

EASTER 2023
Tearing Down the Temple
John 2:13-25

I am so grateful that I have had the privilege of traveling to so many places in the world during my lifetime. I love to travel and meet new people and see new places. One thing that I have seen in literally every place that I have traveled have been TEMPLES and RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES of various faiths. I have seen places of worship everywhere from Central and South America to Africa, and all the way to the Middle East and faraway Asia. I have seen Buddhist temples covered in gold leaf in Thailand, and magnificent cathedrals in Europe. I have even seen the beautiful MOSQUE that sits in Jerusalem on the temple mount where Solomon's Temple once stood. **These temples are often seen as the ESSENTIAL PLACES where people must go if they want to meet with God.** Some of you might even think that being in this house of worship today was the only way that you could really let God know that you were thinking about him, or that places like this are where you have to go if you want to meet with God at all.

Now, some of you might think that what I said about temples and church buildings is NONSENSE, because you feel that God can be found anywhere that you go. You are right. **But it was JESUS who actually placed that thought in your head by what he did on earth 2,000 years ago.** Even if you don't call yourself a Christian, many of the modern notions that spiritual people have about meeting with God anywhere came from the REVOLUTIONARY WORDS and WORK of the Son of God. **Jesus was a religious REBEL.** I know that there are many people in the world today (and throughout history) that are deeply DISILLUSIONED with RELIGION and with the church. There is a whole mindset, sometimes called DECONSTRUCTION, that refers to people who are skeptical of RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS and RITUALS, and who seek to REDEFINE their faith without need of BUILDINGS or PRIESTS or ORGANIZED RELIGION of any kind. Some have rejected CHRIST along with CHRISTIANITY because of their disillusionment over the repeated FAILURES of so many religious leaders of our day. I DO NOT BLAME THOSE WHO REACT THIS WAY. But I want to share something with you today that may help you see faith in a fresh, CHRIST-GIVEN fashion.

I love telling people about Jesus, and encouraging them to go and read what he said and did when he was here on this earth. He was a MASTER at making religious people (especially religious leaders) absolutely furious! You can read so many passages in the Gospels (**Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**) where Jesus absolutely SCORCHED the HYPOCRISY of the religious leaders of his time. He called them snakes and whitewashed tombs, and he exposed them as being people who made it all but IMPOSSIBLE for someone to find God! **They did not like him very much. But the broken people and the common people and the people that were anything but religious LOVED LISTENING to Jesus!** One of my favorite passages that demonstrate how Jesus treated religious hypocrisy in the Temple is found in **John 2:13-17 NIV**

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at

tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Jesus was furious with these religious scoundrels who were using the limited space within the temple to make a godless profit on everything that was used to worship God in that place. This was the COURT OF THE GENTILES, and it was the only place in the temple where Jews AND GENTILES could go to offer sacrifices to God. But these money changers were making it IMPOSSIBLE for them to even do that. The noise of the sheep and goats, and the harsh cries of the hawkers trying to sell their goods created a cacophony of sounds that made meditation and worship untenable. But Jesus's actions revealed more than that. The religious leaders heard Jesus say something that terrified them when they asked for a sign to prove that he had the right to upset the temple mount in this way! **John 2:18-22 NIV**

18 The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 **Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."** 20 They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Those Jewish leaders argued that this temple took 46 years to build, and that there was no way that it could be rebuilt in 3 days. Of course, Jesus was not referring to the destruction of Herod's temple in that moment, but to the temple of his body which would be killed and then raised from the dead! **WHY?** But this same statement was twisted and used against Jesus in the mock trial that led to his death. **Matthew 26:59-61 NIV**

59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. 60 But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward 61 and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.' "

Later on when he was crucified, this was one of the taunts that were hurled at him for why he was being crucified: **Matthew 27:38-40 NIV**

38 Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

Why was the idea of the destruction of the temple so significant to these Jewish leaders? The religious leaders in Jesus day actually remembered that he said he would rise from the dead, and they also realized that any hint of a resurrection would be DEVASTATING to their RELIGIOUS MONOPOLY. **This was why that asked Pilate to post guards at the tomb!** His resurrection would effectively REMOVE the need for a

physical TEMPLE to PROP UP a SYSTEM of religion that was wrongly built around it. This is just what happened! **Matthew 28:1-8 NIV**

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

This paved the way for what God had planned from the beginning! **Truly, the temple was actually just a SYMBOL of where God always sought to DWELL – within his people!** Jesus died for our sin so that he could do just that!

The temple was NEVER meant to be the only place that one could find God. People twisted it to make it that way. God cannot and will not be LIMITED to some fancy building somewhere on the earth. He is the Eternal, Omnipresent God, and he loves being found wherever people live. **Jesus made this ABSOLUTELY POSSIBLE for everyone by his death and resurrection. When he rose from the dead, he offered himself to the whole world as the ONLY WAY to God. No need for a priest, or a temple, or even an offering of any kind. He IS the offering. He simply said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except by me!"** The temple was no longer needed. By his death and resurrection, he DECENTRALIZED faith from any GEOGRAPHIC location, and made its dwelling place any HUMAN HEART that simply called out to him and asked him to forgive and save and lead them.

I love that the Word of God proclaimed this from the beginning, and even gave beautiful HINTS about how Christ would one day TRANSFORM the settings of our faith. **One little-known fact that we learn in the Old Testament was that the temple was built in SILENCE.** No tool was heard working on the stones, but they were put in place after they were shaped and formed so that they fit together perfectly in the end. **1 Kings 6:7 NIV**

7 In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.

In the same way, the temple that Jesus is now building is comprised of those individuals that trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, and who are being TRANSFORMED into his image by the quiet, internal work of the Holy Spirit through his WORD in the daily moments of their lives. **John 14:16-17 NIV**

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

This means that the building of the CHURCH is being done quietly, without need of any OUTWARD TRAPPINGS (Buildings and Religious rituals) to reveal its presence. The church is a FAMILY that is being BIRTHED by God as he works in the hearts of people throughout the centuries. The PEOPLE who are being changed by the Lord are now what is being BUILT by God into the collective dwelling place of God. **1 Peter 2:4-6 NIV**
4 As you come to [Jesus], the living Stone--rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him-- **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

This building we are now in is not the TEMPLE. The PEOPLE that have trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior are the temple! Every time the church moves away from that simple understanding, it causes much pain, suffering, and sorrow. But Jesus created the Church to be a world-wide family that relies on his finished work, on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and on the love of our Sovereign God who brought salvation to us through his Son.

Have you been struggling to accept the truth about who Jesus is and the difference that he could make in your life? He is not angered by your doubt and your questions. He INVITES you to bring them all to him directly, and see how he will answer! **Some of you have been deeply hurt by religion and religious leaders in your past.** That breaks my heart. But we do live in a sick, sinful world, and people will ALWAYS fail us. I will fail you, and you will fail those around you. We will even find that we fail ourselves! But I have found that Jesus NEVER FAILS. He is faithful. He has never given up on me, and he is ALWAYS PRESENT within me. He works on me day after day, and he has for over 43 years now. I am so grateful that he has been with me regardless of whether or not I was in some church building or with some priest.

I can only imagine how God is working on some of you right now! Oh, that we could hear the HAMMER of his WORD and the CHISEL of the CONVICTION of the Holy Spirit as the loving hands of God seek to break hard hearts and bring people into the beauty and wonder of FULL FORGIVENESS and EVERLASTING INTIMACY with him! **Is that your heart he is working on?** Today, the Spirit of God is not inviting you to come to church or to put your trust in this preacher. Jesus is inviting you to know him personally. I love his words in **Matthew 11:28-30 NIV**
28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

About 40 years after Jesus rose from the dead, Herod's temple was completely destroyed. Jesus had prophesied that this would happen, and he warned his followers about it. The historical record of this even tells us that when it actually happened, most of the Christians of that day did not lose their lives because they were not dependent on the temple for their faith. They carried the Spirit of God with them wherever they went. Do you?

Let's pray.

**Easter 2023
Hernando Campus
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John 2:13-22**

Start talking

What is the most beautiful temple/church building of any faith that you have ever seen?

Start thinking.

Why do people of nearly every religion so often think that they have to be in a physical "holy place" to be able to meet with God?

Start sharing.

[Read John 2:13-22](#). Why was Jesus so passionate about how the Temple was being abused? Why do you think Jesus made the comparison of the Temple with his body?

[Read Matthew 28:1-8](#). How was Jesus's resurrection truly the reason why the temple would no longer be needed?

[Read 1 Kings 6:7](#). Talk about how this verse hints at how the Spirit of God will do a quiet work of transforming the "living stones" of the temple after Jesus rises from the dead.

[Read John 14:16-17 and 1 Peter 2:4-6](#). How is the Church the N.T. expression of the temple? How is this so very different from how people have sought the presence of God apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ?

[Read Matthew 11:28-30](#). Talk about how Jesus opened the way for anyone, anywhere to experience the love, forgiveness, and presence of God in their life?

Start praying.

Spend time praising God for all that he has done in your life because of the resurrection of Jesus!

Start doing.

Share your story of salvation this week with someone who does not know Christ.