Destroy This Temple

Christ as the True and Greater Temple — John 2:13-22

Understanding Jesus' Ministry: The Keys to the Gospels

The Scene at the Temple

Jesus has just turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana, and from there He goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover — His first public appearance in the temple since His ministry began.

Passover was one of three feasts at which every Israelite man was required to appear before the LORD in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16), so the city filled with travelers. Most of them had come too far to drive an animal along with them, and the half-shekel every man owed for the service of the sanctuary (Ex. 30:13) had to be paid in one particular coinage rather than in whatever money his own province used. That is why there were animals for sale in the courts and tables where foreign coin could be exchanged. None of it started out as corruption. It started out as a service to worshipers who needed one.

What Jesus finds there is not what a worshiper expects to find.

John 2:13-22

> Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

John supplies his own explanation before the reader can misread the scene the way the men standing there did. Jesus was not talking about the stone building around Him. He was talking about His own body (John 2:21).

That one clarifying sentence changes what this whole scene is doing. It is not a cryptic prediction of the resurrection dropped into an argument about commerce. It's a claim about what a temple had always been for — and about who had just walked into this one.

One detail before going further. He doesn't call the building "the temple" when He addresses the men in it. He calls it *My Father's house* (John 2:16). Hold on to that phrase; before His ministry is over, He'll call this building by another name.

To see the size of the claim, it helps to know what this particular building had already been through.

A House Already Rebuilt Once Before

The building in front of Jesus was not Solomon's temple, and it was not the replacement for Solomon's temple as its builders had left it either. Getting that sequence straight is what makes the scene land, and it starts a long way back.

Before there was any temple at all, Israel had a tent. God gave Moses the pattern for it at Sinai, the people built it in the wilderness, and on the day it was finished something happened that fixed forever what a house of God was supposed to be:

Exodus 40:34-35

> Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

A structure was raised, and God moved into it visibly. That is the pattern. Centuries later Solomon replaced the tent with a building in Jerusalem, brought the ark of the covenant into the innermost room — the gold-covered chest that carried the tablets of the Law, and the place over which God had said He would meet with His people (Ex. 25:22) — and the same thing happened again:

1 Kings 8:10-11

> And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

That house stood for close to four hundred years. Then Babylon came, and the judgment the prophets had been warning about for generations was carried out on the building itself — a building the glory had already left, as the next section shows (Ezek. 10:18; 11:23):

2 Kings 25:9

> He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.

The people were carried off to Babylon, and for decades there was no temple in Jerusalem at all. Persia then replaced Babylon as the world power, and a decree from Cyrus sent a portion of the exiles home with permission to rebuild (Ezra 1:1-3). The work was led by a governor named Zerubbabel — the same man whose place in Jesus' own genealogy this project has already traced (see *Whose Son Is He?*).

The rebuilding did not begin as a triumph. Ezra records a strange scene at the moment the new foundation was laid:

Ezra 3:12-13

> But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

The old men remembered what had been lost. Whatever this second house would be, it wouldn't repeat the first. The ark never appears again in Israel's history after Babylon; the inventory of what the Babylonians carried off names pillars, basins, pots, and shovels, and never names the ark (2 Kings 25:13-17). And Scripture reports no cloud, no fire, and no glory when the second house was finished:

Ezra 6:15-16

> Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

Joy, yes. Sacrifices, yes (Ezra 6:17). But nothing like Exodus 40 and nothing like 1 Kings 8. The one thing that had made the first house glorious is the one thing the record does not report about the second.

The Glory That Had Already Left

Before the second house was ever built, Scripture had already shown the glory leaving the first one — and it did not leave all at once.

Ezekiel was a priest, carried off to Babylon with an early wave of captives, and while he was there God gave him visions of what was happening back in Jerusalem. Over three chapters he watches the glory move by stages. First it lifts off the cherub where it had rested and stops at the doorway of the building:

Ezekiel 9:3

> Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.

It pauses there long enough for the whole house to fill with the cloud (Ezek. 10:4). Then it leaves the doorway:

Ezekiel 10:18-19

> Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

The east gate. Then it leaves the city:

Ezekiel 11:23

> And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.

The mountain on the east side of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. The glory of God withdrew from His own house by degrees, paused over that hill, and departed eastward. Ezekiel is later shown it coming back, and he says outright that it's the same glory:

Ezekiel 43:1-5

> Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw — like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

Ezekiel ties the three visions together himself (43:3). What he sees returning is what he saw by the River Chebar in chapter one, and what he saw the day the city was given over to destruction. Same glory, same prophet, three sightings.

It leaves by the east and comes back by the east — the same road, retraced. Whatever brings the glory home again has to arrive from that direction, over that hill. Verse 5 is the sentence to hold on to: the glory of the LORD *filled the temple*, the same thing said of the tabernacle and of Solomon's house on their dedication days.

The house Ezekiel sees filled is not Zerubbabel's — that one is still ahead, and a later section of this paper takes it up. What matters here is the situation Zerubbabel's builders were working in. By the time they finished, the problem was not merely that the new house was plainer than the old one. The house was a container for a presence that had already gone out of it, and had gone out eastward. That is the disappointment the old men were weeping over — and it is the disappointment a prophet is about to address head-on.

The Latter Glory

Haggai prophesies in the second year of King Darius (Hag. 1:1) — after the return from exile, while the rebuilding is underway and not yet finished. He isn't addressing a nation in general. He names his hearers: Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and the remnant of the people (Hag. 2:2), the very men doing the work. And he opens by putting his finger directly on their disappointment:

Haggai 2:3

> "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?"

Those are the old men of Ezra 3:12, decades on, still able to remember Solomon's house and still watching this one go up beside that memory. Into that question, and to those men, standing at that half-built house, comes the promise:

Haggai 2:6-9

> "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

"Greater than the former" is a specific claim, made about a specific building, spoken to men who had just been asked to admit that the building looked like nothing. It is also a promise with a visible outcome. Either the glory came to this house, or it did not.

So did it come?

Not at the dedication. The second temple was finished about four years after Haggai spoke, and the record of that day says the people celebrated with joy and offered sacrifices (Ezra 6:15-17). It says nothing about a cloud, nothing about fire, nothing about a glory filling the house. Haggai's promise hadn't been kept by the time the doors opened.

There's a hint in the promise itself as to why. What Haggai promises to fill the house with is glory, the word Scripture used of the tabernacle and of Solomon's house on the days God came into them (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11). The silver and the gold He already owns (Hag. 2:8). What the house lacked was the one thing no offering could supply, and the NKJV puts a name on what the nations come to: *the Desire of All Nations* (Hag. 2:7).

The natural place to look for the fulfillment is the building itself, and that's where the search runs out. Herod the Great — the king on the throne when Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1) — began a renovation of the second temple centuries after Zerubbabel finished it, and eventually gave the complex a scale and finish Solomon's builders never approached. The ancient historian Josephus, writing outside Scripture, describes stonework and gold plating meant to overwhelm anyone who saw it. But stonework was never what made a temple's glory. What filled Solomon's house was God's own presence descending into it. Herod couldn't supply that, and no builder could.

Malachi, the last prophet to speak before four hundred years of silence, says how the glory would come back to the house:

Malachi 3:1

> "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

Two figures stand in that verse: a messenger who prepares, and the Lord who then arrives at His own house. Jesus later identified the first one by name, and He did it while the crowds were still trying to work out who John the Baptist had been:

Matthew 11:10

> "For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'"

So the messenger came, and the one he prepared for was the Lord coming to His temple, in person and suddenly. John's Gospel had already told his reader how that could be possible before the temple scene ever begins:

John 1:1-3, 14

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made

> that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John identifies the One who becomes flesh before he says anything about the flesh. The Word was with God and was God, and everything that exists was made through Him. So the One who walks into the temple courts in chapter two is not a representative sent on God's behalf; He is the One the house was built for, and the One who made the ground it stands on.

The word John uses for "dwelt" is the verb for pitching a tent — the same picture as the tabernacle that preceded Solomon's temple, where the glory first came down. John's opening chapter says the glory has come back and has taken up residence in a body, and that men have seen it. His second chapter then walks that body into the temple courts, where it calls the building "My Father's house" (John 2:16).

That's Haggai's latter glory, come to the house in a form nobody standing at the foundation could have pictured: on foot, up from Galilee, in the body of a Man. It came to be received. Whether this house would be filled with it was a question the men in its courts were about to answer.

"Zeal for Your House"

Back in the temple courts, watching Jesus drive out the traders and overturn the tables, the disciples remember a line from the Scriptures (John 2:17). It comes from a psalm, and the psalm repays a look.

Psalm 69:9

> Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

Psalm 69 is one of the psalms the New Testament writers return to constantly, and always in connection with Jesus' rejection and death. Two lines from it show why:

Psalm 69:4, 21

> Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, Being my enemies wrongfully. . . . They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Jesus quoted the first of those about Himself in the upper room (John 15:25), and the second one was carried out on Him at the cross, where He was offered sour wine mixed with gall (Matt. 27:34, 48). Paul cites the same psalm's next line about reproaches when he describes Christ (Rom. 15:3). So what the disciples quote in the temple courts is a line about zeal for God's house; the psalm it sits in is about what that zeal costs the one who has it.

Something in John's quotation does not survive the trip into English. Set the two verses side by side as the NKJV prints them and they match exactly: Psalm 69:9 says the zeal *has eaten me up*, and John 2:17 says the zeal *has eaten Me up*. Past tense in both — a thing already done.

That is the psalm's tense, not John's. The Hebrew of Psalm 69:9 is past, and the NKJV carries that same past tense over into John's quotation of it. But the Greek verb John actually wrote is future: the zeal *will eat Me up*. He didn't simply repeat his source. He changed when it happens.

Flattened into one tense on the English page, the difference disappears, and most readers never know a choice was made. It is a choice, though, and it points forward. In the psalm the zeal has already done its work. In John it's still ahead of Him. The scene in the temple courts is the beginning of what this zeal will cost Him, not the end of it.

John's account has a shape to it: he records the disciples remembering twice. They remember the psalm on the spot (John 2:17), and they remember Jesus' own sentence only *after* He is raised (John 2:22). Both times, understanding arrives late. John records it without faulting them, and in doing so tells his reader how this Gospel is meant to be read — much of what Jesus said made sense only from the far side of the resurrection.

Is This the Cleansing the Other Gospels Record?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke also record Jesus clearing the temple — but at the very end of His ministry, in the final week, not at the beginning. Matthew tells it this way:

Matthew 21:12-13

> Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

Mark and Luke tell it the same way and in the same week (Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46). There are two ways this is commonly handled.

Some read it as one event that John has moved to the front of his Gospel for thematic reasons. Others read it as two separate occasions at opposite ends of the ministry. This project takes the second view, for reasons drawn from the accounts themselves:

- John's setting is the first of the Passovers he records, and he records at least three (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). His placement is tied to a dated feast, not floated free.
- Only John has the whip of cords, and only John has oxen and sheep (John 2:15).
- The words spoken are different, and only one of the two sayings is a quotation. In John, Jesus objects to the house being made *a house of merchandise* (John 2:16). In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, He calls it *a den of thieves*, joining a line from Isaiah 56:7 to a line from Jeremiah 7:11 — a charge about corruption, not merely about commerce.
- The "destroy this temple" saying surfaces again years later at Jesus' trial, thrown at Him by witnesses as something He had said in the past (Mark 14:58) — which fits a saying spoken early and remembered long.

Nothing in the rest of this paper depends on settling that question. If the two accounts describe one occasion, every point made here still stands, because the argument rests on what John says Jesus meant (John 2:21), not on where the episode sits in a timeline.

There is, though, one detail in John's wording that the other three accounts do not carry, and it points somewhere specific. "House of merchandise" is close to the last line of Zechariah's prophecy:

Zechariah 14:21

> Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

The word rendered "Canaanite" carries the sense of a trader or merchant. Zechariah 14 is a chapter about the kingdom — the LORD standing on the Mount of Olives (14:4), the nations going up year after year to worship the King and keep the Feast of Tabernacles (14:16). Its closing promise is that in that day there will be no merchant in God's house. Jesus walks into that house and clears the merchants out of it. Anyone in those courts who knew Zechariah had the vocabulary to recognize what was being acted out in front of them.

The Sign They Asked For

With the tables overturned and the animals driven out, the men in the courts put one question to Jesus: "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" (John 2:18). That demand belongs to a pattern Scripture names outright:

1 Corinthians 1:22

> For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.

Signs, in Scripture, are given to Israel. John says so about his own book:

John 20:30-31

> And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

"Christ" is not a second name. It's an Old Testament word for an anointed king, the title Israel had been waiting on for centuries. The signs John selected are credentials presented to a nation about her King and the kingdom offered through Him, and the life he promises to those who believe them is promised to a people who were already God's own (Ex. 4:22). Read that way, the verse is telling Israel who her King is, and what believing it would bring her.

So when Jesus is asked for a sign to justify what He has just done, He gives the largest sign this Gospel contains, and gives it in one sentence:

John 2:19

> Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The form of that sentence carries part of its meaning. "Destroy" is a command in form, but nobody in those courts is being authorized to demolish a building. It's the kind of challenge that means *go ahead and do it, and watch what follows*. The sign is not something He will perform on request. It is something they will perform on Him.

The men in the courts hear a claim about the building and object on reasonable grounds:

John 2:20

> Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

That number can be checked. Herod began the rebuilding around 20-19 B.C., which puts this Passover around A.D. 27-28 — the opening of Jesus' public ministry. Their count is not a round figure or a complaint; it's a construction record. Josephus reports that the wider complex wasn't actually completed until the A.D. 60s, only a few years before the Romans destroyed it. Forty-six years of work, and more to come, and then rubble.

John records their misunderstanding without ridiculing it. He wants it on record, so that his own correction lands with full weight: *He was speaking of the temple of His body* (John 2:21).

The same sign is given elsewhere in other words. When another group demanded a sign, Jesus answered:

Matthew 12:39-40

> But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

One sign, offered twice, in two different sets of words: a body put into death and brought out of it on the third day. Israel asked repeatedly for something to authenticate the King, and repeatedly got the same answer.

After Two Days, on the Third Day

"Three days" was already a timetable, the one Israel's own prophet had been given for the nation's restoration after judgment.

Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom in the years before Assyria carried it off, and his whole book runs on one picture: a wife who has been unfaithful, a husband who has every right to be done with her, and a restoration that comes anyway. The last verse of chapter five is God speaking, and it sets the terms:

Hosea 5:15

> I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.

Chapter six opens with the people answering:

Hosea 6:1-2

> Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight.

Read together, those verses are national. Hosea's subject is a people torn and struck by God's own hand, who will be revived and raised up to live in His sight — the same people, restored to the same land, under the same God. And the order matters. God withdraws to His own place, as the glory withdrew in Ezekiel's vision, and stays there *till* they acknowledge their offense (Hos. 5:15). The raising up comes after the nation says "let us return" (Hos. 6:1).

The days in that passage are not twenty-four-hour days. Scripture supplies its own measure:

2 Peter 3:8

> But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

On that reckoning, Hosea's two days are the roughly two thousand years of Israel's national death, which is where the nation has been since the King was refused — set aside, scattered, not living in His sight. A Jewish state on the land today doesn't change the count. The nation hasn't yet said "let us return," so it's still the second day. Hosea's third day is the thousand-year kingdom, when the nation is revived and raised up, and the promises made to her are kept in full. Israel keeps her place in that count, and she is raised on the day Hosea named, once she has turned.

Put John 2:19 beside Hosea 6:2 and the sign gets much larger. Jesus' body, put to death and raised the third day, is the whole national pattern in miniature and performed first in one Man. What Israel was promised on the scale of millennia, the King goes through in three days, in public, in front of witnesses — and then tells the nation that this is the sign she will be given when she demands one (Matt. 12:39).

They did get it. They simply didn't understand it until it had already happened (John 2:22).

Not Made With Hands

Hebrews later states directly what John 2:21 leaves as a short aside. Every temple built by human hands — Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's — was only ever a copy of something greater. Hebrews says so about the tabernacle at the head of the whole line, and it grounds the claim in what God told Moses on the mountain:

Hebrews 8:5

> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Moses wasn't designing. He was reproducing something he had been shown. And if the tent was a copy, so was every building that succeeded it:

Hebrews 9:11

> But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Hebrews 9:24

> For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

That reframes the whole sequence. Solomon's temple was real, and its destruction was real judgment. Zerubbabel's rebuilding was real, and so was the promise Haggai spoke while it was going up. But both buildings were, in Hebrews' own word, *copies* — earthly patterns of a heavenly original that no stonework could contain. Zerubbabel rebuilt the copy after judgment and exile. Christ does what no governor could do: He identifies His own body as the true house the copies had been standing in for.

That "made with hands / not made with hands" language did not first appear in Hebrews. It appears at Jesus' trial, in the mouths of the men trying to convict Him:

Mark 14:58

> "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'"

Mark calls this false witness (14:57), and it is: they have Him saying *I will destroy*, when what He said was *you destroy* — the difference between a threat and a challenge. But the distinction they garbled is the one that matters, and they preserved it by accident. Three days. Made with hands, and not made with hands. Years after the fact, the sentence was still circulating in Jerusalem, still not understood, and now doing duty as evidence in a capital trial.

It follows Him to the cross:

Mark 15:29

> And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days,"

They mocked Him with the sign at the exact moment the sign was being fulfilled. And it outlived Him in the charge brought against Stephen, who was accused of saying that *this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place* (Acts 6:14).

The sign has two halves, and Scripture keeps them in order. The cross was public execution, and the suffering comes first, the glory after it. Jesus said so Himself on the road to Emmaus:

Luke 24:26

> "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

Peter puts it the same way when he describes what the prophets were searching for — the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that would follow (1 Pet. 1:11). The glory follows the suffering, at the resurrection and at the King's return. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" has both halves in it, in that order.

From "My Father's House" to "Your House"

At the first Passover of His ministry Jesus calls the building *My Father's house* (John 2:16). Near the end, standing in the same complex, He calls it something else:

Matthew 23:38-39

> "See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

The possessive has changed hands, and the nation goes with the house: the house was where God dwelt among His people (Ex. 25:8), and the ones He's speaking to are Jerusalem's own children (Matt. 23:37). But the same sentence puts a limit on the desolation: *till*. The nation will see Him again on the day she welcomes Him in the words of her own psalm (Ps. 118:26). And within a few sentences He tells the disciples what will become of the stonework:

Matthew 24:2

> And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

That judgment was carried out in A.D. 70, when Rome burned and dismantled the complex, within the lifetime of some who heard Him say it.

So the second house ends the way the first one did. The glory came back into it, walked its courts, was refused, and left — and it left by the road Ezekiel had watched it take. Forty days after He rose (Acts 1:3), Jesus was taken up before His disciples' eyes, and Luke records where they were standing:

Acts 1:11-12

> who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

The glory went out from the Mount of Olives once more, with a promise that it would come back the way it went. The building it left behind was destroyed again. (This project treats "your house is left to you desolate" as its own subject; it is named here only because the temple's story cannot be told without it.)

The House Still to Be Built

It would be easy to draw the wrong conclusion here — that since Jesus is the true temple, the buildings are finished, Israel's temple was a stopgap, and the story of houses in Jerusalem is over. Scripture does not permit that conclusion.

Zechariah 6:12-13

> Then speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: 'Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'"

The BRANCH is a title, and the prophets attach it to one specific person — the King promised out of David's line:

Jeremiah 23:5

> "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth."

So Zechariah is saying, twice in one breath, that the coming Davidic King will build the temple of the LORD, and that He will bear the glory and rule on His throne as a priest. A temple and a throne, held by the same Person, at the same time — and the passage was future when Zechariah wrote it, and still future when Jesus stood in Herod's courts.

Ezekiel spends nine chapters on the measurements of that house (Ezek. 40-48), which is the house he sees the glory return to, coming in from the east. And he states its terms:

Ezekiel 37:26-27

> Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Zechariah 14, the chapter that ends with no merchant in God's house, fills in who else is there:

Zechariah 14:16

> And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

The same chapter opens with the LORD's own feet standing on the Mount of Olives:

Zechariah 14:4

> And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.

That's the same hill the glory paused over on its way out of the city, centuries earlier, in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 11:23), and the hill Jesus was taken up from (Acts 1:12). The mountain of the departure and the mountain of the return are the same mountain. A house, a King, a nation restored to her land, and Gentile nations coming up to her — the kingdom is both heavenly and earthly, and Israel's portion of it is on the ground, in a real city, with a real house in it.

That's where Haggai's promise is finally kept. Haggai already speaks of the house on that hill as one house across its rebuildings — he asks who is left that saw "this temple in its former glory" (Hag. 2:3), meaning Solomon's — so the promise belongs to the house of the LORD in that place. And it's still standing open. Long after the cross, the writer of Hebrews quotes Haggai's shaking of heaven and earth as something God *has promised* and has not yet done (Heb. 12:26; Hag. 2:6). In Haggai that shaking, "I will fill this temple with glory," and "in this place I will give peace" are one oracle (Hag. 2:6-9). The latter glory was offered to the house at the first coming. It fills the house when He comes back.

So the line of temples does not stop at John 2. Jesus being the reality the copies pointed to does not cancel the promise that a house will be built for Him in the kingdom. It settles who the house belongs to.

The House He Occupies Now

The New Testament does apply temple language to Christians. Two passages carry it:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

> Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Ephesians 2:19-22

> Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Those passages do not say the Christian has taken over Israel's house, or that the building in Jerusalem has been quietly swapped out for a congregation. They say that the same God who once filled a building with His presence now dwells in people, and that those people are being fitted together into something He intends to occupy.

The tense in Ephesians carries a good deal: *grows*, and *are being built together*. That's unfinished work, described as ongoing. Nothing about it is in doubt as to whether God will keep what is His — Paul's readers are already citizens and already members of the household when he writes this. What is described is a building still going up.

The scene in John 2 was Israel's, and the house was hers. What carries over to the Christian comes as a second step: the kingdom Israel was offered and refused is offered now to him (Matt. 21:43), and the King who walked into His Father's house will one day examine the house God dwells in now, the life of each Christian (1 Cor. 3:13). Jesus didn't walk into a building God had abandoned to its own devices; He walked into His Father's house and objected to what had been carried into it. So the question for a Christian is never whether he belongs to God. It's what has been set up in the courts. Trading tables get carried into God's house a little at a time, by people who are certain they're being useful, and they are always there for a reason — the sacrifices did need animals, and the temple tax did need the right coinage. That is precisely what makes them hard to see.

Romans 12:1

> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

What Paul asks for is not agreement and not admiration. He asks for the body — the thing that gets up in the morning and goes wherever it has already decided to go. That's what he wants laid on the altar, and it isn't a condition of belonging to God; it is what he asks of people who already do.

And what Jesus did when He found the wrong things in His Father's house is on record. He didn't negotiate with the traders, or wait for the festival to end, or resolve to address it at a better time. He made a whip, drove them out, and turned the tables over on the floor — on the first day He walked in.

The King is coming back to look at His house. What He finds there settles nothing about whether the house is His; that was settled at a price already paid (1 Cor. 6:20). What it settles is what has been allowed to set up in the courts in the meantime, what the life built there is found to be worth when fire tests it (1 Cor. 3:12-15), and with that, whether the man who built it reigns with the King in the kingdom he was offered (2 Tim. 2:12).

The Whole Line of Houses

Set the whole sequence out and the shape of it is hard to miss.

Moses raised a tent and God filled it. Solomon built the first house and God filled that too, and it was destroyed for the nation's unfaithfulness. Zerubbabel rebuilt it, without the glory, to the sound of old men weeping — and Herod later gave that same house a magnificence that still couldn't supply what it lacked. Into those courts walked the One in whom the glory had come back to Jerusalem, and He was refused, and that house was destroyed too, exactly as He said it would be (Matt. 24:2).

Between those two destructions, the true house stood in plain sight in the temple courts and was mistaken for a man arguing about livestock.

He was torn down. He did not stay down. And the sign He gave — three days — is the same schedule Hosea gave for the nation that refused Him, which means her restoration is as certain as His resurrection and rests on the same word, waiting only on the day she says what He told her she would say (Matt. 23:39).

Still ahead there is a house to be built, by the Branch, in the kingdom (Zech. 6:12-13), with Israel in her land and the nations going up to worship the King. And past even that — past the thousand years of the kingdom itself (Rev. 20:4-6) — John is shown something further:

Revelation 21:1-3

> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

Then, looking at that city, he reports the one thing about it he did not expect to report:

Revelation 21:22

> But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

No building at all, once everything before it has passed away. Every house from the tabernacle forward had been built to say one thing, and the voice from heaven finally says it with no building attached: *the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.* When that is true without qualification, the copies have nothing left to say, and the sentence spoken in the temple courts turns out to have been the plainest description of the whole arrangement anyone ever gave: destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.