

This article is produced as part of a series for Easter 2024.
For each day of the Easter week, an article is written either by one of our Ministers or Lay Preachers.
Enjoy and Happy Easter!



Cleansing the Temple

(Matthew 21:12-13 = Mark 11:15-17 = Luke 19:45-46 = John 2:13-17)

The holiest, innermost part of us is where our loving LORD lives and rules. He cannot influence us to any great extent, if we have our priorities wrong, and adamantly obsess about illusions and delusions.

The Christian Apostle Paul teaches us that our body is a God-given temple of the Holy Spirit and that Christ lives in us. (1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 2:20) Jesus promises that we will dwell in him and he will dwell in us. (John 15:4-5, 7) Jesus talks of the Temple as being his body. (John 2:20) The Psalmist tells us that the LORD or the Divine Presence is near to all who call on him in truth. (Psalm 145:18) Jesus tells us that the priority of the Jews is for the temple to be a house of prayer. (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46) Prayer is allowing God to talk to us. In the Biblical symbolism of Isaiah 56:7, burnt offerings are symbolic of worship from our hearts and sacrifices are symbolic of worship from our minds. The Temple is our inner sacred space, where the Divine is: a place to commune with God and be refreshed and re-invigorated:

*“Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
your holy temple.” (Psalm 65:4)*

Jesus mentions this sacred space, by calling it our inner room. (Matthew 6:6) The Bible continually pushes us inwards to what is happening in our hearts and minds.

The Jerusalem Temple, like us, had lost its way. The Divine doesn't need outward show of extravagant rituals, such as the slaughter of animals – which was tolerated but not acceptable in heaven, which Swedenborg tells us wasn't required by the LORD any way. He requires mercy, obedience, “a broken and contrite heart”, good judgment and righteousness, rather than ritual. Again, the Bible turns us inward to our spirit. Are the gentle, domesticated

feelings of love, symbolised by the sacrificial animals active? It is not the LORD who needs our heartfelt worship, but to commune with us we need to show that love, gentleness, patience, humility, teachability and other gentle virtues, which we receive from the Divine, are important in our lives. It is these Divine virtues which challenge our delusions and illusions (AC 9938:2,3), quietly, non-violently inspiring us to let go of them.

As already said, in Biblical symbolism a temple symbolises the holiest place inside us, in which the Divine dwells and seeks to share a flow of ideas appropriate to our personal circumstances. Unkindness and selfishness supported by wrong ideas and beliefs can limit or stop such inspiration becoming a reality in our lives. We can glory in past moments of closeness to God, but not endeavour to seek his presence now. Sadly we can be self-satisfied with our current knowledge of the Bible or our position in the church, and not worry about continuing to improve and advance.

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