

“Destroy This Temple”
John 2:18-21
(Preached at Trinity, May 31, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After Jesus and His disciples left the wedding they traveled about a day's journey to Capernaum where they remained for a few days. They then traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover.
2. As Jesus entered the Temple He found the chaotic scene of commercial transactions going on.
 - A. During the Passover people came from great distances to observe the occasion. Distance made it difficult to bring the suitable lamb and they had to meet the strict scrutiny of the Temple officials. Animals were available for purchase in the Temple and prices were high. In addition, they didn't accept foreign money in the Temple so tables were set up to exchange currency.
 - B. The scene would have been chaotic with the sound of animals braying, the sound of coins changing hands, and loud bantering as pilgrims tried to get the best deal. It was hardly a scene conducive to worship.
But no one seemed to care.
3. In a great display of fury, Jesus made a scourge, overturned the tables, and drove out the entire group. We have to assume that Jesus had observed this for many years prior to this time. It was now, at the beginning of His ministry, that He displayed His authority as the Son of God.
4. At this point Jesus would have been a nobody. He grew up in Nazareth doing lowly work as a carpenter's son. Now, all of a sudden, Jesus marches into the Temple and empties the place. The merchants and money changers had probably conducted this activity for years. Who does this man think He is, barging in and throwing us out?
John 2:18 NAU - "The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"
5. The identity of these "Jews" isn't given but presumably they were men of authority. Perhaps the Temple-police or the scribes or the priests. Those in authority were asking Jesus what right He had to rule the Temple? It's interesting, they weren't trying to defend the activity in the Temple, only the right of Jesus to correct it.
6. The NASB and NIV use the word "authority." It isn't actually in the text but so strongly implied they didn't put it in italics. Literally the original simply reads: "What sign do You show to us, that You do these things?"
By asking for a sign they are asking, "Provide us with your credentials." "Show us your authentication." "By what authority have you entered the Temple and taken charge? Who gave you jurisdiction over the Temple?"

7. It was a bold and audacious act to overthrow the tables and throw people out of the Temple. His words must have been stunning:
John 2:16 NAU - "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."
- A. They were wondering, "What did He mean by "My Father's house. . ."? I've pointed out that there was a high messianic expectation during this time. The actions of Jesus had messianic overtones.
- B. They could not deny the force of His authority.
 Don't forget the Temple was well protected by the Temple security – and they didn't touch Jesus. These leaders questioned the source of His authority; they were threatened by it and jealous of it, but they could not deny it.
- C. It was actually great wickedness. Instead of accepting the corruption of their actions in the Temple they tried to turn the guilt upon Christ.
 William Hendriksen writes:
 "The request for a sign was not only stupid, however; it was also *wicked*. It was the result of unwillingness to admit guilt. The authorities should have been ashamed of all this graft and greed within the temple-court. Instead of asking Jesus by what right he had cleansed the temple, they should have confessed their sins and thanked him."¹
 In addition Hendriksen adds:
 "The majestic manner in which Jesus performed this task, so that none, seeing him, even dared to resist, was proof sufficient that the Messiah had entered the temple and was purging it, as had been predicted. What additional sign could one ask for?"²
8. The sign He chose to give affected them so profoundly it set the course of the remainder of His three-year ministry.
- A. It was used at His trial as a basis for His condemnation.
Matthew 26:59-61 NAU - "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. ⁶⁰ They did not find *any*, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, ⁶¹ and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"
- B. It was the slur they shouted at Him as He hung on the cross.
Matthew 27:39-40 NAU - "And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."
9. Tonight I want to examine the sign and how it was received by the Jewish authorities. I want us to see that it was a sign *delayed*, a sign *displayed*, and a sign *despised*.

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 1:124.

² *Ibid.*

- I. It was a delayed sign
- A. The Jews were expecting to see some mighty display of power; some miracle that would amaze them.
1. The air was full of Messianic expectations. Jesus was largely unknown, but people were quickly being stirred by what they saw in Christ.
John 2:23 NAU - "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing."
 2. These in the Temple were insisting on some great sign to validate Jesus. This was always the pattern of the Jews. They looked for signs to validate the power of God. Paul would later declare this in his preaching
1 Corinthians 1:22-24 NAU - "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."
 3. But this mighty sign was not immediately seen
- B. This sign would not be fulfilled until the cross – but they couldn't understand
1. He taught His disciples plainly
Matthew 16:21 NAU - "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."
Matthew 17:22-23 NAU - "And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; ²³ and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved."
 2. For the unbelieving Jesus spoke in parables
Matthew 13:10-11 NAU - "And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."
 3. Jesus left them in their unbelief

II. It was a displayed sign – Jesus was speaking of Himself

A. “Destroy this Temple”

1. In the wilderness, the Tabernacle was the powerful display of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. It signified the holy.
2. Jesus uses a different word that that found in **Verses 14-15**. There the word ἱερόν is used, which refers to the entire Temple complex. Here in **Verse 19** Jesus uses the word, ναός which refers to the sacred shrine where God dwells.

a. The former is not used metaphorically in the NT but the latter is-- here used of the body of Christ.

b. It is also applied to believers to signify the body of Christ and the holy presence of God, thus making us a holy vessel:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NAU - "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

Here it is applied to the church corporate. In **Chapter 6** it is applied to the individual.

1 Corinthians 6:19 NAU - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

2 Corinthians 6:15-16 NAS - "Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

B. Jesus is the Temple of God, the presence of God, God with us.

1. God's shekinah glory shone forth from the Temple. Jesus IS the shekinah glory. John writes:

John 1:14 NAU - " And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

2. The Temple was a type of Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the true Temple. Jesus was the Temple displayed before their very eyes.

They would seek to destroy Him. - "Destroy this temple"

a. In the sovereign purpose of God, the Jews would be the means of bringing about the very sign they asked for. He was torn, beaten, and nailed to a cross to die. He died and was placed in the tomb. From all outward observation, He was destroyed.

b. In reality, by killing the antitype they destroyed the type. When Jesus died the Temple veil was rent. The entire Jewish sacrificial system came to an end. The physical Temple ceased to have significance. In 70 AD the physical structure was forever destroyed

III. It was a despised sign

- A. They rejected Jesus' authority, His words, and His actions
1. All of those present should have stood up and cheered. Jesus was standing for the purity of the House of God and of the worship of God. No one cared.
 2. Instead there was widespread disapproval
- B. They despised the sign of Jesus and spoke against it
- John 2:20 NAU** - "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"
1. Had they humbled themselves before Him He would have taught them plainly. Instead He left them in their ignorance.
 2. They did not have spiritual understanding. They could only think in physical terms.
1 Corinthians 2:14 NAU - " But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."
 3. The physical Temple had no meaning without Christ. He was the ultimate fulfillment and display of the Temple of God.
 4. But the Jews could not see.
Their hardness of hearts would continue to be their undoing. At the cross this would be the wicked source of their mockery.
Matthew 27:39-40 NAU - "And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

Conclusion:

- We need to draw a couple points of application from this.
1. First, the Scriptures clearly taught the true nature of the Messiah. They should have seen.
 - a. Understanding the Word of God demands a believing heart that only God can give. Those with a hard, unbelieving heart will continue to reject Christ to their own condemnation.
 - b. Notice this passage begins and ends with a reference to the Word of God.
John 2:17 NAU - "His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."
John 2:22 NAU - "So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken."
 - c. One must approach God's Word with a heart to believe.
 Those with an unbelieving heart will not listen and will not hear.
 2. Second, we need to marvel that God's Temple abides with us. The Temple of Christ's body was destroyed, but on the third day it was raised.
 Jesus is now with us with His abiding presence, His shekinah glory, His unfailing mercy seat.
 And He dwells in us by His Spirit. As the body of Christ, we are His holy Temple.
1 Corinthians 6:19 NAU - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you
 Leon Morris: "This gives dignity to the whole of life, such as nothing else could do. Wherever we go we are the bearers of the Holy Ghost, the temples in which God is pleased to dwell. This rules out all such conduct that is not appropriate to the temple of God. Nothing that would be amiss in God's temple is seemly in the child of God."³

³ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997) pages 99-100.