

INTRODUCTION

A group of University of Arkansas fraternity guys wanted to keep the school mascot in their dorm. As you may or may not know, the Arkansas mascot is a razorback, or a hog. These students went to the Dean of Students and asked if they could keep the hog, whose name is Tusk, inside their fraternity house. The Dean said, “Well there’s only one problem. What about the smell?” One of the fraternity guys said, “Oh don’t worry, old Tusk will get used to it!”

Fraternity boys may live in a dirty house, but we’re going to learn that God *won’t* live in a dirty house.

There are a lot of expectations for the building of the Third Jewish Temple. It’s part of the plot of my last novel, *The Jerusalem Protocol*. In order to promote the message today, I even created some FAKE NEWS on my Facebook page. It’s really easy to do, and I’m not even Russian!

But the truth is that for exactly 1,897 years, the Jewish people didn’t have access THE most holy piece of real estate on earth—the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. But since the end of the Six-Day War in 1967, the Jewish people have controlled that 35-acre plot on the East side of old Jerusalem. The Israeli government has allowed the Muslims to continue to use the Temple Mount because the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque are built there.

But hundreds of thousands of religious Jews want to rebuild the Jewish Temple there. The Western Wall is part of the retaining Wall of the Temple Mount. And around the world, every religious Jew prays this prayer three times a day: “May it be Your Will that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our own time.”

For the past 38 years, the Temple Institute in Jerusalem has been making plans to build the next Temple. All the Temple implements used for worship have been recreated according to the specifications in Exodus and Leviticus. Priests have already been trained. Architectural plans have been drawn and the building materials have been stockpiled.

As recent as last May, when the U.S. dedicated the new embassy to Jerusalem, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, was looking at plans for the building of the Third Temple.

In fact, you may not know this, but I’m going to let you in on a big secret. The third Temple is in existence today. But it’s not on the Temple Mount, like in my fake news post. Are you ready? The Third Temple is Jesus. So, whenever anyone wants to talk about building a new Temple, to be correct, they should say the Third JEWISH Temple, because God’s third Temple is Jesus.

John 2:13-25 (CSB). “The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers’ coins

and overturned the tables. He told those who were selling doves, ‘Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!’

And his disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me.*

So the Jews replied to him, ‘What sign will you show us for doing these things?’

Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.”

Therefore the Jews said, “This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?”

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. Jesus, however, would not entrust himself to them, since he knew them all and because he did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man.”

**Psalm 69:9*

All four Gospel accounts relate the story of Jesus running the merchants out of the Temple area. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it happens a few days before the crucifixion. But in John’s account, it happens at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Most evangelical scholars believe that Jesus cleared out the temple at the beginning and then again three years later when the merchants had moved back in.

Let’s examine what Jesus did and then what He said.

I. HIS ATTITUDE: Jesus expressed righteous indignation over what He found in His Father’s House.

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned that some people think of Jesus a weak-kneed milquetoast kind of guy. They think Jesus was always nice and polite and never said or did anything that would make someone hate him. But Jesus was a strong man in body and in personality. And here we see him getting angry. He was not just angry, He was good and angry.

You may be thinking, “I thought anger was a sin.” There is a kind of anger that is a sin and a kind of anger that isn’t sinful.

There is a kind of raging anger that the Bible says is sinful. It happens when you lose your temper and say and do things that deeply hurt people. The Bible word for that is *thumos*, which means to lose your temper. The Bible says that this kind of raging anger is sinful.

When I was in high school I had an anger problem. I was extremely competitive. I was playing basketball one night for our high school team, and I kept getting fouled and the referee didn't call it. So as I would run down the court, I would get in his face and let him know that he must have been blind. I was so angry. About the third time I told him he needed glasses, he blew his whistle and stopped the game. He said, “Number 34, you are out of the game!” The gym got silent and I walked to the bench with my head hanging down. In my anger I had embarrassed my family, my school, and myself. That's the first time I realized I needed God to help me with my anger problem.

But there is another anger that isn't sinful, that's righteous anger. That Bible says, “In your anger, do not sin.” (Ephesians 4:26 NIV)

It was this righteous anger that Jesus experienced when He saw His Father's house being desecrated. Raging anger strikes out and hurts people with words and actions. Righteous anger always attacks an issue, an injustice. Righteous anger doesn't attack people. There is no indication that Jesus used the whip on any of the merchants. He was good and angry at the same time.

As Christians, we should express righteous anger or issues—but not toward people. We should be good and angry that our culture has allowed the killing of 60 million pre-born babies. We should be angry that our religious freedom is being threatened by those who would label evangelical Christians as intolerant haters. We should be good and angry at the things that made Jesus angry.

II. HIS ACTION: Jesus forcefully cleared out the things that prevented prayer and worship.

The outer courts of the Temple were called the court of the Gentiles. It was the only place where Gentiles could pray to the One true God. But these Jewish merchants had filled up the space with their stalls to sell sacrificial animals and exchange money. Their commerce was preventing the Gentiles from praying and worshipping.

Jesus got good and angry. He fashioned a whip out of cords. And with a voice like thunder, the one-man tornado waded into the merchant stalls and drove out the animals and turned over the tables. He shouted, “Get those out of here. You are making my Father's house a marketplace!”

Jesus cleaned house. He had the right to do it. It was the right of ownership. It was His Father's house. If I come over to your house and it's dirty, I'm not going to start cleaning it up. But I see something in my house that needs cleaning up I will take care of it as soon as my wife tells me to!

III. HIS CLAIM: Jesus claimed to be God's true Temple.

The Jewish officials were angry at Jesus for upsetting their monopoly. So they challenged Him by asking, "What sign can you show us that gives you the right to do what you've done?" Jesus didn't hesitate or back down. He said, "That's an easy one. Destroy this temple and in three days I'll rebuild it."

They thought he was talking about the temple building. They said, "You're crazy, it took forty-six years to build this temple, and you think you can raise it up in three days?" The Jews never forgot this claim. Three years later when Jesus was on trial their accusation was, "He claimed that He would destroy the Temple." That was a crime. It would be like someone making a credible threat that they were going to destroy the White House in Washington.

But of course, Jesus wasn't talking about the temple building. If you had been there, John and Peter would have glanced at each other with puzzled looks on their faces. They also thought Jesus was talking about a building. That's why John added the explanation that after the resurrection of Jesus they remembered this conversation and realized afterwards that He was talking about His body.

A few days before Jesus was crucified, He looked across at the Temple and said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate." (Matthew 23:37-38 CSB) God's presence was no longer abiding in the Holy of Holies. God won't live in a dirty house.

Throughout history God has been occupying several houses. Let's review God's houses. So how would you define God's Temple? It was a meeting place between a holy God and sinful people.

Even before there was a Temple, there was the Jewish Tabernacle. It was a portable tent Moses constructed when the Jews were making their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. God's glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle for about 500 years.

A. First Temple: Solomon's Temple (960-586 B.C.)

The next house was Solomon's Temple built in 957 B.C. The Ark of the Covenant that had been in the tabernacle was transferred to a more stable building. This Temple was magnificent. It took over 150,000 workmen seven years to build this beautiful building full of gold and silver. The value of the material alone in today's dollars would be \$157 trillion. That's about eight times more than the U.S. national debt. This temple was God's address until the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 586 B.C. The Ark of the Covenant was never mentioned again in the Bible.

B. Second Temple (514 B.C.–70 A.D.)

The Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple in 516 B.C. We read about the second temple’s construction in Ezra and Nehemiah. The Israelites were poor after returning from exile, so this second temple was rather plain and drab compared to the glory of Solomon’s Temple.

About 20 years before Mary gave birth to Jesus, Herod the Great started an upgrade on the temple. He started by using 10,000 slaves to level out the top of Mt. Moriah by building a huge platform surrounded by thick retaining walls. It became the size it is today, and the Western Wall is part of the retaining wall that Herod built. Renovations continued long after Herod died, in fact, the renovation wasn’t completed until 63 A.D. And then seven years later in 70 A.D., the Roman Army under Titus destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. And the Jewish people lost access and control of the Temple Mount until June of 1967.

While many Jews are wanting to build a third temple, God doesn’t need a building. He won’t occupy it, because He doesn’t need a building made by human hands. He already has a third Temple.

C. Third Temple: Jesus Christ.

The Temple is the dwelling place of God and in Colossians the Bible says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Colossians 2:9 NKJV)

When Jesus was having a conversation with the woman at the well in John 4, she asked about whether people should worship at the mountain in Jerusalem or the one in Samaria. Jesus said, “The time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...The time is coming and now is when true worshippers will worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:21, 23 NIV)

Worship is no longer about a place. It’s about a person: Jesus. And through Jesus, sinners can approach a Holy God. You don’t need to travel to Jerusalem to find God. You don’t have to make a pilgrimage to Mecca to look for God. You don’t have to travel to the Vatican to find God. It’s not about a place, it’s about a person. You only need to seek Jesus.

D. Fourth Temple: The people of God.

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven He told the disciples He was going to return to His Father, but He was going to send the Holy Spirit to take His place. Jesus said, “I have been with you, but HE will be IN you.” And on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled those 120 first believers, and God had another temple, the church. There are two expressions of God’s living Temple.

1. Jesus lives in US, the Church!

The Bible says, "For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16 CSB) Here's an easy way to remember this. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for his people, and in the New Testament, God has a people for His temple! He lives in the hearts of His people.

People still mistake the church house as God's dwelling. Sometimes people revere these buildings as if they are more holy or special than any other building. I call that an edifice complex. God doesn't live in bricks and mortar and steel. The early church didn't even have buildings for the first 300 years of Christianity. He lives in His church collectively, but there's another way He has a Temple.

2. Jesus lives in ME, a Believer!

Not only does God live in His people collectively, He also dwells in each believer individually. The Bible says, "Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So, glorify God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 CSB) You might hear someone say, "It's my body, and I can do with it whatever I please!" Well, if you're a child of God, you can't say that. You are not your own. We are to honor God with our bodies.

The most life-changing truth I've ever discovered is that the bottom line of Christian life is Christ in me. God WITH me is comforting. God FOR me is encouraging. But God living IN me is transforming. My entire life was radically changed when I started to grasp the impact of Christ living in me.

TAKE AWAY TRUTH: God wants to keep His Temple clean!

The Bible says, "So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1 CSB) Jesus drove out the animals and money-changers because they were preventing prayer and worship. Is there anything in your life that is hindering your prayer and worship? If Jesus took a cord and strolled through your personality, would there be things to which He would say, "Get out of here. You shouldn't be here!"

Remember the college guys who wanted to keep the hog in their house? Some people can be content to live in a dirty house. But God doesn't want to dwell in a filthy temple. When King David sinned, he prayed, "Wash away my guilt, and cleanse me from sin...Create in me a clean heart oh God." Would you be willing to ask Jesus to walk through the different areas of your life and clean you up? He's good at cleaning house. But you have to give Him access to all the rooms.

CONCLUSION

The world watched with great interest as the divers rescued the twelve Thai soccer players and their coach from the flooded cave. The rescue operation took eighteen days and cost the life of one of the volunteer divers. The young men and their coach were trapped in a dark place with little air and little food and water. The cave was going to flood further with expected rains.

As experts planned the rescue, nobody stopped to ask, "How much is this going to cost?" Because the attitude of the rescuers was "whatever it takes is worth it." And the world rejoiced as all the players and their coach made the transition from the darkness of the cave into the light of day. What an amazing rescue!

That might have ranked up there as the second most important rescue in history. The most important one was when Jesus died on the cross. The Bible says, "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." (Colossians 1:13 CSB) And as Jesus approached the cross He considered the cost and said, "Whatever it takes, Father. Not my will but yours be done." When Jesus was dying on the cross there was a curtain hanging in the Jewish Temple. It separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the world. God's presence had once dwelt there in the Holy of Holies. Only one man could enter into the presence of God once a year. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter there with the blood of a lamb. And on the afternoon Jesus died, that thick curtain was ripped in half from top to bottom. It was God's way of saying, "There is a new way to gain access to me. And that is through the true Temple, my Son Jesus."

Have you allowed Jesus to rescue you? Before He can rescue you, you must quit trying to save yourself and trust Jesus to rescue you. What if any of those Thai boys had decided to try to rescue themselves? What if they had said, "Nobody is coming, we have to save ourselves." We know the answer to that. Instead they had to put their faith in the rescuers and their plan, and then put themselves into the hands of those professional divers. What a great lesson for us. If we try to save ourselves, we will always fail. But if we trust ourselves to Jesus, God's true Temple, He will bring us out of the darkness of sin into His wonderful light.

So one day, the Israelis may build another Temple, but we can rejoice that Jesus is the true third temple and through Jesus, we who are sinful people can find forgiveness from a Holy God.

OUTLINE

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God's Temple: A meeting place between a holy God and sinful people.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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