

THE NEW AGENDA

SERIES: THE PASSION ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

By Scott Grant

It's about Jesus

The gospels, once we understand them, force us to an inescapable conclusion. They are not advocating a philosophy, a religion or a system of belief. They are not even advocating “Christianity,” a word that cannot be found in the scriptures. They are advocating a Person. They are advocating Christ. And that’s what ultimately makes the gospels either irresistible or utterly frustrating, depending on what you want out of them.

Many people read the gospels and appreciate the teachings of Jesus. However, admiration for, and even adherence to, someone’s teachings is significantly different from—and safer than—worshiping that person. The gospels present Jesus as the Lord, Yahweh; the one true God. He came first and foremost to give us himself, but in many ways we are unprepared for him. His presence, then, often serves first of all to disrupt our way of life. Jesus overturns our idolatrous agendas in order to give us himself.

In Matthew 21, Matthew describes Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Jesus understands his entry into the city as fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 21:5). The people hail him as the Son of David, the Messiah (Matthew 21:9). Hopes are high. Then Jesus does something strange. He enters the temple and disrupts their way of life.

The intentions of Jesus

Today marks the conclusion of a five-week series on “The Passion According to Matthew.” Chronologically, this passage would not be the last in the series; it would be the first. Nevertheless, it does serve as a fitting conclusion from a thematic point of view. It shows us how Jesus got himself into so much trouble. In our series, it functions as a flashback that provides context for the passion of Christ.

Two symbolic acts of Jesus help us understand his intentions. In the first part of our series, we looked at one of these: the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. Jesus redefined the Passover, the central meal in the life of Israel, by placing himself, and his death, in the middle of it. A new and better exodus, the true return from exile and the final forgiveness of sins would be found in him.

Today, we will look at the other: Jesus’ disruption of the temple. In his entry into Jerusalem and his actions in the temple, Jesus redefines the central symbol of Israel, the temple, and replaces it with himself. He also acts out the long-anticipated return of the Lord to Jerusalem, which in the prophets was linked with the return from exile and the forgiveness of sins (Isaiah 40:1-11, 52:1-12). In so doing, he indicates that the current temple system is ripe for judgment—the temple system is corrupt, the people are corrupt; God is going to judge Israel, he is going to judge Jerusalem, and his temple is going to be destroyed.

So we understand from the two symbolic acts of Jesus that he intended to die as the new Passover lamb to bring about the new exodus, in which Israel—and ultimately the Gentiles as well—return to the Lord. He also intended to present himself as the new temple, the new meeting place of God.

Jesus overturns the tables

And Jesus entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.” (Matthew 21:12-13)

The people longed for the Lord’s promised return to Jerusalem, particularly to his temple (Zechariah 1:16, 8:3; Malachi 3:1-4). Here the Lord, Jesus, returns to Jerusalem, and to the temple. Jesus, in messianic fashion, entered Jerusalem in a “gentle” way, “mounted on a donkey” (Matthew 21:5). But when he arrives at the temple, he starts throwing things around. What happened to our meek and mild Jesus?

Not that long ago I had asked a friend of mine, who had never read the gospels and was not a believer in Jesus, to read one of them. He chose to read the gospel of Luke. I had great hopes for this, that he would be moved by the love of Jesus. When he got back to me and I asked him what he thought, the first thing he said to me was, “Jesus, he’s harsh!” I was disappointed at first, but after thinking about it, he was right. There are some harsh elements in there about Jesus, and his action in the temple is one of them. We have to, of course, understand that when Jesus is harsh it’s because he loves these people; when Jesus is harsh it’s because he loves *us*. He doesn’t want to tolerate our “Tom Foolery” and so, in certain occasions, both in the gospels and in our lives, he has to be harsh and somewhat ruthless it seems.

Temple cleansings were associated with the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (2 Chronicles 29-30, 2 Kings 22, Ezekiel 40-48). Matthew is showing us, therefore, that Jesus is restoring the kingdom. He disrupts the ministry of the temple, casting out those who were buying and selling animals for sacrifice, overturning the tables of those who were exchanging foreign currency into Tyrian money in order to make their purchases, and overturning the seats of those selling doves for sacrifice. The actions of Jesus leave us with two questions. First, what problem does he have with what’s going on in the temple? And, second, what does he intend to communicate by his actions?

Jesus’ words help us to understand his actions. His words originated with the prophet Isaiah, “my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (Isaiah 56:7) and with the prophet Jeremiah, in which the Lord calls the temple a “den of robbers” (Jeremiah 7:11). We must first understand something of the context in which the prophets spoke if we are going to understand what Jesus is trying to communicate here, through his actions.

Isaiah 56 concerns the anticipated return from Babylonian exile but also looks forward to an age beyond the exile, and even to the true return from exile. It speaks of the inclusion of eunuchs and foreigners. Although Mark, in his gospel account, includes the words “for all the peoples,” Matthew leaves this phrase out. Evidently, in the reference to Isaiah 56:7, Matthew sees Jesus being first of all concerned that the temple is no longer a “house of prayer,” oriented toward the Lord.

In Jeremiah 7:4, the Lord tells the people: “Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’” The temple provided them with a false sense of security. Because of the temple, they assumed that the Lord was with them, which allowed them to do whatever they wanted with the assumption that the Lord would not intervene. Their central sin was idolatry (Jeremiah 7:6, 9).

Jeremiah said the temple had become a “den of robbers.” The phrase does not illustrate the specific sin of the people of Israel, nor did the Lord accuse them of robbery in Jeremiah 7. Rather, the phrase illustrates, again, a sense of security that the people felt. As robbers would hide out in a cave for safety, the people of Israel were hiding out in the temple, so to speak, assuming they were safe from the Lord’s judgment. The Lord, announcing that he would destroy the temple unless they changed their ways, said that the temple provided no security at all (Jeremiah 7:12-15). They didn’t change, and the Lord destroyed the temple through the Babylonians in 586 BC.

What, then, is Jesus saying to the people of his day by accusing them of making the temple a “robbers’ den”? The New Testament word translated “robber” is used by Josephus, the First Century Jewish historian, of an “insurrectionist” or “brigand.” These are the ones who took up arms against Rome. Even the Hebrew word translated “robber” in Jeremiah can mean “violent one.” This is the meaning in Daniel 11:14, where it is predicted that “violent ones” from among the Jews would rise up against an Egyptian king. Likewise, the Greek word translated “robber” (*lestes*) was used of Barabbas (John 18:40). Mark and Luke identify Barabbas not as a robber but as an insurrectionist (Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19). Matthew identifies each of the men crucified next to Jesus as a *lestes* (Matthew 27:38). The Romans did not crucify robbers, they crucified revolutionaries. They crucified those people who would take issue with Rome’s right to rule. That’s why there were crosses all over the land; to enforce Rome’s rather brutal form of oppression.

Therefore, Jesus seems to be saying that the temple has become a den of insurrectionists (*lestes*), whose agenda is to overthrow Rome, and that the Lord does not endorse this agenda. Just as the people of Jeremiah’s day acted like the pagans, the people of Jesus’ day have adopted a pagan nationalistic agenda. Just as the temple provided no security in Jeremiah’s day neither does it provide security in Jesus’ day. Just as Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the temple, and was true to his word, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple and would be found true to his word, when the Romans, putting down a Jewish rebellion, destroyed the temple in 70 AD. (Matthew 24:2, 23:38.)

How does Jesus link the words from Isaiah and Jeremiah? By invoking Isaiah 56:7, Jesus accuses Israel of rejecting the Lord. By invoking Jeremiah 7:11, Jesus accuses Israel of rebellion against Rome and using the temple as a talisman. Jesus’ use of Jeremiah 7:11, then, contains echoes of the Isaiah 56 context, in which the temple was to be a place of worship for eunuchs, foreigners and “all the peoples.” Israel was planning to take up arms against Rome. Jesus, however, blessed a Roman centurion, and when Jesus was crucified, Romans at the scene, unlike the Jews, recognized him as the Son of God (Matthew 8:5-13, 27:54). The biggest tragedy is that what the Jews had longed for—the return of the Lord—had actually taken place, but they couldn’t see it because they are focused on their own agenda. We are reminded of the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-4:

“But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. And he will sit as a smelter and purifier of

silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in the former years.”

What does Jesus intend to accomplish through his actions and words? Matthew has just noted that Jesus was called a prophet (Matthew 21:11) Now, what did prophets do? They acted out the judgment of God symbolically. That, I suggest, is what Jesus is doing here. He is acting out the judgment of God upon this temple and upon the corrupt system, symbolically—casting out the money changers, overturning tables, etc. He temporarily shuts down the activity in the temple. They are able to resume that activity later, but Jesus is making a prophetic, symbolic statement. Israel has forsaken its God, and he is pronouncing and acting out judgment on the temple, where Israel was supposed to be worshiping its God. His actions would be especially effective at this time, during the Passover, which attracts Jewish pilgrims. It’s the equivalent of having a prime-time audience.

Jesus overturns our agendas

We, too, have our idolatrous agendas, don’t we? We may even worship our agendas instead of the Lord. We cling to ambitions that may have nothing to do with God’s will for our lives, often without being aware of it. Our agendas sometimes have little to do with Jesus and everything to do with our own version of success. We can’t see Jesus, because our agendas are in the way. And, at the same time, we establish certain routines that allow us to feel spiritual. We hope that these routines will provide a hedge against a God who might have something to say about our agendas. We pray; we read the Bible; we attend fellowship groups; we go to church. However, perhaps like the Jews in the days of Jeremiah and Jesus, we’re just hiding out. I heard someone say, “Most people don’t go to church because they’re looking for God. Most people go to church because they’re running from God and looking for cover.”

Like the Jews of Jesus’ day, we may long for the presence of the Lord, but when he shows up, he’s not what we expected. Then the only security our routines provide us with is a false one. Jesus often shows up not to endorse our agendas but to frustrate them. He casts out and overturns beliefs and actions that are not oriented toward God. He disrupts our lives, our fellowships, our churches. He throws tables and chairs around, so to speak. And, in doing so, he shows us that it’s not really the presence of the Lord we were longing for but the success of our agendas. Perhaps we’re not so much longing for the presence of the Lord as we are longing for the Lord to do what we want him to do.

Jesus is here to change that longing. In order to change it, he often frustrates it. For a moment, and sometimes for much longer than a moment, we freeze. All activity ceases. We can’t keep doing what we were doing and continue to think that everything is all right. Jesus gets our attention.

A memorial service for Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead brought thousands of people to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco in 1995. One devotee who had attended more than 1,000 Grateful Dead concerts said that the difference between the Grateful Dead and most other bands was “the religious factor.” He said, “When you’re in the crowd, there’s a definite god-like feeling. Everybody who comes to a Dead concert can feel that.”

That's all well and good, apparently, until something disrupts your worship, like the death of the lead member of the band. The same fan said at the memorial service, "I would give anything if I could take this day back." (1) When our idols fail us, Jesus is there to give us himself.

Jesus challenges the Jewish leaders

And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant, and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have prepared praise for Yourself?'" And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there. (Matthew 21:14-17)

Matthew reports the healing of the blind and lame because such healings were indicative that the new age was upon them, that the Lord was returning to Israel, that the exile was over, that this really was the Lord who had entered the temple (Isaiah 35:5-6, Ezekiel 37:12-14, Matthew 11:4-5). There would be a time of inclusion, when the outcasts of Israel and even the Gentiles would be embraced, and they would come to Jerusalem (Isaiah 60). But the leadership of Israel was not embracing the outcasts of Israel, such as the blind and the lame, let alone the Gentiles. The movement of disabled people in the temple precincts was restricted. Here, Jesus embraces the outcasts and heals them, which has the effect of restoring them to the community and announcing to all that these, too, are part of Israel.

Matthew reports that the blind and the lame "came to him in the temple." The temple is not the focus; Jesus is the focus. The outcasts are in the temple, *but they come to Jesus*, who is not part of the temple leadership. They gather not to the temple per se, but to one in the temple. Jesus *is* the fulfillment of the temple. Immanuel, "God with us," has come. He is not only the fulfillment of the temple but he will build an entirely new kind of temple, one comprising living stones (1 Peter 2:5). Therefore, the old temple, the one abandoned by the Lord because the people had abandoned him, is no longer needed and will be judged and destroyed by the Lord. Jesus' prophetic actions in the temple make precisely that statement.

The fact is this is the first time in the gospel accounts that the chief priests, who were former chief priests and other leading priests, are noted as being in opposition to Jesus. They belonged to the party of the Sadducees, which dominated the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council in Jerusalem, and for the most part favored the status quo. They join the opposition now because the temple is their power base and because they now see Jesus as a threat. The scribes, experts in the scriptures, tended to be Pharisees, who favored the overthrow of Rome. Jesus opposed the revolution, but he also disrupted the status quo and, from the perspective of the priests, could have become a focus of revolutionary activity. The priests and the scribes have different outlooks, but both become indignant after seeing the "wonderful things" that Jesus did and hearing what the children were crying out.

Presumably, the overturning of tables and seats is not among the "wonderful things" that raised the ire of the chief priests and scribes. Neither do they seem to be that bothered by the "wonderful things" themselves (the healings) inasmuch as they do not speak to Jesus about them. Instead, they are most bothered by the children, for when they speak to Jesus, it is about them.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the multitudes (the adults) were crying out “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:9). Originally, “hosanna” meant “help” or “save, I pray,” but it came to mean something along the lines of “praise.” “The Son of David” was a messianic acclamation, and the children hearing this previously from the multitudes, are now proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah and are worshipping him as such in the temple.

The Messiah would have authority over the temple. Previous “sons of David,” kings in his line, cleansed and restored the temple (2 Chronicles 29-30, 2 Kings 22). The Lord told David that his son would build the temple (2 Samuel 7:13), but the description of David’s son in 2 Samuel 7 goes beyond Solomon, who built the first temple. A greater son ultimately must have been in view: *the* Son of David.

If Jesus simply disrupted the temple activities and healed a few people, the priests and scribes probably wouldn’t have been too bothered. A messianic acclamation, however, is another story. And if a messianic acclamation is validated by “wonderful things” such as healings, it’s not easily dismissed. The wonderful things, then, tended to validate what the children were saying.

Jesus was not the kind of Messiah the priests and scribes wanted. The Messiah certainly wouldn’t throw things around in the temple and act out God’s judgment on it. So the children must be quieted, lest anyone get the idea that this deceiver really is the Son of David and thereby gain a following, take control of the temple and turn the world of Israel upside down. So the chief priests and the scribes become indignant. They tell Jesus, “Do you hear what these are saying?” The implication in the question is, “Well, if you do hear them, shut them up! You are not the Son of David!”

Jesus, though, responds to their question at face value. He simply says, “Yes.” Yes, he hears them, and he has no problem with what they’re saying. Now he has a question for the priests and scribes that will call into question their perceptive abilities. Jesus says his hearing is just fine, but he calls into question their reading ability. He asks them, “Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself’?” The citation is from Psalm 8:2. Just as the priests and scribes knew that Jesus heard the children, Jesus knows that they have read Psalm 8. Jesus says he hears, understands and endorses what the children are saying; now Jesus asks them if they hear, understand and endorse what the scriptures are saying.

In Psalm 8:2, the “praise” that the Lord has prepared for himself from children has the effect of confounding his enemies. The Hebrew word in Psalm 8:2 means “strength,” but the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses a word that means “praise.” The Hebrew word can also be used to imply something like “praise for his strength.” Jesus is saying that Psalm 8:2 can be applied to the children who are currently praising him, although in that psalm praise is prepared for the Lord, Yahweh, the one true God. The implication, then, is that *Jesus* is the Lord, Yahweh; *Jesus* is the one true God.

Another implication is that the priests and the scribes are the enemies of the Lord who are confounded by the children’s praise of the Lord, namely Jesus. Jesus is further saying that the scriptures, in Psalm 8:2, endorse the children, thereby lending further credence to their words.

The Lord has “prepared” children to praise him. In the temple, of all places, the adults should have been prepared to praise him, particularly the chief priests and scribes, experts concerning the temple and the

scriptures. But when the Lord returns to Jerusalem and enters the temple, as promised by the prophets, he hears not words of praise but words of anger. As it turns out, the children, in their innocence, reflect a better understanding of the intent of the temple and the scriptures than the experts do.

Earlier, during the triumphal entry, the adults were crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” It appears they are crying out no longer because if they were, the priests and scribes would have mentioned them to Jesus as well. Perhaps the actions of Jesus in the temple caused the adults to re-evaluate their assessment. Even so, after the cry of the adults has faded, the song of the children fills the temple. Jesus then leaves “them,” the priests and scribes. The Lord has returned to Jerusalem and to the temple but has nothing to do with the leaders of Israel or their temple.

Matthew tells us that Jesus left the city and lodged in Bethany. Why does Matthew inform us of the direction of Jesus’ departure and his eventual destination? It doesn’t seem at all integral to the story. Perhaps Matthew sees something symbolic in this, just as Jesus intended his disruption of the temple to be understood symbolically.

The prophet Ezekiel, just a few years before the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC, was given a vision of the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple and the city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:18-19, 11:22-23). When the temple was completed the Lord had filled it with his glory, which symbolized his dwelling with his people (2 Chronicles 5:11-14). But the people had since abandoned him, as can be seen in Jeremiah 7, so the Lord has left the temple, which made it just another building. Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord leave the temple through the east gate. Then he saw the glory cloud leave the city and stand over “the mountain which is east of the city.” That mountain would be the Mount of Olives. On the east slope of the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, is a little town called Bethany. Therefore, as the glory of the Lord left the temple and Jerusalem to the east and stood over the Mount of Olives, Jesus leaves the temple and Jerusalem and lodges on the Mount of Olives.

In Ezekiel’s day, it became clear that the presence of the Lord had left the temple, which meant it was just another building and could, therefore, be destroyed. The prophets, though, looked forward to the day when the Lord would return to Jerusalem and to his temple. Jesus, by understanding praise of the Lord in Psalm 8 to be applicable to him, has, in a subtle way, just proclaimed himself to be the Lord. But when he returns to Jerusalem and the temple, he finds people who are not oriented toward the Lord, just as the people in the days of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The first temple, abandoned by the Lord, was destroyed by the Babylonians. It was later rebuilt under Zerubbabel and embellished by Herod, but it, too, ended up being just another building. Jesus, the Lord, could not find a home there. So he lodged elsewhere—east of the city, just as the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel’s day. Once again, Jesus is acting out judgment on the temple—just as the Babylonians destroyed the first temple, the Romans would destroy this one.

The Lord returns, but not to dwell in the temple. It is corrupt beyond salvation. However, he intends on building a new temple. After all, he is the Son of David, the temple builder. Now is the new age, the time of inclusion. The pilgrims are flocking to a different kind of temple, to a different kind of Jerusalem (Ephesians 2:19-22, Galatians 4:25, Hebrews 12:22). They’re coming not to a physical building or city but a spiritual temple and city because they want the presence of the Lord who dwells there. They’re coming for Jesus.

Jesus gives us himself

The priests were experts in worship. The scribes were experts in the scriptures. In our worship and in our study, have we still somehow missed Jesus? Jesus told his countrymen, “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of me; and you are unwilling to come to me, that you may have life” (John 5:39-40). Has something other than Jesus become the focus of our lives?

If so, we may also have become somewhat exclusive, like the priests and scribes. If we’ve become exclusive, we’ve lost site of our vocation, as a kingdom of priests and as a temple of living stones, to embrace the outcasts of society, to introduce them to the healing presence of Jesus and enfold them into the community of God.

Jesus asks us questions that, perhaps, we’d rather not answer. The kind of questions that he asked the chief priests and the scribes, such as, “Have you never understood what you’re reading? Do you hear, really hear, the song of the children? Do you know that the scriptures and the children are speaking of me? If you know that, then why are you living this way?” At times, I know I’ve felt Jesus ask me such questions. Twelve years ago I was studying the book of Galatians and understood that it was speaking of the grace of God. For the first time, though, it struck me: I understood it, but I didn’t understand it. I understood that it was speaking about the grace of God, but I didn’t understand the grace of God. I realized that if I believed in the grace of God—really believed in it—my life would be taking a different shape.

About 10 years ago, while visiting some friends, their little girl came up to me and began tenderly stroking my face. She continued for quite some time, rather persistently even. Eventually, she touched something in my soul and I could hold it in no longer and began to weep. As I look back, I now realize that I had been holding onto a vision for my life that was not in line with God’s will, and that the Lord was using a child, in her gentle innocence, to illustrate my dilemma.

How do we respond to the children in our midst? After all, they are the ones who will carry the gospel into the next generation. The church is for them as least as much as it is for the adults. Do we think they have words of truth to speak to us, or do we insist on their silence? Sometimes, children in their innocence reflect a better understanding of truth than the experts do. Listen to them, and they’ll tell you about Jesus.

The church, of all places, is the place where people should be prepared to receive and praise Jesus. Sometimes, though, we offer faint praise and conceal deep-seated resentment because Jesus has not fallen in line with our aspirations. If Jesus disrupts our agendas, it’s only to give us something better. He does so to give us himself. He himself is the new and better agenda.

The evidence of his greatness is all around us, but often catches us by surprise. We don’t expect children to proclaim the greatness of Jesus, but sometimes they do. They’ll say something profoundly simple. They’ll gaze at us or touch us in a peculiar way. In so doing, they access our souls. And somehow, we know that something is wrong. Obscure verses of scripture, read but forgotten, brought to mind again, point us to Jesus. Circumstances play themselves out in oddly coincidental ways.

We may try to ignore the children, discard the scripture or interpret the circumstances in a way that excludes Jesus, but he is making his presence known. He beckons to our hearts, where he wants to build something beautiful that centers on himself.

In Franco Zeffirelli's film, "Brother Sun, Sister Moon," the story of St. Francis of Assisi, Francesco's life is disrupted. He enjoys his family and friends and the family business, and God endorses it all, for all he can tell. Then he and the other sons of Assisi go off to war, and Francesco returns disillusioned. He withdraws from life and keeps only to himself. He no longer goes to mass. Instead, he wanders in the fields to smell the flowers and watch the birds. But still, he can't make sense of life. The tables and seats of his life have been overturned, so to speak.

Finally, his father forces him to go to mass, but he finds it completely stifling. He's troubled by the separation he sees between the rich and poor worshippers. The crucifix in the cathedral transfixes him. In the image, Christ has his eyes closed. Francesco is obviously troubled by false worship in the cathedral and by the presence of this image of Christ. He begins perspiring and loosening his clothes, haunted by the mindless worship and the image of Christ. He can't take his eyes off the image.

Then he sees a vision of the image of Christ with his eyes open, he breaks through to a new understanding and he walks out in the middle of the service a changed man—a free man. He has seen Jesus, and that's what freed him. His life was disrupted, but out of the disruption, he found Jesus. (2)

The better agenda

Jesus told the Pharisees, "But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). Jesus is greater than our "temples." He's greater than our agendas. He is the presence of the Lord. He has come not to endorse our agendas but to give us a better one. He has come to give us himself.

We may hear the questions that Malachi asked: "But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears?" The answer is: We can! We can endure the day of the Lord's coming and we can stand to greet him because we long for him to refine and purify us, that we might receive him and in return give him the righteous offering of our lives.

NOTES

(1) San Jose Mercury News, Aug. 10, 1995

(2) Brother Sun, Sister Moon, © 1972 International Films SPA.

Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE ("NASB"). © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, 1996 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Catalog No. 4815
Matthew 21:12-17

Fifth Message
Scott Grant
April 4, 2004

[Back to Index page](#)

Copyright © 2004 [Discovery Publishing](#) the publications ministry of [Peninsula Bible Church](#). This data file is the sole property of Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain the above copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale without the prior written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made, in writing, and addressed to: Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306-3695.