

# Jesus *Is* The Temple: John 2:13-22

Covenant Church  
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## John 2:13-22 (NRSV)

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After 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.

## I. Jesus Does Not *Cleanse* the Temple—Jesus *Is* the Temple

### 1. Arguments:

- a. Jesus does *not* quote Scripture that points to corruption—in contrast to the synoptic gospels

Matt 21:13 (cf. Mark 11:17// Luke 19:46): [Jesus] said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers” (citing Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11)

- b. Jesus clearly changes the meaning of “Temple” *within this episode*
- c. The broader context around our story supports this reading: “Lamb” of God (1:29, 36); Jewish purification rituals
- d. Structure and vocabulary support this reading: an outline of our story and the word for “Temple”

A. Action (vv. 13-17): What the temple is *no longer*

(1) Jesus drives out animals, overturns tables, commands (vv. 14-16)

(2) Disciples “remember” scripture (v. 17)

B. Authorization (vv. 18-21): What the temple is *now*

(1) “The Jews” misunderstand Jesus’ words (vv. 18-21)

(2) Disciples “remember” scripture *and* Jesus’ words (v. 22)

ἱερόν

ναός

- e. Zech 14:21, possibly alluded to in John 2:16, is speaking of *the eschatological moment*

**John 2:16** Stop making the house of my Father a marketplace!

**Zech 14:21b** ...And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts *on that day*.

- f. The gospel of John more broadly portrays *Jesus—not the Jerusalem temple*—as the temple

**John 4:19-24** The [Samaritan woman at the well] said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, *the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

**John 7:37-39** On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now *he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive*; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**John 8:31-32** Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “*If you continue in my word*, you are truly my disciples; and *you will know the truth*, and the truth will make you free.”

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “*I am* the way, and *the truth*, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**John 14:16-17a** *I will ask the Father*, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the *Spirit of truth*...

**John 18:37** Everyone who belongs to *the truth* listens to *my* voice.

**John 20:22** When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive *the Holy Spirit*.”

2. A reading...

*Jesus-the-prophet undertakes a “prophetic sign-act” to reveal a word from God: the time for this temple’s worship (trading for animal sacrifices) has ended, and the time for new Temple worship in spirit and truth has begun*

Prophetic “sign-acts”: Isa 20; Ezek 4; Jer 13

Jesus-as-prophet in the gospel of John: John 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17

**Heb 10:1b-4, 10-12** ...[The law] can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins... And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that 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,”

## II. It’s All About Jesus

**John 8:58-59b** Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him...

**John 14:1** Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

**John 14:9** ...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...

**John 20:28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

**John 10:30** The Father and I are one.

“When asked in 1962 (on his one visit to America) how he would summarize the essence of the millions of words he had published, [Karl Barth] replied, ‘Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’”<sup>1</sup>

“Prayer is being with Jesus and simply spending time with him.” —Henri Nouwen<sup>2</sup>

## III. Our Lenten Journey

The season [of Lent] is one for serious reflection on ourselves, our lives, our priorities. But it is not the purpose Lent to plunge us all into gloom and depression, but rather to allow a new light into our self-reflection during its 40 days. The light we use to illuminate these reflections is the light Jesus Christ. —Jane Williams<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Karl Barth: Courageous Theologian” in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Holman Reference). Edited by Christian History Magazine Editorial Staff, Mark Galli, and Ted Olsen. Available at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/theologians/karl-barth.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Nouwen, *Finding My Way Home*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001: p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Williams, *The Merciful Humility of God: 2019 Lent Book*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, p. 1.