

The Gospel of John: Part 08, The Clearing

John 2:13–22 (ESV) — *13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” 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.*¹

2 Temple Clearings

Today we are in the second chapter of John verses 13-22 and we are going to cover the clearing of the temple by Jesus. Now here is where we come to the first controversy between the synoptics and John’s gospel. The problem is simple; John is recording this happening at the start of Jesus’ ministry. Matthew², Mark³, and Luke⁴ record it happening at the end. The simple solution and the one I believe, along with many others⁵ is that there are 2 temple clearings one at the beginning and one at the end

¹ John 2:13–22

² Matthew 21:12-17

³ Mark 11:12-19

⁴ Luke 19:45-48

⁵ Luther, Macarthur, Ironside, Morris, Carson, Lightfoot and more

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of Jesus' ministry. I will mention some of the reasons some scholars speak out so strongly^{6,7} against two temple clearings, but I am going to mainly focus on the fact that there are 2.

If you want some reading on this E. Randolph Richards has an article from the Trinity Journal of Theology⁸ that goes into 25 pages of more depth than I'm going to cover. I will use some of his argument without going into too much depth.

Arguments against 2 Clearings

The biggest argument against this happening twice is that they did not arrest Jesus. The reason it is believed by some scholars that John placed the temple clearing here is for theological reasons. They feel that John placed the temple clearing here because he had just discussed purification in the scripture about the water to wine and he is more concerned with theology than chronology. I disagree.

First, there are several differences in the account here and the account in the synoptic gospels. Second, In the synoptic gospels they record what Jesus said here the day after, during the trial⁹, yet they are having disagreements about what exactly he said¹⁰. If it had happened three years previously that makes sense. If it happened the day before that doesn't. Thirdly, John says the next day three times in chapter 1, and chapter 2 starts with on the third day¹¹. John seems to be interested in chronology an awful lot, I don't see why he would suddenly say, I think I'm going to just forget about chronology.

⁶ Gerald Borchert calls the idea of two temple clearings "a historiographic monstrosity"(see footnote 7)

⁷ Gerald L. Borchert, vol. 25A, *John 1-11*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 160.

⁸ http://www.tiu.edu/files/divinity/connect/trinityjournal/TJ_pgs_19-43_Spring_2008.pdf

⁹ Matthew 26:61

¹⁰ Mark 14:58-59

¹¹ John 1:29, 35, 43, 2:1

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As far as the argument about, why did they not arrest him. We are talking about a man that walked through a crowd that was wanting to seize Him yet mysteriously they couldn't¹². So let's move on to the text and we may look at that more further on.

The Passover

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. H.A. Ironside¹³ points out that in the Old Testament it was referred to as the Passover of the Lord, but the Jews have grown so far away from God that now it is just the Passover of the Jews. In other words it is an empty festival that does not honor its true purpose of worship and thanksgiving. Jewish males over the age of 19 were required to make the pilgrimage to the temple to sacrifice an animal in remembrance of the Lord's Passover. The Passover was celebrated annually on the fourteenth day of Nisan which would correspond with March/April on our calendar.

The Passover as we talked about in an earlier lesson was what protected the Israelites from the last plague in Egypt. The Lord had sent His death angel to kill the firstborn of all the Egyptians. The Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb and rub its blood on the doorway of their house so the death Angel would Pass over their house. Afterwards God commanded them to do this festival annually to remind them of His delivering them from Egypt and to remind them of God's wrath passing over because of the blood of the lamb.

So that is why Jesus is going to the temple. **He is going to give thanks for the salvation that God provided.**

¹² Luke 4:29-30

¹³ H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Gospel of John* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1942), 83-84

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The Temple

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. We need to first picture the temple. The ESV Study Bible has an excellent illustration of the temple mount. I'm going to use it to help you see what exactly is going on here. First we need to look at the two words the bible¹⁴ uses for temple. They are *hieron* and *naos*. *Naos* refers to the actual temple that contains the Holy Place and Most Holy Placeⁱ. *Hieron* refers to the Temple Complexⁱⁱ or the Temple Mountⁱⁱⁱ. Temple here, being the word *hieron*, which gives a broader definition, allows us to come to the conclusion that the logical place for the market to be setup would be in the Court of Gentiles, since it is the most likely place. The ESV Study Bible does suggest that it was at the Royal Stoa and that is a possibility, but most commentators feel it was the Court of Gentiles.

The Jewish people had to travel to Jerusalem to sacrifice an animal, specifically a lamb for the Passover¹⁵, but lambs and goats which are referred to interchangeably were used for sin offerings¹⁶. The burnt offerings called for oxen¹⁷ and doves could be used for the poor¹⁸ in place of lambs. So there was a need for the animals, travelers from afar could not always bring an animal, so there was a purpose here. That being said Sometimes God expects us to do stuff that isn't exactly easy or convenient.

Why Were The Animals There?

Why were the animals in the temple? It appears that around this time the high priest Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin got into an argument. The Sanhedrin had been meeting

¹⁴ <http://www.orthodox.com/html/bscleans.html> see section 2

¹⁵ Exodus 23:14-17

¹⁶ Leviticus 5:6

¹⁷ Numbers 7

¹⁸ Leviticus 5:7

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in the Chamber of Hewn Stone¹⁹. Due to this argument Caiaphas refused to let them continue meeting there. It appears they started meeting in the center apse of the Royal Stoa at the permission of the owners of the animal markets. It is believed as retaliation for them being given a meeting area so close to the temple; Caiaphas had allowed the animal sellers competition to sell in the Court of Gentiles²⁰. The animal sellers that gave the Sanhedrin permission to meet at the Royal Stoa sold animals near the Mount of Olives. So keep in mind as we are reading this passage that the animal markets here were a new thing and many probably worried about God's view of this new thing.

The money changers

The money changers were there because a Jewish man was required to pay the temple tax in Jewish money. This was due to several reasons such as; the Jewish money had a higher silver content, and did not contain the images of pagan gods or symbols, or the emperor's image on the coinage. The money changers were known for charging very high interest rates as high as 12.5 %²¹ which was forbidden²² in the scriptures.

The Scene

So let's picture the scene. Jesus, the Son of God walks into the Temple of His Father to worship. As He walks through the courts towards the temple, He is praying in His head. The sounds of animals pierce His prayers. The arguing and bartering of traders breaks the tranquility of worship. As He thinks of His mission and why he is here verses from Psalm 69 go through His mind. He thinks of what He is about to suffer, the pain that is to come. He calls out in His mind, "*Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to*

¹⁹ see illustration ii

²⁰ <http://related.springerprotocols.com/lp/de-gruyter/the-historicity-of-the-gospel-account-of-the-cleansing-of-the-temple-rotHGrspeV>

²¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 74]²¹

²² Exodus 22:25

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my neck. I sink in deep mire,"²³, My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God...For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.²⁴

Jesus picks up strands of cord from the ground that litter the temple. Tears for the lack of reverence they give God drop from his eyes as he carefully weaves them together. The disciples stare on wondering what their teacher is doing. When suddenly he wields the whip he has made, chasing the animals out striking at the men who do not know God and are here to profane the worship for a profit. He turns and walks to the table of the money changers flips their tables over sending money everywhere. He looks at those selling pigeons and says, *"Take these things away; do not make my father's house a house of trade."*

The response

The Jews run to him, *"What sign do you show us for doing these things?"* Let's think about why they have this response. It has been 400 years since Malachi spoke. He was the last prophet to be heard. No prophet has been heard from in that time. All of a sudden John the Baptizer shows up prophesying, and today this man walks in and chases out the traders. These Jews are asking, "Are you a prophet, Did God send you?" They are not saying He does not have the right to do these things, **they are asking if He has the right.**

Jesus' answer was not what they expected. They expected Him to Say the Lord saith as the Old Testament prophets did and proclaim God's disapproval of this practice.

²³ Ps 69:1-2.

²⁴ Ps 69:6-9.

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They are expecting God to prove to them that He sent this man Jesus. Jesus did not proclaim He was a prophet, because he spoke with the very authority of God when He said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”*

To the Jews this made no sense whatsoever. What they did not realize, was that God was giving them the sign they asked for. In Deuteronomy 18:22 we have a test for prophets instructed by God. The scriptures say that a prophet should be tested before they believe Him. Not only will he tell them what God says, but he will prophesy an event and when it happens they will know the prophet was sent by God.

Jesus the Temple

Jesus is telling them several things in the simple statement, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* First as verse 21 tells us Jesus is referring to His body as the temple. When He said temple, they are thinking of where they go to worship God. Jesus is stating by referring to Himself as the temple that He is where they will go to worship God. This is important, because even today, if I ask you, “where do you go to worship God?”. Most will give me the name of a church. And do not get me wrong church is very important. It is a place where believers can gather, worship, fellowship, encourage and discipline each other. Everyone should belong to a church somewhere. **But**, the name of a church in response to, “Where do you worship?” is wrong.

You see we do not worship in a temple; we worship the temple that is Jesus. And that can be done anywhere. It should be done everywhere. Worship should not consist only of getting up Sunday and going to a building. If that is your definition of worship then you are in the same place these Jews are and you have replaced the worship of the Lord with the worship of the Christians.

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Worship should be everywhere. When your eyes open in the morning you should thank Jesus for the life He has given you. As you say goodbye to your wife and children for the day you should thank Jesus for the family He has given you. As you walk into the workplace you should thank Jesus for the ability to care for your family. If you go to school you should thank Jesus for the opportunity for an education so that in the future you will be able to provide. As you go through the day your worship should include being thankful for the other believers you come in contact with. Your actions should be a form of worship and you should worship by asking God for the opportunity to be a witness for Him.

We do not worship through a building, but through our risen saviour the Lord, Jesus the Christ. We do not worship a temple but God, Jesus. Second, Jesus is giving them a prophesy they can test. He is saying I will be destroyed, but I will rise in three days. It is important to also notice the wording here, "*I will raise it up.*" Jesus is saying you ask what authority I have. I have the authority over life and death. I will bring myself back to life because I am God. That is why Jesus does not say The Lord saith. He is the Lord.

The Jews Response

The Jews do not understand that this is a prophesy to test Him by. They think he is crazy. "*It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?*" What He is saying is incredible. The temple they are worshipping in took forty six years to build. It is still actually under construction at this time. They see no need to argue more or arrest this man he has proven to them He does not have the authority they were looking for. He is not here to tell them that God disapproves of this practice.

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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. His disciples after His death see this as the prophesy it was.

This is an example of not seeing the forest for the trees. As I stated earlier there was 2 temple clearings. So after his man shows up, and chases everyone out, and states that they are profaning God. They do not stop. Three years later this scene plays out again. It leads to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus.

God gave them their answer they just didn't listen. Many times we are the same way. God will tell us to stop sinning in some way, yet we will continue on in our sin as if we know what is better for us than God. Sometimes Christians will pray, Lord let me know what I should do here. God answers them, but because it isn't the answer they want to hear, they ignore Him.

Conclusion

I want to go back over the things we have looked at tonight. Jesus went to the temple (this would be church for us) to worship. He gets there and the temple is not being used for worship but profit and to meet the agendas of certain men. Jesus purifies the temple. The application seems simple. The Church needs to be purified and worship becomes the purpose. I think if that is how we try to apply this we are missing a lot of what is being said. In a couple of chapters we are going to see Jesus tell a woman that worship will not be in a temple but in spirit and truth²⁵. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,*

²⁵ John 4:23

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whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

I think this application needs to be applied to our lives. Our bodies are the temple that houses the Holy Spirit. We need to all call upon Jesus to cleanse our bodies and make us pure. We should worship God with our lives which were bought with a price.

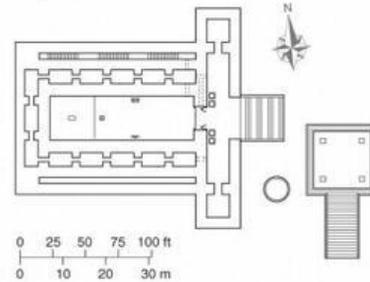
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HEROD'S TEMPLE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Herod began construction of this magnificent temple in 20/19 B.C., during the 18th year of his reign. The main construction phase was completed within about a decade. Detailed descriptions of the temple exist in Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 15:380–425; *Jewish War* 5:184–247) and in early rabbinic writings (esp. Mishnah, *Middot*). The Roman army under Titus destroyed the temple during the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The temple was 172 feet (52 m) long, wide, and high (about 16 to 20 stories tall).

Temple Architectural Plan

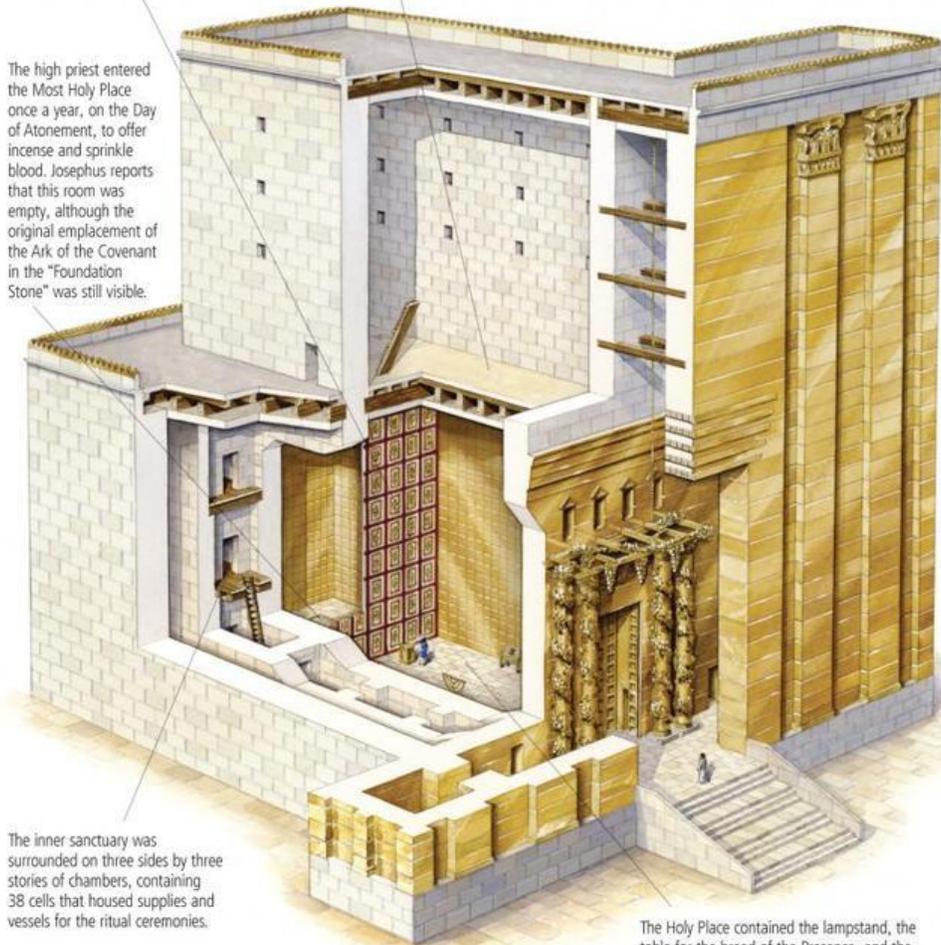


There was an upper chamber above the sanctuary, which allowed access (through holes in the floor) for cleaning of the gold-covered walls below. A ladder (shown partly cut away in this section) gave access to the upper roof level.

A massive curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. When Jesus died, this curtain was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to offer incense and sprinkle blood. Josephus reports that this room was empty, although the original emplacement of the Ark of the Covenant in the "Foundation Stone" was still visible.

The inner sanctuary was surrounded on three sides by three stories of chambers, containing 38 cells that housed supplies and vessels for the ritual ceremonies.



The Holy Place contained the lampstand, the table for the bread of the Presence, and the altar of incense. An angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah on the right side of the incense altar (Luke 1:11).

