements.

 **Exodus 30:13** — *“Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary...”*



Why Tyrian Shekels?

➤ **Tyrian coinage was used because:**

1. **High silver content (94%+)** — more trustworthy than Roman coinage
2. **Consistent weight (about 14g per shekel)**
3. **Accepted by temple authorities** as the standard for holy use

Ironically, Tyrian shekels bore **pagan images**, including:

- The image of the **Phoenician god Melqart (Heracles)**
- An eagle, symbolizing Roman or pagan power

 Even though this conflicted with Jewish aversion to graven images, the **purity of the silver** took precedence in the temple's financial system.



What Did the Money Changers Do?

1. **Exchanged Roman and local coins** (which were impure or lightweight) for **Tyrian shekels**
2. **Charged a fee** (called a **kolbon**) for this exchange — usually a **small coin (1/48th of a shekel)**, but sometimes more
3. This fee could increase during **feast times**, like **Passover**, due to demand

 The money changers were not inherently evil, but the system became **exploitative**:

- Taking advantage of **pilgrims**, especially the poor
- Profiting **within the temple precincts**
- Turning worship into a **financial transaction**



Why Did Jesus Confront It?

- The **Court of the Gentiles**—meant to be a house of prayer for all nations—was instead filled with:
 - **Money changers**
 - **Animal sellers**
 - **Commercial chaos**
- The system likely operated with the **permission of the high priestly family** (notably the house of **Annas and Caiaphas**), who received a cut of profits

 **Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7** — *“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations”*

 **And Jeremiah 7:11** — *“But you have made it a den of robbers”*

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Implications of the Exchange System

Aspect	Description
Religious	It was tied to Temple worship and purity laws
Economic	It created a monopolized economy under temple control
Political	It reflected the collaboration between priestly elites and Roman interests
Prophetic	Jesus' disruption was a sign of divine judgment against a corrupt system



Summary

- **Tyrian shekels** were used for their silver purity, not their images.
- **Money changers** profited by exchanging impure coins for them and charging fees.
- Jesus' anger wasn't against commerce in general, but **commercialism corrupting worship**.
- His temple cleansing was a **prophetic act** declaring judgment on a system that prioritized **profit over prayer**, and **ritual over righteousness**.

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While we can't calculate an exact dollar amount, we can give you a **realistic estimate** of how wealthy the high priestly families like **Annas** and **Caiaphas** were, and then **translate that into modern equivalents** based on historical economics. Let's break it down:



Who Were Annas and Caiaphas?

Name	Role	Years Active	Notes
Annas	High Priest (6–15 AD)	Retained power behind the scenes	Father-in-law of Caiaphas
Caiaphas	High Priest (18–36 AD)	Official high priest during Jesus' trial	Likely appointed with Roman support

- Though Annas was officially removed, he retained great **economic and political power**, especially over **temple commerce**.
- Their family is referred to as a “**dynasty of priests**”, dominating the high priesthood for decades.



How Did They Make Money?

The High Priestly family controlled:

1. **Temple tax system** (half-shekel from every Jewish male annually)
2. **Money changers** (exchanging coins for temple currency)
3. **Animal sales** (for sacrifices — lambs, doves, oxen)
4. **Temple markets** (likely taxed or leased to sellers)
5. **Fees and corruption** (e.g., selling high priesthood favors, legal bribes)

 Josephus and the Talmud speak of the “**booths of the sons of Annas**”, implying the family ran an entire **market franchise** within the temple courts.



Estimating Their Annual Income

Let's conservatively estimate based on some key numbers:

1. Temple Tax Income

- Population of adult Jewish males (worldwide): **~2 million**
- Temple tax: **½ shekel per person** = **~8 grams of silver**
- $2 \text{ million} \times \frac{1}{2} \text{ shekel} = 1 \text{ million shekels/year}$

That's about **14,000 kg (30,865 lbs) of silver/year**

At modern silver prices (~\$25/oz), that's **~\$12 million USD/year in silver alone** just from the temple tax.

Even if the high priest's family got just **10% in fees or cut**, that's **\$1.2 million/year (modern equivalent)**.

2. Profit from Money Changers

- Every person exchanging coins paid a **small fee (kolbon)** — 1/48 to 1/24 of a shekel
- Multiply this by **hundreds of thousands** of visitors, especially during **Passover**

Let's estimate:

- $400,000 \text{ people} \times \$1–2 \text{ equivalent fee} = \$400k–\$800k/\text{year}$

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3. Animal Sales Revenue

- Sacrificial lambs (required for many sacrifices) sold at inflated prices
- Doves, oxen, and other animals sold at temple-approved booths

Let's say:

- 250,000 lambs sold during Passover \times \$100 modern value each = **\$25 million**
- If the priestly family got even **5–10% of total market cut**, that's **\$1.25M–\$2.5M**



Combined Wealth Estimate (Modern Value)

Income Source	Estimated Annual Revenue (Modern USD)
Temple tax fees	\$1.2 million
Money changing	\$400k–\$800k
Animal sales	\$1.25M–\$2.5M
Other temple commerce	\$500k+ (e.g., market rents, bribes)
Total Estimate	\$3.5M–\$5M/year minimum

And that's just **annual income**. Their **net worth** would be **much higher**, especially with land, properties, and influence.



Social Class Equivalent

In ancient Judea, this would place Annas and Caiaphas among the **wealthiest elite**, comparable to:

- **Modern multimillionaires**
- **Corporate executives controlling a religious monopoly**
- Politically protected **religious oligarchs**

They were powerful **landowners**, religious authorities, and **political collaborators with Rome**. Their influence extended **beyond Jerusalem** into the Sanhedrin and Jewish diaspora.



Reflecton

Jesus' **cleansing of the temple** was a **direct economic threat** to this system.



"*You have made it a den of robbers.*" – Matthew 21:13



That word "robbers" (**lēstēs**) doesn't just mean thief — it can mean **violent oppressor** or **plunderer**.

Jesus wasn't just flipping tables. He was **challenging the entire corrupt priestly economy**, which helps explain why the **chief priests sought to kill Him immediately after** (Mark 11:18).

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1. Before the final week — no record of healings *inside* the Temple courts

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus **teaches** in synagogues, on hillsides, and even in private homes — but every time He's near the Temple before His Passion Week, He's either:

- **Teaching** (e.g., John 7–8, Feast of Tabernacles)
- **Debating** with religious leaders
- **Observing** Temple rituals

Yet, there is **no record of Him healing inside the Temple precincts** before that final visit.

Let's look chronologically:

Time	Event	Location	Healings Mentioned?
John 2	First Passover visit	Temple courts	None — only <i>cleansing</i> the Temple
John 5	Healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda	Near the Sheep Gate (north of Temple, <i>outside</i> sacred area)	Yes, but outside the courts
John 7–8	Teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles	Temple courts	No healings recorded
John 9	Healing of the man born blind	Likely near the Temple (he washes in <i>Siloam</i>), but not inside	Outside again

So up until His **triumphant entry**, every miracle connected to the Temple area happens **outside the Temple gates**.

2. During the final week — healings *inside* the Temple courts

Then everything changes in Matthew 21:

“And the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them.” Matthew 21:14 

This takes place **right after** He drives out the money changers.

Now He replaces their corrupt commerce with **acts of divine mercy** — the Temple's *true* purpose.

This is the **only time in the Gospels** that healing happens *inside* the Temple precincts itself.

It's deliberate, prophetic, and symbolic.

3. Why this mattered

Under Old Covenant law:

- The **blind and lame** were **barred** from entering the Temple area (2 Samuel 5:8; Leviticus 21:17–23).
- They represented physical conditions that signified *ritual imperfection* or *unfitness for holy space*.

So when Jesus heals them **inside the Temple**, He:

1. **Reverses David's exclusion** — welcoming those David symbolically excluded.
2. **Demonstrates His authority as the Greater Davidic King**.
3. **Reveals Himself as the new High Priest** who *purifies rather than excludes*.

4. Prophetic and Messianic fulfillment

Isaiah 35:5–6 prophesied:

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer...”

By healing *inside* the Temple, Jesus shows that the **Messianic age has entered the Temple itself**. Holiness is no longer something to *protect from contamination* — it's now a **power that flows outward to heal**.

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⭐ 5. Summary

Period	Location	Activity	Meaning
Early ministry	Synagogues, Galilee, outskirts of Temple	Teaching & healings (outside)	Grace moves outward to the unclean
Festival visits	Temple teaching only	No healings inside	Respect for ritual boundaries under Mosaic law
Passion Week	Temple courts	Healing the blind and lame	Messianic reversal — holiness now restores, not excludes

Conclusion:

Yes — Jesus **did not heal inside the Temple courts** until the **final week before His crucifixion**. When He finally did, it was an unmistakable declaration that **the Presence of God had returned to His house** — not in ritual form, but in the living Person of the Son.

“My house shall be called a house of prayer... and the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them.” — Matthew 21:13–14 