

PM John 2:13-22 & Hebrews 10:1-14 Jesus replaces the temple

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[0 : 00] John's Gospel, chapter 2, at verse 13. This is the story of Jesus cleansing the temple. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting there, 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. And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade.

His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me. So the Jews said to him, What sign do you show us for doing these things?

Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, It has taken thirty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?

[1 : 20] But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 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.

Just to there, may God bless to us this reading in his word. We'll sing now in Psalm 96a, verses 7 to think is in Hebrews chapter 10, and we're going to read verses 1 to 14.

Hebrews chapter 10, from the beginning of the chapter, and this is entitled, Christ's Sacrifice Once for All. And it's a comparison between the sacrifice of Christ, and the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and the basic ideas that Christ, of course, fulfills these.

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Otherwise, they would not have ceased to be offered. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins.

[2 : 51] But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sin every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings, you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book. When he said above, You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings, these are offered according to the law.

Then he added, Behold, I have come to do your will. He does away with the first, in order to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time, a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemy should be made a footstool for his feet.

[4 : 27] For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. We'll just read to there, and may God bless to us this reading too.

Now we're going to look at the second part of Jesus cleansing the temple, and that's in John chapter 2, and taking up at verse 18.

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

Now this morning we looked at the story of Jesus cleansing the temple. And we saw the sort of thinking that lay behind us. What was he trying to do in doing this?

And we looked at it in various ways. This was above all a protest against the commercialization of religion. There was no place for a market in the temple of God.

[5 : 30] And so in driving out these traders that were in the temple, he is saying the temple is a temple dedicated to the offering of sacrifices and to prayer.

The offering of sacrifices that make atonement so that prayer can be offered acceptably to God. And so he's not just saying away with this commercialization.

He wants to establish the proper role of a temple. And he's doing this in a way that shows the claims that he makes about himself. He says, he speaks about his father's house.

And that's a big claim. He's saying that he's the son of God. He's saying that he's got authority here because he owns the place. And we also saw how this was a prediction about the future.

Here he's overwhelmed with zeal. Zeal consumes him. And later on, his zeal for the things of God consumed him. In the sense that he was put to death because of his, let us say, his religious opinions.

[6 : 37] That's the sort of thing we said then this morning. And we want to look now at the discussion that arises from it. Now there are four things that I want to say here this evening as well.

The unbelief that he faced, the evidence that he offered, the claim that he made, and the response that he received. So let's begin by looking at the unbelief that he faced.

Now just think, if you were in that situation and you saw Jesus cleaning out these traders, what would you think about the matter?

And I suspect there were really two very, very different points, two extreme points of view that people might well have. Sensitive, spiritually minded, Jewish people would say, well done.

It was about time somebody did something about this racket. And they would appreciate what Jesus did. And they would think, the temple has now been set free from these business interests.

[7 : 46] And it's available for people to pray in, in peace and quiet. And they would applaud Jesus' actions. And now, the very opposite of that, of course, is people that were thoroughly opposed to Jesus doing this.

They would say, what right does he to do this? He's interfering with the rights of business. These traders are perfectly legitimate in what they're doing. They're helping worshippers to provide their proper animals for worship.

It's a legitimate business and there's no reason why Jesus should interfere with them. What's he doing? Interfering with what the temple authorities have put in place.

He's no right to do this. And their reaction to that might be pretty drastic. So that they said, this man should be arrested. This man shouldn't be allowed to go around doing this.

We must bring him before the courts. We must find him. We must imprison him. We must torture him. Something of that nature is what people at that extreme would say.

[8 : 50] I think what we do have here is something a wee bit in between. And you can well imagine that when there are these extremes, there are always people somewhere in between.

And what these people are saying to them, to Jesus, is this. They're saying, give us a sign. Show us your credentials.

What sign do you show us for doing these things? They needed some backup proof that he had authority to do this.

They needed to understand, or they wanted to understand more fully what made him think he had the right to do it. But, you know, this is the point.

It's not just that they're asking for his credentials. They're asking for his credentials in a particular form. It must be done through a sign. It must be done through a miracle.

[9 : 47] The NIV puts this in a slightly different way. What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? So what they're really saying is, we must have a sign.

We must have a miracle. We must have something special. And you see, that is an evidence of unbelief. They have not embraced Jesus' word.

They have not believed the claim that he makes. And they're wanting more evidence in the form of a sign. Now, this, of course, was something that came up later in the Gospels.

And Jesus makes his opinion very plainly clear. He makes his opinion very clear about that when the question arises.

People say, show us a sign. And this is what he said to them. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

[10 : 45] And Jesus said, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign. But no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Now, we're not dealing with the sign of the prophet Jonah. That's the resurrection. But we're not dealing with that. What we're dealing with simply is this idea that it was a bad thing to be asking for signs and wonders.

Jesus had done plenty. Jesus had taught. Jesus' word had got out. And if people were asking for more, it was because they didn't believe what he'd been saying.

And a request for signs and wonders to be done in that context came from an evil heart, an adulterous heart. That's a heart that was not faithful to God.

And that's the way he treats signs and wonders later in the Gospel. Now, I do feel that we've got to be a wee bit careful about this in saying that's the situation here.

[11 : 45] Because after all, this is just the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He has done a sign already. We know that in Cana of Galilee. But this is in Jerusalem. The people haven't yet seen him fully at work.

And so we've got to be cautious about this. Nonetheless, I do think we can say there's the evidence of unbelief. Here they are. And Jesus has effectively said, I'm the Son of God and that's my authority.

And they don't believe it. That's unbelief. They don't receive the word of God. And they're wanting to have some proof, a visible sign. There's the part of the unbelief that Jesus faces here.

Jesus' word is what matters. We have to believe that word. When he teaches, we accept his teaching. When he makes a promise, we have to list ourselves upon the promise.

When he gives a command, we have to do it. His word is what's important. And it's his word that they are rejecting here in favour, they say, of some sign and wonder.

[12 : 49] Not so serious as it was to become when he had been doing plenty of signs and wonders. But serious enough for us to say, yes, here is a measure of unbelief. And we see this coming out also in their attitude to what Jesus says in reply.

They say, give us a sign. And Jesus gives them a sign or tells what the sign is going to be. He says, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

Now the thing that I want to draw attention to is that the people here didn't begin to understand what he's talking about. He's talking in pictorial terms.

They think he's talking about the temple in Jerusalem and he's not. But they don't have the spiritual insight to realise that this is just an illustration. Their unbelief has blinded their minds so that they can't penetrate what Jesus is saying here.

And the reaction to this is an evidence, a further evidence of their unbelief. It's interesting to me that several times in John's Gospel this is what happened.

[14 : 03] Jesus gives a picture, if you like, of spiritual matters and the people to whom he gives it are blind to the spiritual meaning of it all. And they treat it to be understood at a natural level.

we've got this in the next chapter in the case of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was told he must be born again and Nicodemus apparently doesn't understand what Jesus means by that.

We know, of course, he should have known that Jesus is speaking in figurative terms. As a person is born naturally, so they must be born again spiritually.

But Nicodemus is blind to that and he says, how can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time and do his mother's womb and be born? So you see, what had spiritual significance this man is blind to and he takes this at a natural level.

The same was true in the following chapter in John chapter 4 where we've got the story of the Samaritan woman. There they are at the well and Jesus not unnaturally uses the picture of water bringing life to a person as a picture of the spiritual water that he provides that will bring spiritual life to them.

[15 : 22] And he says, whoever drinks of this water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Now that's picture language. He's talking about drawing water using water but it's just a picture of spiritual things. But the Samaritan woman doesn't get it.

She says, sir, give me this water. Now that sounds good but it's not good because she goes on to say so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.

She's interpreted that at the natural level. She doesn't have the spiritual insight to understand that this is an illustration. And so that's the situation we've got here.

Jesus uses this picture and we'll develop that in a moment but he puts it before them and they've got to think about it. What's he really meaning? This is a teacher.

[16 : 22] Is there an inner lesson to this? But their unbelief blinds them to that and they take this at its natural level. And so the response to this is it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

And that implies quite plainly that they think that he's talking about the temple at Jerusalem which he wasn't doing but they think he was. Now I know, I'm sure you know that Solomon built the temple originally a long time previous to this.

That temple was destroyed when the Babylonians came and captured Jerusalem and took many of its people into exile. The walls of the city, the palaces and the temple were all destroyed then.

And it was only later when they came back from Babylon that they reconstructed the temple on its site. But that was a pretty poor building. Small and not very prepossessing at all.

And 46 years previous to this the man that is called Herod the Great the Herod that we meet in the opening chapters of Matthew's Gospel for example. Herod the Great began a rebuilding project and he made what was a pretty insignificant building into an amazing piece of architecture.

[17 : 41] A huge construction, beautiful stones and wonderfully designed and constructed. And that's what they're referring to here. 46 years ago Herod started that and it took all that time to get where it is now.

And you think you can do it in three days. It's quite obvious that their minds are blinded to the spiritual truth that Jesus is trying to get across. Because they take this what is just an illustration, a parable if you like, they take this illustration at its natural level without seeing the spiritual lesson that's there.

Another evidence of unbelief. That's what happens. If you read the scriptures in unbelief they said I mentioned to them that you'll be missing.

If you don't read the scriptures with faith in your heart your eyes will be dimmed at least if not blinded to the truth that is there. And that's what we've got here.

People are not prepared to believe his word and have their eyes blinded from the truth when he brings it to their attention. That's the terrible nature of unbelief.

[18 : 54] So it's a pretty serious thing that Jesus is up against here. Our question then is how does he deal with this? What does he say here that enables the disciples at the end of the story to say well looking back on this after the resurrection we believe this word and we believe the prophets which is the outcome that we'll look at eventually.

So what does Jesus how does Jesus deal with them so that unbelief might be removed and this faith that they've got at the end of the story becomes a reality.

Well the next thing we have to look at is the evidence that he offered and it's all connected with this sign that he's giving them. When you destroy this temple he's saying I will raise it up in three days.

Now it's quite obvious because it says so here that he's not speaking about the temple at Jerusalem he's speaking about himself and he's speaking about it says here his body.

He's speaking about them destroying his body. He's speaking about himself raising it up in three days. He's speaking here about his death and his resurrection.

[20 : 16] I think that's quite obvious to us but let's just go over that a wee bit. He says destroy this temple. Now if you take it literally they're going to say no way are we going to destroy this because we don't believe you can raise it up in three days so we're not going to destroy this temple just so that you can prove who you are.

But as I say it's got a spiritual significance. But really he's saying to them you are going to be responsible for my death. You are going to bring about the destruction of my body.

You are going to bring me to death. And of course that's the way the scriptures represent the matter. He's speaking here with the Jewish leaders they're called the Jews which is John's shorthand generally speaking meaning the Jewish leaders.

He's not talking about all the Jewish people when he says the Jews more often than not he's speaking about the Jewish leaders. Anyway these are the folks that in fact did have him arrested.

They brought him before the Jewish court and had him condemned. They brought him before Pilate the Roman governor and asked him to condemn him.

[21 : 35] They brought him before Herod the son of the Herod that we mentioned that built the temple and Herod refused to deal with the matter no reason for killing him and he brought them back to Pilate and insisted that he be crucified and Pilate we're told delivered him to their will.

It was all dominated by these Jewish leaders at one level what brought about his death the activity of these people to whom Jesus is speaking here and that's the way it was after the resurrection even Peter preaching immediately after the giving of the Holy Spirit can describe it in this way he says Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men the lawless men are perhaps the men that don't respect the law that is the Gentiles doesn't matter if that's right or not but you crucified him means you Jewish leaders you Jewish people you're responsible governors you crucified him and that's the general testimony of the apostles this was a wicked act perpetrated by these people and so when Jesus says destroy this temple he's speaking about the fact that they were going to be the means by which he was taken to the cross and put to death and then when he says I will raise it up after three days then obviously this is referring to his resurrection now I do have a bit of a problem about this because it isn't usually said that Jesus raised himself from the dead it's usually

God the father that raised him from the dead but here he's saying I will raise up this temple in other words I'll come back to life I'll be brought back to life and there is a verse in John that encourages us to think about the agency of Jesus in regard to his resurrection no one takes my life from me he says but I lay it down to my own accord I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up so there they're saying I have authority to take my life again I have authority in order to reconstruct this temple that you will destroy by your lawless attitude and so the resurrection happened through his agency there's no conflict in saying that it was done by the father because he and the father are one and have got a common purpose and a common instrumentality if we might say so in this particular case so Jesus says

I will raise up my body I'll come to life again I have authority to take my life again and so he's saying this is the sign if you want proof of who I am that's where you have to look and that's the evidence that he offers here you just look at my resurrection and you'll understand who I am and how it is I can do what I've been doing and why it is I can cleanse the temple and that's an important consideration it seems to me speaking for myself that we really haven't emphasised the importance of the resurrection as a validation of the claims of Christ this is what proves who he is this is the big sign that he is all that he claimed to be and it seems to me that Paul works along these lines for example when he speaks of Jesus being of the line of David according to the flesh but then there's the other side to him he was declared to be the son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead by raising

Jesus from the dead the father was saying this is my son with whom I am well pleased this is one who has got power who has got authority and that's what the resurrection was declaring and this is the way in which unbelief can be undermined in this particular case this is the way that unbelief is undermined and it's by this means that these people are able to come to put their trust in Jesus and the scriptures of the Old Testament by thinking about the significance of the resurrection now as I say I don't think we've done justice to this and I'm not going to pretend to do justice to it on one occasion but just the way I think we can see this in the most general terms is this the resurrection was the father saying to Jesus you've done all that I asked you to do you've done it perfectly here is your reward you're to be raised from the dead and to sit on my right hand in the place of honour and authority by raising him from the dead he's saying

[27 : 00] I'm perfectly pleased with everything he's done and he is now indeed a prince and a saviour and that's what the resurrection that's part of what the resurrection from the dead is declaring about Jesus he's done a perfect work I'm happy with it and that is what makes unbelief so ridiculous if the father is prepared to say I'm happy with the work of Christ who are we to say anything different if he's given this display of who Jesus is and of what he thinks about him how can we dare to say anything different and that's what kills unbelief if we only realise what the father said about the son by raising him from the dead we would recognise him for who he is a perfect saviour who has done everything that the father asked him to do a saviour in whom we can trust because the father himself found him trustworthy what right is he to declare to cleanse the temple well he's the sort of person who is fairly trustworthy in the father's eyes who acts for him and is acknowledged by him as being perfect that's what happened at the resurrection and it's in this way it seems to me that we can look at our unbelief and compare it with the trustworthiness that the father found in the son and that he displayed by raising him from the dead so if we've got unbelief this is our way maybe even the way to solve it look at

Jesus raised from the dead think of what that meant recognize that the father found him trustworthy and said there's nothing of blame him at all he's done a perfect work and let's submit to that judgment about him and see if the father was I'm content with him if the father found him trustworthy I'm going to trust him too that was the evidence that Jesus offered now the third thing that we've got here is the claim that Jesus made and we're looking here at this idea that he used his his death and resurrection he described them in terms of a temple they're thinking of the temple at Jerusalem he's thinking of another temple and I think you see that the idea that we've got here in mind is this that he ultimately is the true temple you can look at that temple at

Jerusalem and you can cleanse it make it good as it's possible to be as Jesus did but ultimately he doesn't cleanse the temple he replaces the temple because he is the temple the true temple and that I suggest is what this illustration suggests if you're looking for a place of worship you find it in Christ he's the true temple temple now there's a couple of passages that I could refer to but I'll just refer to one it's the Samaritan woman again and you know that story I presume you know that story Jesus has been speaking about different things and she raises the question about worship the Samaritans worshipped in Mount Gerizim the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem and so there was this question in her mind if he's really a prophet he'll be able to answer it which is the proper place to worship in

Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem and Jesus says the hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father and he goes on to speak about the need to worship in spirit and in truth but you see if you take it seriously that he says neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem he's saying temples as we know them are out of date now that I've come to think of a particular place where sacrifice and offering and prayer are offered is outmoded now that I am here and effectively he's destroying the temple and he's instituting another temple himself and that's the idea that this illustration is meant to convey to us he doesn't just cleanse the temple he replaces the temple Jesus is the true temple now what do we mean by that well we can go on for that long enough but what did we say this morning a temple was far a temple was the place where they provided sacrifice the blood of sacrifice provided atonement and on the basis of atonement prayer was offered

Jesus is the true temple in as much amongst other things as he provides these facilities to where in the temple a priest offered a sacrifice but Jesus is the true priest that offers a sacrifice in the temple an animal is killed and his blood is shed Jesus is a true sacrifice for sin his blood was shed as a fulfillment of all these animal sacrifices that makes Jesus the true temple then their atonement was provided at least in some symbolic fashion the reality is provided in the death of Jesus all that the temple provided Jesus provides Jesus is the true temple in the temple they prayed hopefully on the basis of sacrifice offered and if that was so their prayer was accepted we pray on the basis of the sacrifice offered and we pray in the name of

[33 : 26] Jesus and our prayers are accepted all that happened in the temple has been accomplished by Jesus fulfilled at a higher level by Jesus which makes him the true temple of God and that's the place where we can find atonement where we can find forgiveness and where we can find access to God because he is the true temple now what was the outcome of all this the response that he received and that's what we've got in the last verse here so in thinking about the resurrection they realize all that Jesus was speaking about here and everything takes on a new perspective and fits into place nicely and they believe the word of

Jesus and the Old Testament scriptures scriptures now people ask what Old Testament scriptures he's speaking about and they have some trouble trying to decide what text from the Old Testament Jesus or John is speaking about here and for me I don't really think it matters too much it's the general idea that's in mind here they believe that the Old Testament scriptures spoke about Jesus maybe they were thinking about the Old Testament sacrifice and saw them fulfilled in Jesus maybe they thought about Psalm 69 verse 9 about zeal consuming him and they related that to his death maybe they saw other passages of Isaiah or whatever the point is they looked afresh at the Old Testament and they said that word is trustworthy they listened again to what Jesus said and they said we can trust his word and that should surely be the outcome of what we've this is meant to stimulate our faith and to make us say we can trust them so look afresh at

Jesus cleansing the temple replacing the temple and saying it's in me that there's atonement and you can find access to God look at the proof of that in the resurrection what he did was accepted by the father and let us accept it too and say we can trust this man we can trust him completely whatever he says we will listen to and will accept whatever promises he offers me I'll embrace them and act upon them whatever commands he gives me I'll follow them out let us listen to his word and accept it with faith as these men did may God bless to us this study in his word we're going to sing in