

The Temple Of God

John 2:18-22

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¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Imagine walking into a church building one Sunday. And the moment you walk in you see tables for buying groceries and meat, you see a table for banking. You see all kinds of commercial activity. You see people bargaining. You see all kinds of commotion in the foyer. You would probably question what has become of the place. And that would be most dishonorable for a place of worship.

Well, when Jesus walked into the temple, this is what he saw. He saw cattle bellowing. He saw sheep bleating. He saw pigeons and heard the flutter of their wings. He saw the money changers and heard the sound of coins. The temple looked a house of trade. But the place was a temple – the place where *worship* was supposed to take place. The place where people would come to set their minds on noble things like holiness, love, purity, praise, thanks giving, adoration, penitence and prayer. In Jesus’ own words, the temple authorities had allowed the temple premises to become “*den of robbers*”. (Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46).

The Temple in Jerusalem was the central focus of Judaism. Josephus the historian writes that there was a time when the office of high priest was sold to the highest bidder in the 2nd century B.C.

And this temple in the first century had become a place of corruption. The corruption reached to the level of apostasy. Apostasy simply means the abandonment of the values for the worship of God.

And what did Jesus do? He took action. Jesus drove out the money changers. And what did Jesus say to those money changers? Verse sixteen - “*Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.*”

And the religious leaders were seeing and observing all that Jesus was doing. They are enraged. They were mad. They were mad for at least *two* reasons – They saw Jesus as someone taking authority in his own hands and they saw Jesus’ actions as a threat to their economic system. Apparently, the authorities profited from the buying and selling of animals for temple sacrifices.

Our passage begins in the aftermath of Jesus cleansing the temple. This passage is really about true worship and who is the object of our worship.

Let's look at verse eighteen and nineteen.

¹⁸ *So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"* ¹⁹ *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

Their question to Jesus was about his authority. What Jesus did was quite revolutionary for his day because they saw Jesus undermining the whole temple system – the priesthood, the Pharisees, the scribes and whole establishment. They knew enough about the warnings of the prophets in the Old Testament that God desired true worship but the place had become corrupt.

Their questioning is reactionary. They see Jesus driving out the money changers. They have no desire to do some reflection on their part. Because the place of prayer had become a travesty and a mockery. This is what they demand from Jesus. If you really have the authority to clean out the place. If you really are the Son of God, then prove your credentials. Show us a sign. Give us a miracle. Display your authority by a show of your power.

And what Jesus says in response is a little puzzling but brilliant. Jesus literally says, *"You all destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"*.

I have at least *two* observations here:

1. First observation: In the beginning of the Gospel of John we see how much authority and power Jesus has. *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"* John 1:3. Surely, Jesus has authority over all material things as well.
2. Second observation: Remember that saying, *"Be careful what you wish for or ask"*. The leaders ask for a sign and they get too much in return for asking. Jesus is like, fine, you want a sign. Here is the promise of a sign you just cannot ignore. The religious leaders were already destroying the purity of the temple. If you notice they did not disagree to what Jesus did – the cleansing of the temple or what Jesus said that the temple was a place of prayer. Their issue was with Jesus. His identity. He was not part of them. They thought he was the son of a poor carpenter. They probably thought, *"this man is acting like he owns the place"*. And yes, he is Lord of heaven and Earth. So, let's demand some proof. So Jesus' answer is puzzling but it is brilliant because if they ask how he had the authority to cleanse the temple, Jesus claims he has the authority and power that he can rebuild the temple in three days. If Jesus claims to rebuild the temple in three days, surely he has authority to cleanse the temple.

Now, what do Jews do? Do they take his offer?
Let's look at verses twenty through twenty-one.

²⁰ *The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"* ²¹ *But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*

It was too much for them to process. Another translation says, "the temple has been under construction for forty-six years". It is said the temple was finally completed in 65 A.D. Herod built this temple. So Jesus' claim is astounding and unbelievable to them. Again, they cannot fault Jesus for such a claim because they asked for it.

But Jesus really was speaking about the temple of his body.
This is crucial.

A few observations:

1. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything the prophets of old predicted and prophesied. Jesus is the true Temple of God. Jesus is worthy of worship. Jesus is the High Priest who mediates for you and I. If you recall the words of Jesus to the woman at the well ²¹ *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* John 4:21-24
2. Jesus is also the True Sacrifice. His life was taken to pay for your sin and mine. The physical body of Jesus was without sin. *"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"*. Colossians 2:9 Yet Jesus was marred and disfigured for sinners. Our bodies are still tainted with sin. But because of his death and resurrection, those who have trusted in him as their Savior have been united spiritually with him. We will one day be raised just like he was.
3. Paul writes that your body is temple of the Holy Spirit. So, from a practical standpoint, we must be so careful with our bodies. God has given us the wonderful privilege of giving us Holy Spirit. Last week we saw that it is Jesus who baptizes, who immerses us with the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in Romans 12:1 *"to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"*. Our bodies are meant for God.
4. Collectively we are the "body" of Christ. We come together to worship Christ and exalt Christ.

So the Jews are shocked by Jesus' answer. But the real meaning of the temple is hidden from them. Even his disciples did not understand it initially.

So, John the author writes that they understood the meaning of what Jesus at a later time.

Verse twenty-two:

²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

This is a wonderful way that the author ends this passage. The Holy Spirit reminds them of Scripture. Scripture was fulfilled in Jesus. And we are not given the specific scripture they believed but is said Psalm 16 verse 11 is most likely what they had in mind.

Jesus said these words to his disciples in John 16.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”.

What a great privilege it to have the Holy Spirit. He helps us remember the words of God. And his Word sustains us in times of need.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **The Temple Of God?** John 1:18-22

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What hope does the resurrection of Jesus offer us now and in the future? 1 Corinthians 6:14-15, 15:17-19, 2 Corinthians 4:14, 5:15, Ephesians 2:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:10,

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. How are we to worship God in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus? Ephesians 2:13-18, Hebrews 4:14-16
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Is there any anything that needs to be driven out of your life so you live a pure and holy life? What habits can you adopt so that the Holy Spirit helps you to remember Scripture?