

The Court of the Gentiles

Although the “Court of the Gentiles” is not specifically translated in various versions of the Bible, the “Court of the Nations” is mentioned. Generally speaking, when the ancient Jewish reference to the Nations was a specific reference the all non-jews, and included references to “the Greeks” and “the Gentiles”.

Some background for the Catholic reference to the Court of the Gentiles as the location of Christ’s cleaning of the Temple are following:

On the occasion for Pope Benedict's reflection on Christ's expulsion of the money-lenders, or what the Pope calls "the cleansing of the Temple", he calls attention to "the universalist vision of the Prophet Isaiah (56:7) of a future in which all peoples come together in the house of God to worship the Lord as the one God", and then he goes on to say:

In the layout of the Temple, the vast Court of the Gentiles in which this whole episode [the expulsion of the money changers or cleansing of the Temple] takes place is the open space to which the whole world is invited, in order to pray there to the one God.... In answer to the question of what Jesus actually brought to mankind, we argued in Part One of this book that he brought God to the nations (p. 44). According to his own testimony, this fundamental purpose is what lies behind the cleansing of the Temple: to remove whatever obstacles there may be to the common recognition and worship of God—and thereby to open up a space for common worship.

The Court of the Gentiles is not explicitly named in the Bible, but it is referenced indirectly in a few passages that describe the layout of the Jerusalem Temple and its purpose.

1. ****Mark 11:15-17****: This passage describes Jesus driving out those who were buying and selling in the Temple. He refers to the Temple as "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17), which implies the inclusion of the Gentiles, who would gather in the Court of the Gentiles.
2. ****Matthew 21:12-13****: Similar to the passage in Mark, this account narrates Jesus cleansing the Temple and includes His statement about the Temple being a house of prayer.
3. ****Luke 19:45-46****: This also mirrors the accounts found in Mark and Matthew, emphasizing the commercialization occurring in the Temple area, indicating it was meant for prayer and worship.
4. ****John 10:23****: This passage notes that Jesus was walking in the Temple in Solomon's colonnade, which was part of the overall Temple complex, including the area designated for Gentiles.

The descriptions of the Temple in these New Testament passages reflect an understanding of the Temple as having different courts, with the Court of the Gentiles being the outermost area where non-Jews could worship. The layout and divisions of the Temple are more explicitly detailed in the Old Testament, notably in descriptions within the books of Exodus and Ezekiel, though they do not specifically mention the Court of the Gentiles by name.