

HOLY TRASH CANS

A Devotional Meditation on Tzav (Command)

Leviticus 6:8-8:36; Jeremiah 7:21-8:3, 9:23-24; Isaiah 56:6-7; Zechariah 14:20-21;
Mark 11:15-17; Romans 9:14-26; Revelation 21:22-27

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Are all the trash cans in Jerusalem going to be holy one day? That's what I heard from the Bible teacher in our Christian high school. He said things like that to get us interested in the biblical subject of the day. His subject on that occasion came from the concluding verses of Zechariah:

In that day "Holy to *ADONAI*" will be inscribed on the bells of the horses and the pots in House of *ADONAI* will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. In fact every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be Holy to *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* [LORD of Hosts], so that everyone who comes to sacrifice will take them, and cook in them. In that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the House of *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*.

Zechariah 14:20-21 TLV

My teacher's humorous comment introduced a discussion of the Messianic Age when nothing unholy would exist in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The point I believe he wanted to get across was that when Jesus returns, all the world will be made right, down to the last details of the pots and utensils in the place where Messiah will reign for a thousand years.

I remember enjoying that class because it conveyed hope for our future. It was one of the few occasions when we actually discussed what life would be like in the Messianic Age. Teachings and conversations on the End Times usually focus on the signs pointing to Messiah's return. There's very little talk of what happens afterward, and that is a problem. In my younger years, talk of the End Times was exciting, but also depressing because I was concerned about missing out on important life events, like marriage, fatherhood, and a successful career. That's why I appreciate that light-hearted discussion about holy trash cans because it set me on a path of inquiry beyond the hopelessness of End Times destruction toward the joyful anticipation of global rebirth in the age of Messiah.

This message of hope is there in the last chapter of Zechariah. As the nations of the earth are gathered against the Jerusalem, the last outpost of God's people, Messiah touches down on the Mount of Olives, wins the war, and begins the reconstruction of the world. The holy pots speak to the thoroughness of that reconstruction. They are holy because the entire city is holy, which is why in John's vision of the New Jerusalem he explains that nothing unholy shall ever enter it.



Photo by Scott Beale / The Laughing Squid, June 26, 2009, [via Flickr](#).

The whole city becomes a holy precinct, where God's Covenant Nation of Priests mediate between Him and the nations as they come up to worship. They won't need to buy sanctified vessels for the offerings they bring, which is why there will be no "Canaanites" in the House of God. That term could refer to the depraved, violent people who defiled God's Land to the point that He commanded His people Israel to eradicate them, but it also refers to merchants engaged in buying and selling sanctified items to worshippers. Messiah Yeshua had something to say about such people:

Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the Temple and started to drive out those selling and buying in the Temple. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those selling doves, and He wouldn't let anyone carry goods through the Temple. And He began to teach them, saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

Mark 11:15-17 TLV

The problem Yeshua addressed was not that people were engaged in trade of common items for items and animals set apart for use in the Temple. That was a necessary exchange, because the Temple was set apart from the rest of the world as a sanctified space where heaven and earth met. Only the priests and Levites could handle the holy things, and only people who had made themselves clean, or sanctified and acceptable, could enter the Temple to present their offerings. The process of being approved for entry, and of having approved offerings and utensils, required considerable effort and expense. Yeshua wasn't objecting to that. He was objecting to the way it was done, by merchants who obstructed the access of worshippers, and profited from the exchange.

It's a perilous thing to trifle with the holy. That's why Yeshua was so upset – why zeal for His Father's house consumed Him. The people who so casually bought and sold holy things disregarded that peril. So do we, sadly. The holy things are so special that they cannot be used for anything else, and often can only be used once. That's what we learn from God's instructions about the holy sin offering:

ADONAI spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying: 'This is the *Torah* of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering is to be slaughtered before *ADONAI*. It is most holy. The *kohen* [priest] who offers it for sin should eat it. It must be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting. Whatever touches its flesh will be holy. When any of its blood is splattered on a garment, you are to wash it in a holy place. But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled is to be broken, and if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, it is to be scoured, then rinsed in water. Every male among the *kohanim* is to eat of it—it is most holy. But no sin offering from which any of the blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place is to be eaten—it must be burned up with fire.'

Leviticus 6:18-23 (25-30) TLV

I don't know if the holy vessels in Messiah's Jerusalem will be of earthenware or bronze, but they will be set apart for this single use. That means the entire city will be set apart, which means every person, animal, utensil, article of clothing, and appliance will

be set apart. Such was the case for the priests and Levites serving in the Tabernacle in the days of Moses, and in the Temple in the days of the kings, and so it shall be in the days of Messiah, when He presides as Son of David over the priests in the Temple, and oversees the cleansing of the earth from Jerusalem.

That kind of society requires a degree of sanctification the world has never seen, and which can only be completed when our hearts are made new. After all, we, the redeemed of the Commonwealth of Israel are the ones who will carry out the cleansing of the earth after all these millennia of desecration. That's why we have to be converted into holy vessels. We get a picture of that now, even in our imperfection. We are like those earthenware vessels that carry the holy substance, but then must be broken to pieces after our usefulness in this life is finished.

We're going to be shattered no matter what we do. Whether we are vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy, we will eventually go the way of all flesh. The shards of our lives tell stories to those who come after us. The hope we impart to them is the hope of resurrection, when all the shards are gathered up and remade into indestructible holy vessels.