

One Greater Than the Temple
John 8:1-11

Intro: During a crisis about who he is and charges from the authorities of blasphemy and insurrection (ch 7), Jesus continues steadfastly in his Father's business at his father's house (see different versions of Luke 2:49).

V 1 – This text opens with Jesus leaving Jerusalem and going to the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley.

Mountains are mentioned over 500 times in the Bible. They have a logical symbolism since Israel is dotted with them and they have a spiritual symbolism since many religious encounters took place on them –

1 – Mt. Aarat – 16,845 ft – Noah's ark rests there – Gen 8:1-5

2 – Mt. Sinai – 7,497 ft – Moses received the Ten Commandments – Ex 19-20, 24

3 – Mt. of Olives – 2,710 ft - Jesus prayed there before his arrest – Luke 22:39-49

4 – Mt. Zion – 2,510 ft. David captured this Jebuside stronghold and Solomon built the

Temple there

5 – Mt. Tabor – 1,886 ft – Jesus was transfigured there – Matt 17:1-9

6 – Mt. Carmel – 1,724 – Elijah fought Baal's prophets there – 1 Kings 18

7 – Mt. Eremos – 656 ft (actually at a negative altitude about 86 feet below sea level) -

Sermon on the Mount – Mt 5

Jesus spent important time on mountains –

1 - Jesus' temptation (Matthew 4:8),

2 - the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12),

3 - a number of healings (Matthew 15:29-31),

4 - the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1),

5- Jesus' final discourse (Matthew 24:3),

6- the commissioning of the Apostles (Matthew 28:16-20)

And that is how this text opens, with Jesus on the Mount of Olives –

John 8:1-11 - but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

It is probably safe to say that Jesus invested the time on the Mount of Olives in prayer before

v 2a - returning to Jerusalem and specifically, the Temple.

First: The Temple

In Jesus's time, no place on earth was holier than the Temple Mount, known as *Har Habayit*, the "*Mountain of the House of God*." It is here that God has, for centuries, conversed with prophets and priests and on which a Temple had been built for his glory and his dwelling.

- 1 – The Ark was moved between Shechem and Shiloh
- 2 – It was moved to Jerusalem after David captured the city
- 3 – David chose Moriah, where Abraham built the altar to sacrifice Isaac
- 4 - Solomon completed the first Temple in 956 BC
- 5 – The building was not large, but the courtyard was expansive
 - It faced eastward
 - It was oblong, consisting of 3 rooms of equal width
 - The Porch or vestibule
 - The Holy Place
 - The Holy of Holies (where the ark rested)
 - A storehouse surrounded the Temple

6 - The Temple was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon who removed the Temple treasures in 604 and 597 and destroyed the building in 587/586.

7 - Cyrus II of Persia conquered Babylon and in 538 allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple.

8 – The Jews completed the second Temple in 515 BC, only a modest version of the original building.

9 – The ark of the covenant and the Mercy Seat were lost but the rituals continued.

10 – Antiochus IV Epiphanies plundered it in 169 BC, deamdnign that sacrifices be made to Zeus. This began the Hasmonean revolt during which Judas Maccabeus cleansed and rededicated the Temple, celebrated annually by Hanukkah.

11 – Pompey entered Jerusalem in 63 BC but left the Temple intact.

12 – In Marcus Licinius Crassus plundered the Temple treasury.

13 – Herod the Great, the Roman appointed king of Judaea, began rebuilding it in 20 BC and constructed lasted 46 years, during which time Herod doubled the size of the surrounding area.

14 – The Herodian Temple was the center of life for Israel. It held a copy of the entire Old Testament and the Sanhedrin, Israel's Supreme Court, met there.

Two Pictures

No other single complex in the Greco-Roman world compared to the Temple in Jesus's time. Herod nearly doubled the size of the original Temple Mount under Solomon, making it almost 40 acres; 32 football fields. The Roman forum was only 20 acres. The largest temple complex in the world, the Karnak in Upper Egypt was 2,0000 years in the making and 60 acres.

- 1 – One thousand priests trained as masons to build the holiest parts

2 – Ten thousand workers, using a thousand wagons to transport materials, constructed the rest of the building

3 – The Temple proper took a year and a half to build

4 – The courtyards and porticos were under construction for eight years

5 – Refining work lasted until 64 AD, only six years before Titus destroyed it in 70 AD

At its pinnacle at the southeastern corner, the Temple stood 211 feet high (the Roman Colosseum is 159 feet tall) and the Kidron Valley rested over 400 feet below, the highest, ancient, man-made structure. In contrast, the Acropolis is 511 tall and but the Parthenon is only 45 feet tall.

15 – The Temple was destroyed on the of AV/Father, 4 August.

16 – All that remains today is the Western Wall.

17 – The Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque was constructed there in 691 AD.

18 – Israel regained control of the Temple in 1967.

Second: Jesus & The Temple

Both Solomon and Herod's Temples were wonders of the ancient world. Of course, the objects in the Holy Place and Holies of Holies were not in Herod's Temple. Nor did God's presence any longer visit the Temple, but it was beautiful and seen as the place God revealed himself.

Jesus still considered it "my Father's house" (John 2:16) and "my house" (Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

From the beginning of his life to its end, his life was found up in the Temple.

1 – Joseph and Mary dedicated him there – Luke 2:22-24

2 – Twelve years later, they found him there – Luke 2:46

3 – He began his ministry there in the Spirit – Matt 4:5

4 – He healed the blind and lame there – Matt 21:14

5 – He taught there – John 8:2; Luke 19:47, 21:38; John 18:20

6 – He celebrated the feasts there – John 7:14

7 – On one occasion, the people tried to crown him King there – Matt 21:15

8 – He protected the Temple, cleansing it – John 2:13-16; Matt 21:12

9 – He taught that He was the true Temple – John 2:19-21; Matt 12:6

10 – At his death, the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was rent from top to bottom – Matt 27:51.

Hebrews 10:19-22 - *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw*

near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

And what does all of that have to do with our text?

Remember that in John 8:2 – “...he came to the temple.”

Matthew 12:1-6 - At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” ³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

See vs 5 & 7 –

- 5 - The priests were guilty
- 7 - The people were guiltless

These Jews are ready to sacrifice this woman’s life. Jesus is about to extend her mercy. He’s doing the opposite of the Jewish leadership. He’s giving mercy, and not condemnation to the guilty, to a woman who is literally, a stone’s throw away from death.

What is the point of the Temple?

- 1 – It is where God meets his people
- 2 – It is where God’s people are forgiven their sin

² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

One greater than the Temple said that.

In our desire to know what Jesus wrote in the sand, we tend to look down. We don't know what Jesus wrote in the sand. God didn't tell us. Instead of looking down, we should be looking up. Everything Jesus said and did in this text is in the shadow of the Temple.

What is the point of the Temple?

- 1 – It is where God meets his people
- 2 – It is where God's people are forgiven their sin

In that regard, this woman stands as a model for all that Christ has come to do as the third Temple.

- 1 – She meets God
- 2 – Her sin is forgiven

And we'll look at it next week.