

## **The Anger of Jesus**

**by Phillip Guerena**

Shouting, a Christian husband was upset and was verbally abusing his wife. "Woman, hurry up. We are late for this important church gathering. If Jesus got angry for a just cause, so can I. Get moving; you are making us late. It is all your fault..." He continued tearing her up and down.

Studying the anger of the most self-controlled and meekest person who ever lived will determine the course of that emotion in most Christians. Like the proverb of old says: "All roads lead to Rome." The excuse many give when they lose their cool is, "Jesus made me do it. He did it as he purged the temple. He is the example I must follow." But examining more closely this passage of Scripture (John 2:13-19), it merits another look. What might have happened if he hit the animals to eject them from the sanctuary? What might have occurred if the coins were put up for anyone to take? Let's look at two views -- a violent temple encounter and a gentle temple encounter.

### **A Violent Temple Encounter**

Flying feathers. Coins being scattered. Tables kicked over. Animals whipped. Did Jesus cause such things when he cleansed the temple? For the

sake of tradition, let's conclude that he did. The text relates that it was almost the Passover, a very crowded time of year for worshipping. How many cattle were present there for sale? When Solomon dedicated the temple, there were 22,000 head of cattle offered (II Cron. 7:5). Josiah at his immemorial Passover had 3,800 (II Cron. 35:7-9). King Asa (II Chron. 15:11) on a non-required day, made a sacrificial offering of 700 cattle plus 7,000 sheep and goats. So how many cattle were present when Jesus cleansed the temple? 1,000 to 2,000 head would be a conservative estimate.

Stampeding a few thousand hoofs and horns into a dense crowd would have caused a terrifying destruction of major proportions, especially if most of them were young bulls (Ps. 69:31). Dying and dead sheep (about five times more sheep) all over. A wild driven herd would have wasted anything in its path. Pigeons, children and adults scattered throughout. Many people diving all over the premises trying to retrieve cows, coins and sheep that were up for grabs. Blood and feathers decorating the courtyard wherever the wild fury struck. Paramedics and ambulances coming in and going out for the injured and deceased. Butchers trying to salvage whatever animal carnage possible. Jesus might have been accused of inciting a riot. He might have been guilty of murder and assaulting the innocent with deadly weapons. Throwing other's monies into the multitudes would also be a crime. All this would be the work of a modern day terrorist. He would not be caring for anyone, life or currency. The only importance would be making a deadly, bloody, irresponsible statement about his beliefs or disbeliefs. The respecting of traditional values would be trampled. One of the big news items of the day was 18 dead when the tower of Siloam fell on them. This would pale in comparison to the Passover slaughter.

Two of the best Bible translations on John 2:13-16 seem to be the KJV and the Wuest Expanded New Testament. However, the NIV, though an excellent version of the Scriptures, seems to be lacking in this portion of the Bible.

### **A Gentle Temple Encounter**

First of all, Jesus made a whip out of small cords. Going through modern open-air markets, with the same old style, some things are readily discarded. No one throws away ropes or useful items. But small pieces of strings would be tossed in the trash. More than likely, these left-over pieces were used by Jesus to make a whip. However, it would almost be worthless to afflict pain on anything or anyone. Lion tamers never intend to hit the wild animals; they only hope to scare them into obedience. Cowboys rarely hit the cattle with the rope. They are afraid the livestock might run away, get hurt, and take everything in their path. This would be of great personal damage to everyone involved.

Now sheep and cattle cannot be herded together because the larger animals would trample the much smaller ones. In this section of the Bible, Jesus took out the sheep first, then the cattle. If Jesus would have stampeded the beasts, they would have taken sheep, tables, people and everything in their way.

He drove them all out of the temple. "To drive out" is a very interesting word (in the original Biblical language) used over 70 times in the New Testament. It is used in Mark 1:12 as the Savior was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted. Also, the apostles drove out evil spirits (Mark 6:13), and Jesus drove them out -- same word -- too (Luke 11:19-20). Whenever Jesus spoke, he did it with authority. And even when

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he was dying, the veil of the temple was ripped into two pieces; the sun darkened and seemed to hide its face from the suffering Savior. At his resurrection, some local graveyards had their say in opening up and giving up alive some of their former occupants. Everything he did was with authority. This was true in driving out beasts and merchants from the house of God. There was no need for violence; nor was there pain administered to anyone. Proof of this -- not a person was hurt nor a coin lost. If there were, Jesus would have been justly accused.

The coins were in fact "poured out," not scattered, which would have been extremely careless. Also, the coins would now be for finders keepers. No businessman would have put up with that random distribution of his hard-earned capital. If indeed the coins were flung at will, this would have by itself caused a great public disturbance. In Revelation 16 the word "to pour out" is used freely. Here the angels empty out their seven bowls of wrath on the earth. This would suggest the coins were neatly kept in jars. Probably they were put away in order of their value. For example, quarters were in one jar, nickels were in another, etc. When he went after the tables (next in order accordingly), he turned them over. This same word in Acts 5:22 and 15:16 is translated "returned and went back." In Latin America, a turned-over table in a public market place means shop is closed. The banks were merely shut down when the coins were paired together and the tables overturned.

Furthermore, it is significant to note that pigeons and chickens cannot be herded. If anyone steps into a strange hen house, the chickens would go wild. But when the proprietor goes in, everything is calm. Jesus especially told the owners of the pigeons, "Take these out."

James 1:20 plainly says that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Also, if Jesus went out of control, it would be

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completely out of character for him. He possessed all the gifts of the Spirit. One of these is certainly self-control (temperance). Not only was he the meek and gentle Savior, but never was his shout heard in the streets nor would he break the withered reed. Do you blame John 2 for your anger? Please do not use this for an excuse to go out of control: he never did.

Avoiding and shedding anger is explicitly commanded in the Bible. "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret -- it leads only to evil" (Ps. 37:8). The New Testament says to get rid of this malignity (Eph. 5:26-32; Col. 3:7-8). Ecclesiastes 7:9 explains that anger resides with fools. Giving full vent to anger is only done by fools (Prov. 29:8,11). Certainly Jesus Christ was never ever a fool. Disobeying God's eternal Word was unheard of for our Redeemer. But beating, scattering, throwing and shouting are signs of one possessed with vengeance and an unforgiving spirit. Lashing out like this makes a violent Savior, not a gentle one. Prov. 16:32 exalts the man who controls his spirit and temper. Violating any of these Scriptural indications would have marred the perfect Lamb of God.