

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Desecration and Destruction of the Temple

Introduction

Many years ago, I went to hear George Verwer, the founder of Operation Mobilization, speak. Verwer's messages, wherever he spoke had to do with living the balanced Christian life. Prior to one conference his daughter gave him a tie clip. It was a carpenter's level. She said, "Dad, I think your getting a little over-balanced on this balance thing!" John is over-balanced about the glory of Jesus. It's all about Jesus' glory. That's his thing. That's what he wants us to see. In the first chapter, John told us about Christ's creative glory. When Jesus went to the wedding in Cana, John pointed out Christ's glory to transform. We also learned from the account of Christ's commitment to the purposes and the timing of his Father. At the end of his earthly life, it is that commitment that glorified the Father.

From the wedding, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover and he enters the Temple.

Read Text: [John 2:13-22](#)

Christ's Indignation

What Jesus saw in the Temple, disturbed him greatly. The Temple was being used for commercial activity. Jesus had been here before. When he was 8 days old he met Simeon and Anna. When he was 12 he sat and interacted with the Jewish theologians. Now he enters again.

The Temple was built by Herod the Great who ruled from 37 B.C. to A.D. 4. We learn that it took 46 years to build the Temple. John also saw the Temple and he also saw its demise. In A.D. 70, Titus entered with his armies and destroyed it. But at this time in history, in Jerusalem, the population could have swelled from 60,000 people to 250,000 people. "By selling oxen, sheep, and pigeons, the merchants, as well as the money-changers, rendered a service to those who had traveled to Jerusalem from afar, enabling them to buy the animals on-site rather than having to carry them for long distances."¹

My memory isn't always good, but one thing I tend to remember is when I have taught something in the past and later learned it wasn't true. I remember teaching this story in a SS class and I taught that the problem with this activity was not the sale of animals, nor the exchange of currency, but that the vendors were gouging the people. A lady asked, "How do you know that?" I fumbled my way through the answer, quoting some prominent commentators. The truth is that this text clearly teaches that this was not the thing that got Christ's anger. No, he said, ". . . *Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade*" (John 2:16b, ESV). "Jesus clearly was outraged by the hullabaloo,

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). [The ESV Study Bible](#) (p. 2023). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

believing they had desecrated the temple with this buying and selling.”² So he cleaned house! “Stop turning my Father’s house into a market place!”

Christ’s Motive

We learn, through John what Christ’s motive was. In verse 17 we read, “*His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’*” (John 2:17, ESV). Now we are not certain if the disciples knew that at the time or later. But the motive is clear: Zeal for the Father’s house consumes him. John quotes [Psalm 69:9](#) which is David’s explanation as to why he experienced so much opposition in his life ([Psalm 69:7-9](#)).

The Temple as the place where God met with his worshippers. The Temple was the place where sinners would be accepted by God because there was a bloody sacrifice contained within. Jesus’ passion and concern for his Father’s Temple related to his desire for pure worship and a right relationship with God through the divinely appointed place that served as the only place where sinful man could be accepted by a holy God. That passion invited the anger of the Jewish leaders. That passion angers ungodly people today!

Christ’s Meaning

The Jews asked Jesus a normal question. What right do you have to come in and do this? “Give us evidence (a sign) that you are authorized by God to do this?” they asked. He says,

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19b, ESV).

Most of the time when Jesus spoke profoundly of spiritual things, most people only saw it through human reasoning – and it didn’t make sense. The Jews likely laughed. “It took 46 years to build and you can destroy it and you can rebuild it in 3 days?” they mocked.

Now here we come to one of those divinely inspired interpretations of the Holy Spirit. John writes, “*But he was speaking about the temple of his body*” (John 2:21, ESV). Notice a few key points:

1. Jesus did not say that he would destroy the Temple. (Jesus was accused of saying that at his trial. ([Mark 14:58; 15:29](#));
2. The implied pronoun in the sentence is “You”. “You destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up.”
3. Jesus is making an implicit accusation (that history will support). It is that Jesus was prophetically asserting that these Jews will destroy the Temple (i.e., his body), but he will raise it up in 3 days.

² Osborne, G. R. (2018). [John: Verse by Verse](#). (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 68). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

As Scripture and history will prove, this prophecy of Jesus was accomplished. Hear Peter, the Apostle: *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it”* (Acts 2:23–24, ESV).

Jesus the Temple, the one who was the fullness of God, the one whom sinners could come to through his shed blood and become acceptable to God – this Jesus was killed and on the third day rose again. Jesus clearly saw the connection between the Temple and his body as spiritual, or typological, as representing something glorious. Stated otherwise, Jesus saw the Jewish Temple as ultimately pointing to himself. The Temple is the road sign; Jesus is the real thing.

John’s Comment

Again, we have an important comment by the inspired author: *“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.”* (John 2:22, ESV). From this we learn a couple things:

- #1. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ provides the ultimate explanation for who he is and what he said and did.
- #2. When the disciples after the resurrection reflected on this event, it made sense to them and it stirred up faith in the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Notice what we have just experienced. The encounter of Jesus in the Temple was intended to show us his glory – that he is the ultimate Temple – the ultimate place where sinners can meet with God. And as John intended, he showed how this event, when spiritually discerned, stimulate faith – faith in the Scripture and the words of Jesus.

John uses the singular when he writes “scripture”. We are not certain what he had in mind but I’m guessing he had the same thing in mind in [Chapter 20:9](#). After the death of Christ and prior to the resurrection, John records these words: *“for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”* (John 20:9, ESV). I’m guessing he means the same thing. Once Jesus rose from the dead, the Old Testament prophecies of his resurrection proved to be true. Also, all the times that Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection also proved true.

Application

I think there are some obvious points of application that we should consider:

- #1. Like the Temple, all the promises, hopes and dreams of Israel were to find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

#2. Jesus is the Temple. He is the One where we must go to find acceptance with God. He is the focal point of our worship. It is in Christ we find the shed blood that gives us access to the Father.

#3. Thirdly Jesus is concerned about the purity of His Father's House. As the revelation of God's redemptive plan moves forward we realize that since the ascension of Jesus, His body is the Temple. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV),

¹⁶ "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

The "you" is plural, meaning all of you – all of us, who are in Christ, who have His Spirit. Jesus is very concerned about our purity – purity of worship, purity of thought, and purity of behavior. Now we know what Peter meant when he wrote, *"For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* (1 Peter 4:17, ESV)

#4. Fourthly, the resurrection of Christ validates all that he has said about the Gospel; and the resurrection of Christ attests to the reliability and truthfulness of Scripture. It is interesting that when Jesus rose again, it was this event that sparked trust in Christ's word and in the Scripture.