

The Temple as God's House

JCV Integrated Text: **John 2:18-25**

And because of this the Jews questioned Him, "What sign can you show us? Seeing as you do these things." Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." So the Jews said, "For forty-six years the Temple has been built! but you will raise it up in three days?" He though was speaking about the temple of His body.

After He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this. Then they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Now while He was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many *people* trusted His authority seeing the signs He was doing. But on His part, Jesus did not entrust Himself to them since He understood all people. He didn't need any human testimony, as He knew himself what was in a man.

JCV Integrated Text: **John 3:1**

Now there was a man of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Introduction

In the previous section **John 2:13-17** we saw Jesus turning over the money tables at the Temple and now, in the remainder of the chapter, we look at the consequences of His actions. We continue to the first verse of the next chapter where Nicodemus is introduced.

Remember that this is a separate incident from the one where Jesus turns over the money tables during His last week on earth. Here He is considered a bit of a local 'hothead' whereas the second time at the end of His earthly ministry He has huge crowds following Him.

The 'Jews' in this discussion are probably the Temple guards (who are minor priests) perhaps with some others of higher authority too. They ask questions of Jesus which reflect Him being viewed as a local troublemaker who is stepping out of line and they challenge His prophetic authority.

The discussion with Jesus about the "sign" helps us date this incident!

First we need to note that there are two Greek words used in **John 2** which are both translated into English as '**Temple**'. Rabbinic literature and **John's Gospel** use these **two words** consistently so recognising them can help us understand what is being talked about.

The **first word** is used in **John 2:14,15**. It is:

Strong's: G2411 ἱερόν **hieron** (hiy-er-on') *n.*

1. **a sacred place or area** (as protected or enclosed on all sides).
2. (*by implication*) **a sanctuary** (ranging in size and purpose, such as a large land reserve for animals, or as a compound for religious activities, or a small inner room for repose, prayer, or security).
3. (*specially*) **the entire precincts of the Temple** (at Jerusalem or elsewhere).

Consistent with Rabbinic writing, **John** uses it here to refer to the **Temple precinct** which includes the court of the Gentiles.

The **second word** is used in **John 2:19,20**. It is:

Strong's: G3485 ναός **naos** (na-os') *n.*

1. (*properly*) **a dwelling place** (public).
2. (*concretely*) **a temple**.
3. (*specially*) **the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem**.

This word is used for the **sanctuary building itself**.

Additionally, different translations of **John 2:20** also treat differently the aorist form of the verb 'to build' used in the phrase "46 years ... in building" (KJV). Put simply, this could give

either

- the building process has been going on for 46 years

or

- a building process was completed 46 years ago.

The Temple and precincts went through various building projects (and continued to do so until 62 AD) so the phrase is ambiguous as a chronological marker. However, when we notice the move from ἱερόν / **hieron** to ναός / **naos**, it becomes clear that the **speakers are referring to the completion of building that related to the main sanctuary, not the wider precinct**.

Josephus tells us that Herod started renovating the Temple around 20 BC and that it took 18 months to complete... i.e. the Sanctuary has been built for 46 years. This is a precise statement which dates this conversation taking place in 30 AD in the days around April 7th.

So, the statement seems to be more about how the Temple doesn't need rebuilding as it has worked just fine for 46 years, rather than being about how the precinct has spread and grown over 46 years. Of course, both might have been part of the actual debate... but **John's** summary is clear that the sanctuary went through its building process 46 years before.

Moreover, we should note the word Jesus uses for 'raise up' in **John 2:19**:

Strong's G1453 ἐγείρω **egeiro** (e-ǰei'-rō) *v.*

1. **to waken.**
2. *(literally)* **rouse from sleep, from sitting or lying, from disease, from death.**
3. *(figuratively)* **rouse from obscurity, inactivity, ruins, nonexistence.**

{transitively or intransitively}

[probably akin to the base of **G58** (through the idea of collecting one's faculties)]

KJV: awake, lift (up), raise (again, up), rear up, (a-)rise (again, up), stand, take up

See also: **G58**

We see that this word is related to the word:

Strong's G58 ἀγορά **agora** (a-ǰo-ra') *n.*

1. *(properly)* **the town-square** (as a place of public resort).
2. *(by implication)* **a market or thoroughfare.**

[from ageiro, 'to gather' (probably akin to **G1453**)]

KJV: market(-place), street

See also: **G1453**

So 'raise up' is more like 'rousing into activity' like a market does first thing in the morning.

Jesus the builder

It is worth noting that building is Jesus' profession. He is a **τέκτων tekton**.

Strong's G5045 τέκτων **tekton** (tek'-tōn) *n.*

1. **an artisan** (as producer of fabrics).
2. *(specially)* **a craftsman in wood.**

[from the base of **G5098**]

KJV: carpenter

Root(s): **G5088**

We can see that **tekton** is generally an artisan but it is translated in the Bible specifically as 'carpenter'. This may be because early on Christians reverentially took Jesus' statement "my yoke is easy", **Matthew 11:30**, as meaning He used His artisanship to make yokes that didn't chaff the necks of the oxen they were used on.

Most scholars recognise that Jesus, like most artisans, worked in the building trade.

So, there is potentially some humour or humorous aggression here. Jesus states that if the Temple was torn down He could rebuild it in three days, His critics taking this as an unwanted job tender and state "it's stood for 46 years, it doesn't need you input thanks!"

Victory-in-the-people

Other feasts follow Passover and we see **in verses 23-25** that during the period when Jesus stays on after the Passover "many people trusted His authority seeing the signs He was doing". So, at the Passover the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus to demonstrate His authority and ejected Him from the Temple. Now Jesus is outside the Temple, people are hearing what He is saying and seeing what He is doing and trusting in His authority!

However, although this would seem a good opportunity to garner a following and build on the people's endorsement Jesus chooses not to do. He does not want to be tied in to work to other people's agenda, He is working to His own agenda.

This helps to set up the next chapter which begins "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, called Nicodemas, a ruler of the Jews" (**John 3:1**). We will see next time how Nikodemus offers a route to success that Jesus turns down since He knew 'what was in people' and He didn't need the Pharisees' endorsement.

John's Gospel will reveal Nikodemus as a good guy in the end ... but his patronage would have tied Jesus to an agenda that was too politicised to be useful and needed to be challenged.

Interestingly, **Nicodemus** means 'Victory/Victorious in the people'... but Jesus won His victory for people, not because of them.