

AND THE **WORD**
BECAME FLESH

the Gospel of John



John 1

REVIEW

THE TITLE OF THE GOSPEL?

- “In the beginning....” (opening words of Gospel)

JOHN 1

- The creation story
 - But not just a re-telling of the Genesis story of creation
 - The one who brought creation as we know it by speaking it into existence (vv. 1-4)
 - is now bringing about a new creation made up of God's offspring living with the Son ("I am who I am" = *ho ōn*) in the bosom of the Father (vv. 12-18)
- As a true prophet, John bears witness to the Word made flesh
 - John is sent from God; he can see who the Word in the flesh is: the Lamb of God who will remove the world's sin (What is that, and how is it done?)
- Jesus' disciples are those who begin to abide (*menō*) with the Word and learn from Him
 - Like all Jews of their day, they have political expectations that they must un-learn
 - They will become clean as they listen to and learn from the Word (John 13)
 - The Word will indeed rule (Son of Man) but in dying (throughout his incarnation)

John 2-3

I. CANA

II. CLEANSING

III. NICODEMUS

IV. 'HE MUST INCREASE' (POSTPONED TO THE NEXT SESSION)

John 2:1-12

I. CANA

CANA



NB: Nathanael, whom we have just seen in John 1:45-51 is from Cana, (John 21:2). It is probably because of the connection between Nathanael and Cana that this story comes here in the Gospel account.

WHAT BRINGS US TO CANA?

- Wedding:
 - Marriage = Betrothal + Wedding
 - Promise of children
 - NB: Absence of “local colour” – what does the author want you to see?
- Jesus’ mother:
 - What is her name?
 - What does she do and how does Jesus treat her?
 - What is missing in John’s Gospel (found in Matthew and Luke)?
- Jesus’ action:
 - What does Jesus do?
 - NB: again the presence of water
 - Miracles in John → “Signs” (vs 11)
 - Actions of Jesus in John: Jesus will not act on the agenda set by any human

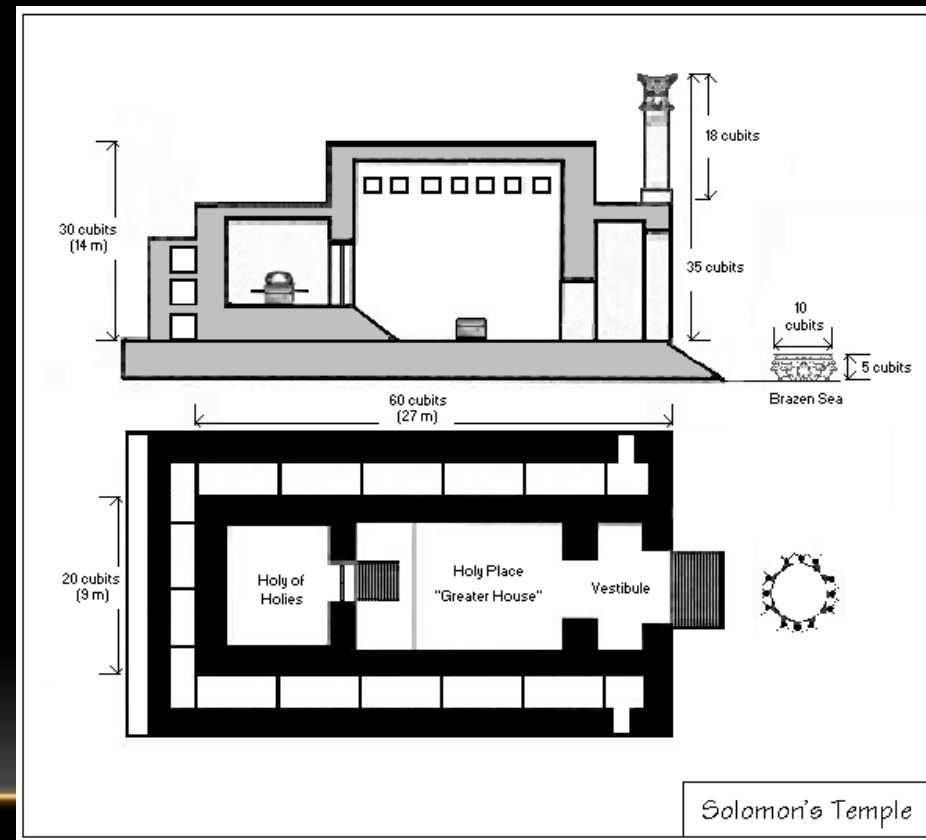
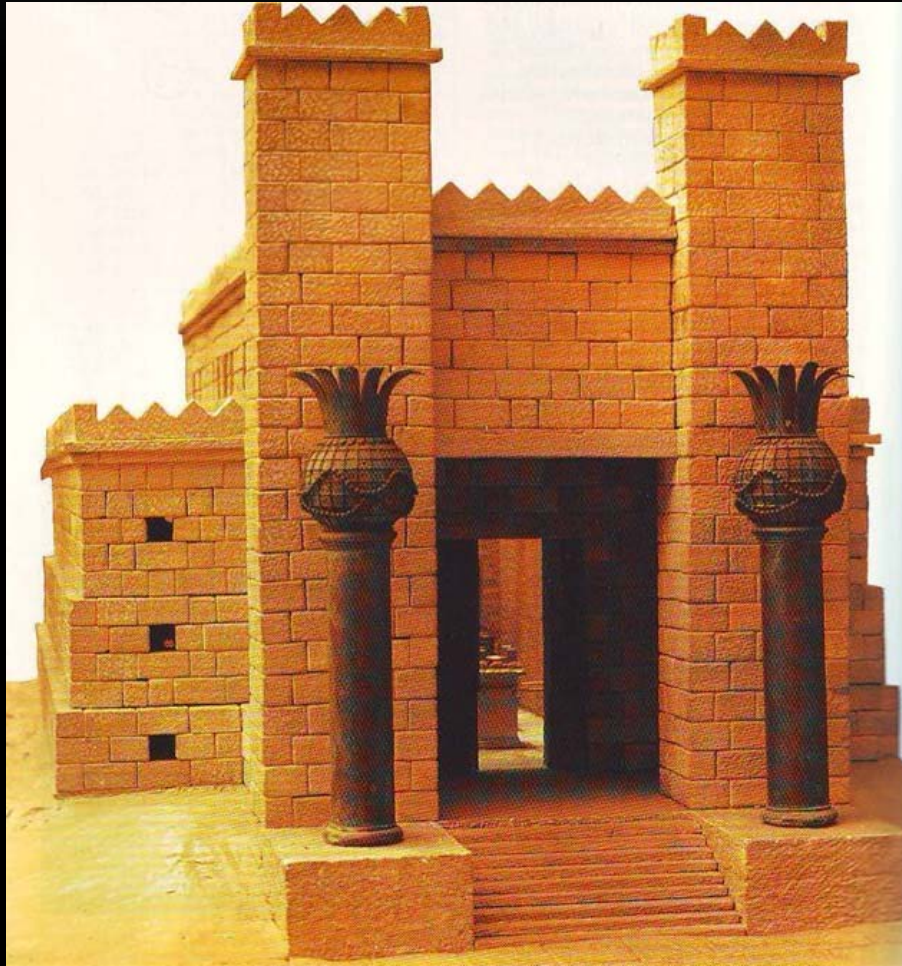
John 2:13-25

II. CLEANSING

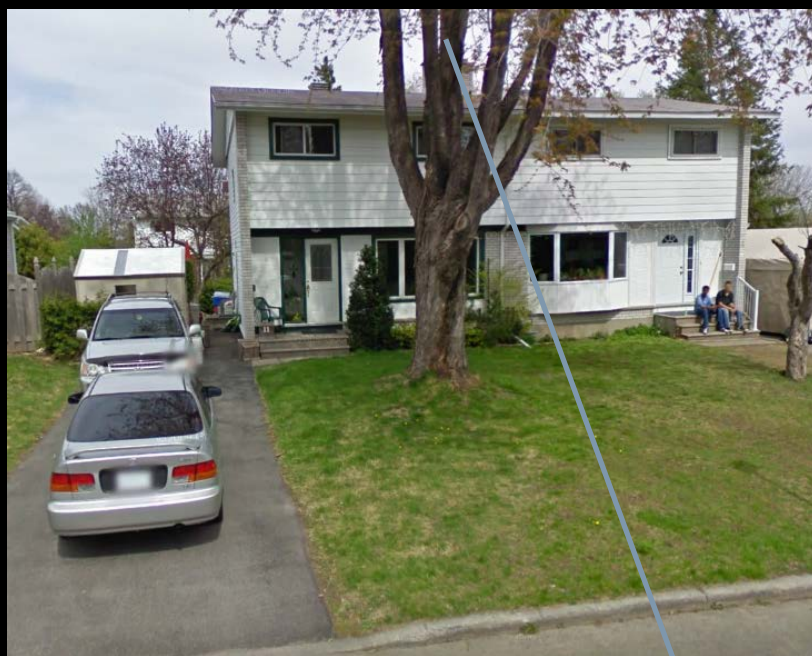
THE TEMPLE INCIDENT

- Passover
 - What is it?
 - Passover in the Gospels (1x) and in John (3x)
- Jesus' action
 - Very bodily!
- The Temple
 - What was it like

THE FIRST TEMPLE



A CONTEMPORARY ANALOGUE

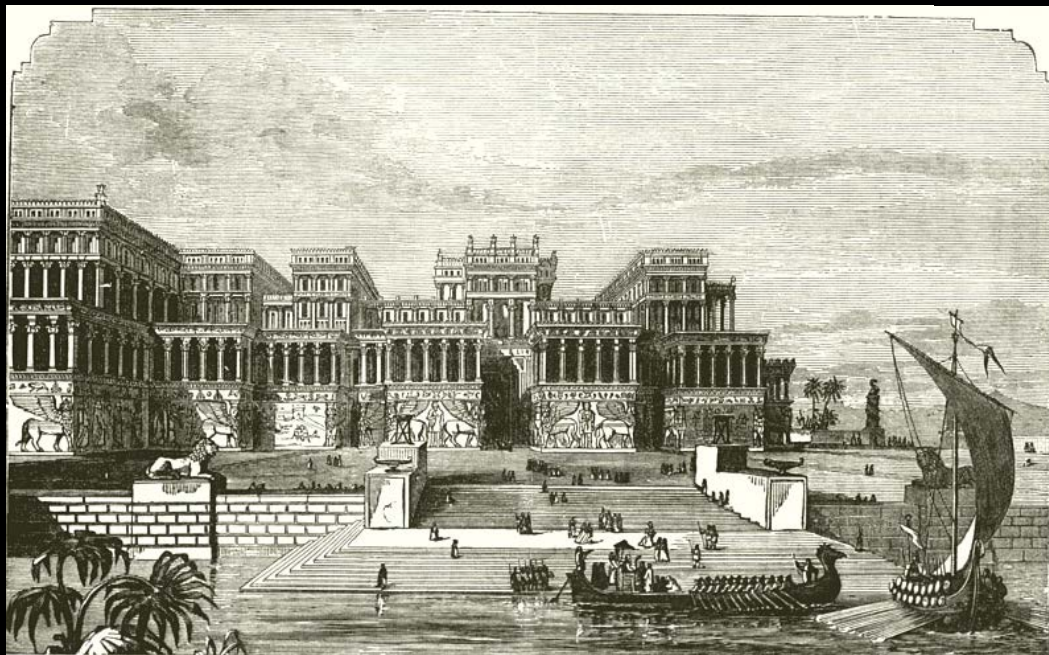




Artistic reconstruction of the Ziggurat of Assyrian Nineveh



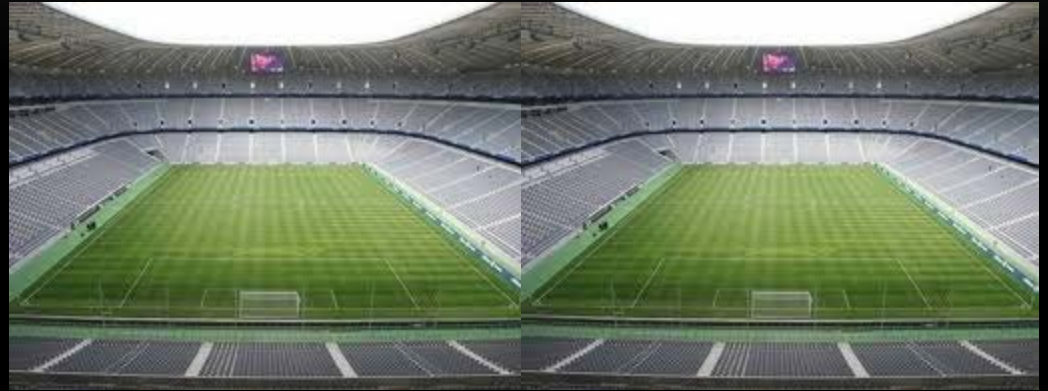
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Artistic depiction of Nineveh at the height of its glory (c. 700 BC).

The huge Abu Simbel temple (dedicated to Nefertari), built by Pharaoh Ramesses II (the Pharaoh of the Exodus) in the 1200s BC.

HEROD'S EXPANSION OF THE TEMPLE



THE TEMPLE INCIDENT

- Jesus' pronouncement (vs. 19) and the OT prophecy (vs. 17)
 - Enigmatic and ambiguous (cf. 1:51)
 - One meaning for those who do not see / Another for those who do!
 - Jesus' body will become the new Temple (What will this mean?)

John 3:1-21

III. NICODEMUS

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

- Nicodemus honours Jesus as a prophet ("teacher", "from God" like John)
 - Nicodemus (a teacher!) learns from Jesus
- Jesus:
 - To enter the kingdom of God is to be able to see it
 - To see it you must be born How? You must be born ***anōthen***
 - Nicodemus: "again" / Jesus: "from above" (= "from spirit", not from flesh)
 - Those who enter / see are born from above / spirit and are like the wind / spirit
 - This happens through the ascending / descending Son of Man (cf. 1:51)
 - Further confirmation that this is about death: Mosaic serpent lifted up!
 - Healed of death by sight!

CONCLUDING WORDS TO NICODEMUS

- God loved the world in this way...
 - He sent His Son so that people would believe
 - Belief is the way to salvation = true seeing! (We do not see TO believe; we believe TO see.)
 - Judgment is not seeing (those who do not see will die and that is their end)
 - Not seeing the light – the illumination of reality through the Word – is death
 - And that light is here made manifest in Jesus!
 - Why can people not see the light? Because the light exposes both the truth about reality and the truth about false realities.
 - Those who cling to false realities do want them revealed.
 - Those who do truth / know truth (whether they recognize its origin in the Word or not) will acknowledge the source of light and truth (i.e., the Word) when it is revealed to them.
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Some questions for reflection on John 1-3

John's Gospel is clear: the same God who brought about creation is now at work bringing about a NEW creation. That new creation is particularly about God bringing into being offspring (children). But, how do you imagine that process of new creation happening? In other words, what does it "look like" when God brings forth (begets / conceives) offspring? (*NB: Remember that this birth happens as we learn from the Word by abiding with the Word.*)

Would it make any practical difference in your life and in the life of others around you if you first of all saw yourself as one of God's offspring, dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and radiating the light of God from your presence there? What difference would it make to others around you who are not (or at least don't consider themselves to be) children of God?

The world teaches us to value things that we see or hope to see.

- For the people of the ancient world (including Israel), family was perhaps the thing that they could see most clearly and cared most about.
- The people of the ancient world (including Israel) also prized the beauty of great buildings, including temples (or the Temple), with these buildings becoming the focus of everything that they did and seeking to increase ever more the beauty and greatness of those buildings (like Rome or Herod's Temple).
- For the people of Israel (including Jesus' first disciples = learners), there was the constant hope that they would one day see God's messiah, saviour who would make them strong politically and that then they would see Israel rule the world.
- But, in the Gospel of John, all of these "sights" are things that need to be unlearned because they all "anchor" the flesh (i.e., they weigh us down) rather than allowing us to be the free offspring of God, born of Spirit (wind), required in a new creation.

What things in your life need to be unlearned so that the wind/Spirit of God can 'fill your sails' and move you where God wants you to go?

In John's Gospel, Jesus appears often to act strangely when "pastoral" requests for assistance are made to him. (His answer to his mother in John 2 is one of the first instances of this, but certainly not the last!) Why? How might the Gospel of John help us to think about pastoral needs and the best way to meet them?

Some questions for reflection on John 4-5

Water is an important material reality in the world of Jesus' day; yet, water is important in the Gospel of John not for itself but because, while it is necessary for fleshly existence, there is something much more important than water – something that transcends it – that is needed for spiritual existence. What is it that is greater than water and that is needed to sustain the offspring of God? (*Sounds like a riddle, doesn't it?*)

Where, when, and how is the proper place for worship according to the Word made flesh? Why? What practical implications does this have for you? For us?

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we see Jesus on trial only at the end of those Gospels and just before His execution. In the Gospel of John, however, the Word made flesh is on trial from the start of the Gospel:

- perhaps as early as John 1, when the leaders of the Jews sent interrogators out to question John the Witnesser;
- perhaps from John 2, the incident in the Temple, where in words that remind us of the trial in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus speaks of destroying the Temple and raising it in three days (cf. Mark 15:29-30);
- certainly from John 5, when Jesus heals a man and then is brought before the Temple authorities to defend himself for his actions.

Why do you think that John shows the Word on trial from the start of his Gospel rather than just at the very end?

In a trial, the accused has both legal witnesses against him and legal witnesses for him. In the trial of Jesus in John 5, Jesus (who defends Himself) calls witnesses who will “speak” (or have “spoken”) in his favour. Who are they? Concerning whom do the witnesses give testimony? (*NB: This is not a trick question, but it is intended to make you think about who is speaking in John 5.*) Does the Gospel of John suggest that the children of God might also need witnesses to speak for them? If so, who would they be?