

**Corruption of the Priesthood**      Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time      Friday, November 23, 2018      Rev 10:8-11;      **Lk 19:45-48**      (St. Clement I, pope and martyr)      (Jesus' view is the only real worship of God is a gift of self, sacrifice of self.)

**“It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.’”**

Jesus did not invent this term, “den of thieves.” It had already been used by at least one of the prophets. It was in the air, so to speak, **implying that the temple and moreover the temple priesthood had become corrupted.** The community at Qumran to which John the Baptist most probably belonged and Jesus most probably was associated with in some way, sometimes called the **Essenes**, were a group of messianic Jews awaiting deliverance, who **believed that the greatest obstacle to deliverance and to the establishment of the kingdom of God was the temple and the priesthood**, which by the way, was in alliance with the Roman authorities, although this alliance was always moving. So for a while it seems Jesus had a great deal of freedom to preach as he wanted and to do as he wanted even in the temple precincts, but then after some shifts in Rome and a realigning of various factors and factions **the priesthood had more freedom and Jesus' ministry was over.** This is a very likely scenario.

But here the point Jesus is making is there's something wrong with the way we are doing things. God is not really being honored. People are following ways of doing things, ritual sacrifices, temple worship, but their heart isn't in it, as one of his more salient points. Now Jesus himself is the example of what it means to have heartfelt worship. Jesus kicks out from the temple all these animals because animals are at best symbols, but even then not necessarily, of one's own gift of self. Whereas **Jesus' view is the only real worship of God is a gift of self, sacrifice of self.** He leads the way. He becomes the blood of the atonement; that's his very words at the Last Supper: “Take and drink, this is my blood poured out for you.” Well on the Day of Atonement the

high priest poured out the blood of atonement, **Jesus clearly taking the role of becoming the atonement**, of bringing about a new at-one-ment, as it were, **reconciliation, between God and his people**. And this is what these words are indicating.

We know that when Jesus went to pray, he didn't go to pray at the temple. He preached in the temple. **When he when to pray he went to the Garden of Gethsemane**, which is at the bottom of the Mount of Olives. And that is according to a prophecy of Malachi, that **the Shakina**, the holy covering, which was supposed to hover over the temple had **moved, because of the corruption of the priesthood**, onto the nearby Mount of Olives. So behind the words there's a great deal going on, a great deal of drama and **a great deal of movement. And for Jesus it's toward the Father**. For many others it was in some other direction.