

THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH HIS GLORY: JOHANNINE
TEMPLE-CHRISTOLOGY AND THE DEATH OF JESUS

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Summary:

The thesis of this paper is that the Apostle John portrays Jesus in his death as the cross-enthroned Messiah who is the true dwelling place of God's glory, replacing the Temple with its institutions, priesthood and cult as the locus of worship for the people of God.

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OUTLINE

Thesis: John portrays Jesus in his death as the cross-enthroned Messiah who is the true dwelling place of God's glory, replacing the Temple with its institutions, priesthood and cult as the locus of worship for the people of God.

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“The Temple he had spoken of was his body”: The temple-action in John (2:12 - 45)

John’s portrayal of Jesus’ death, so deeply entwined as it is with the many messianic riddles uniquely significant to the Fourth Evangelist, is one of the great hermeneutical enigmas of his gospel. Indeed, such a variety of evocative themes are knotted about the Johannine passion narrative that every new attempt to untangle them seems only to unravel new threads of interpretation. Among the more obvious themes are: Jesus as king and judge, Jesus as Son of Man glorified¹ or Jesus as prophet²; among the more subtle: Jesus as high priest³ or Jesus as eschatological Torah⁴; among the more thought-provoking: the Passion as cosmic warfare⁵ or the cross as a vision of the glory of God enthroned.⁶ Given this range of interpretations, it is justifiable to look for a unifying framework on which the varied thematic threads might be woven together into some kind of seamless whole.

While no single interpretive scheme could be expected to encompass the entire range of motifs present in John’s passion narrative, a cohesive framework tying many of them together emerges when we consider his first concrete, explicit reference to Jesus’ death: the temple-action of 2:13-25. Here we are presented with one of John’s most remarkable contrasts to the Synoptic tradition, placing the event at the start of Jesus’ ministry rather than during his last week at Jerusalem. To be sure, some scholars hold that John’s account does not indicate a deviation from the Synoptics at all, and reading the texts at face value, argue that Jesus performed two such “cleansings.” Carson, for instance, though he admits the question cannot be

¹ So W. R. G. Loader, “The Central Structure of Johannine Christology,” *New Testament Studies* 30 (April 1984): 188-216.

² See Adele Reinhartz, “Jesus as Prophet: Predictive Prolepses in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (June 1989): 3-16.

³ So John Paul Heil, “Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57.4 (October 1995): 729-45.

⁴ See Stephen J. Casselli, “Jesus as Eschatological Torah,” *Trinity Journal* 18 (1997): 15-41.

⁵ So Judith L. Kovacs, “‘Now Shall the Ruler of this World be Driven Out’: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 14.2 (1995): 227-47.

⁶ See Jey J. Kanagaraj, “Jesus the King, Merkabah Mysticism and the Gospel of John,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 47.2 (1996): 349-66.

resolved with certainty, calls the arguments for a single temple-cleansing “weak and subjective,” and concludes that “the most natural reading of the texts favors two.”⁷ However, given the centrality of the Temple in the many Jewish riots, revolts and uprisings of the first century,⁸ the suggestion that Jesus actually performed so politically volatile an act *twice* is historically implausible. The Temple’s significance as a fault-line of political instability might be more fully grasped if we consider that only in the Temple precincts did Rome grant priests the right of capital punishment; here they could carry out a “legal lynching: they could drag the intruder out of the holy area and split his skull with clubs.”⁹ So sensitive was temple security that the real puzzle of the incident is, as Wright notes, “the fact that Jesus managed to perform such a subversive and shocking action and escape immediate arrest.”¹⁰ In his assessment, “it is perfectly credible to imagine Jesus performing a dramatic and highly visible symbolic action without being arrested at once. From then on, however, he would of course be a marked man.”¹¹ In this historical context it is unlikely that Jesus performed such an action on two separate occasions with impunity. More likely is the assumption that John has placed this event at the start of his gospel for his own theological and thematic purposes.¹²

While Carson does not find explanations of John’s theological or literary motivations for having moved the temple narrative “intrinsically convincing,”¹³ when we consider this passage

⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 178.

⁸ See E. P. Sanders, *Judaism Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London: Trinity Press, 1992), 39-40 for examples, among which: In 5 BC protesters were tried and executed for tearing down Roman eagles from the gate of the Temple; in 41 AD ‘tens of thousands’ of Jews publicly protested emperor Gaius’s decree to have his statue erected in the Temple. In Sander’s words: “Threats to the Temple and to worship seem to have stirred more people than did military dominance ... but the later roused large numbers” (42).

⁹ Sanders, 61. Commenting on the warning notices forbidding Gentile access beyond the Court of the Gentiles on pain of death, Sanders notes: “It appears that, when Judea was directly governed by Rome, the priests were allowed to enforce this warning, though they could not otherwise sentence people to death.”

¹⁰ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 424.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹² Even if we grant that there actually were two separate events, we must ask what thematic purposes motivated John to include the earlier one (one not included by any of the other writers) and exclude the later, a question which leads to essentially the same inquiry.

¹³ Carson, 177.

carefully and trace its imagery closely through the rest of the book, it actually becomes a thematic lens through which we can read Jesus' whole career towards the cross, placed at the start of the work so as to illuminate all that follows. And if we allow Jesus' prediction in 2:19 of a razed and newly-raised Temple to resonate clearly, the whole action becomes for John an ominous prolepsis that not only prophesies but also interprets the coming hour of his passion. This prophetic word declaring Jesus' own body as the new or true Temple of the Lord, John's second prediction of his passion, is closely related to his first: Jesus' promise to Nathaniel that he will see the "angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (1:51). In this allusion to Genesis 28:12-15, Jesus' body is pictured as the stairway of Jacob's dream, on which angels traverse, above which stands the Lord, and the vision of which prompted Jacob to declare the place *bêt'  l h m* ("the house of God" 28:22). If we read this allusion with its full intertextual force, we hear Jesus' promise that just as Jacob discovered "none other than the house of God" (Gen 28:17) through his vision at Bethel, so too Nathaniel, the "true Israelite," will discover the true "house of God" when he glimpses the Son of Man lifted up.¹⁴ The oblique temple imagery here becomes explicit only a few verses later with the prophetic word Jesus proclaims in 2:20: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Here John insists we grasp the portent: "The temple he had spoken of was his body" (2:22).

Thus John has begun his account of Jesus' public ministry with two prophetic prolepses, one allusive the other explicit, picturing Jesus as the true house of God. In 1:51 he is the vision of Jacob's *b t'  l h m*; in 2:19 his body is his Father's house, the true temple of the Lord. Herein lies, not only a motivation for having moved the temple narrative, but an interpretive framework for the rest of the gospel. For, inasmuch as the Johannine Jesus is the true prophet of

¹⁴ See Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield Academic, 2002), 148-151 for an indepth historical and grammatical exegesis of Temple imagery in John's allusion to Gen 28:12-22.

Israel whose “divine speech” is fulfilled by the cross,¹⁵ we should expect his prophetic claim to be the true Temple, destroyed and rebuilt in his death and resurrection, to find its fulfillment in the passion narrative. And tracing the Temple theme as it wends its way through the Fourth Gospel on its inexorable path to the hour of glory, we discover a clear thesis: John portrays Jesus in his death as the cross-enthroned Messiah who is the true dwelling place of God’s glory, replacing the Temple with its institutions, priesthood and cult as the locus of worship for the people of God.

“Zeal for your house has consumed me”: Temple-Christology in the Book of Signs

While space here permits only a cursory sketch of a topic that would itself fill many papers, a brief survey of John’s Temple-Christology¹⁶ as it appears in the so-called Book of Signs allows us to sharply focus this thematic lens for our subsequent reading of the passion narrative. Throughout this first section of his gospel John has woven both explicit and allusive references to Jesus as the replacement Temple, in connection to his prophecy in 2:20. As discussed above, though this theme is first explicitly introduced by John’s portrayal of Jesus as the true temple in 2:19-22, it is anticipated by 1:51 and possibly more subtly by John the Baptist’s declaration of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” (1:29). Taken on their own, John the Baptist’s words are not immediately evocative of the Temple, but given the ambiguity of what specific sacrifice is in view here, and given the matrix of temple imagery that surrounds 2:12-22,¹⁷ we might understand this as a reference to Jesus replacing the atoning function of the

¹⁵ See Reinhartz, 10-1.

¹⁶ For this term I am indebted to the title of Mark Kinzer’s “Temple Christology in the Gospel of John,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37.1 (1998): 447-64. By “Temple-Christology” I will mean in this paper the way John pictures Jesus, the Christ, as the replacement Temple, subsuming not only the building as the place of worship, but also the Temple cult, institutions, priesthood as the centre of religious life for God’s people.

¹⁷ Besides the aforementioned allusion to Genesis 28:12, there is also John’s claim that Jesus, as the word-made-flesh, “tabernacled (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us” (1:14), subtly connecting Jesus to the tabernacle, the first dwelling place of God’s glory. There is also the discussion with the Samaritan woman (4:21-26, see below).

Temple service generally. While clear candidates for a specific lamb-offering that might stand behind John the Baptist's ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ Θεοῦ remain elusive,¹⁸ we should note that a lamb was offered morning and evening as part of the ongoing daily service of the Temple, an offering which might be understood as atoning "since the temple tax [which paid for it] was called 'atonement money' and its purpose was 'to make atonement' (Ex 30.16)."¹⁹ More will be said about Jesus' role as "the Lamb of God," but here suffice it to say that beneath John the Baptist's ominous proclamation lies at the very least a picture of Jesus whose sacrificial death will fulfill and replace the expiatory function of the Temple cult.

John's presentation of the temple-action itself reinforces the suggestion that he understands Jesus as replacing the Temple's sacrificial system generally. Unlike the Synoptic tradition, where Jesus simply overturns the benches of those selling pigeons (Mark 11:15), John depicts Jesus driving out all the animals used in Temple sacrifice: sheep, cattle and doves. This is more the notable when we consider it is historically unlikely that herd animals were ever kept or sold in the Temple complex itself, being bought in shops outside the Temple, though birds were sold in the Temple's Royal Portico, being more common as a sacrifice and more easily kept.²⁰ John's theological reading here, of both the historical Temple practice and the temple-action tradition, emphasizes Jesus as the Temple's replacement: in driving out cattle, sheep and doves, Jesus has symbolically driven out the whole sacrificial system, so replacing it with himself.

¹⁸ This is much controverted. If an expiatory lamb-sacrifice is intended here, we must note that in Levitical Law, the Day of Atonement sacrifice was a bull (μῶσχος, LXX) for sin, a ram (κρίος, LXX) as a burnt offering for the priest and a goat (χιδάρος, LXX) for the community (Lev 16:3). Bulls, goats or birds were prescribed as individual sin offerings (Lev 4:1-5:13); lambs were only prescribed as individual guilt offerings for unintentional sin or uncleanness (Lev 5:14-6:7) or as voluntary acts of worship. Sanders notes that the sin and guilt offerings intertwine, and that in discussing first century practice it is possible to understand a guilt offering as a special category of a sin offering (107). The Passover sacrifice was a lamb, however this was not necessarily an expiatory sacrifice (though more on this below).

¹⁹ Sanders, 105.

²⁰ See Sanders 87-9 for a number of convincing arguments that only birds were sold in the temple.

The theme of temple replacement is further underscored by a subtle word-play on “house” (οἶκος) in 2:16-17. Jesus drives out the sacrificial animals because they have replaced the οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου (“my Father’s House”) with an οἶκον ἐμπορίου (lit. “trading-house”),²¹ thus zeal for οἴκου σου (“Your House”) will consume him. This “house of God” language resonates in deeper tones with Jesus’ specific claim to replace the Temple, using ναός, which denotes “the sanctuary or holy house proper,” over the more common ἱερόν, which “denotes the whole temple complex.”²² Jesus will not refer to his Father’s “house” again until 14:2, when he assures his followers that by his death, a place will have been prepared for them in τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, suggesting cryptically that he alone will provide the access to the Father’s presence that the Temple once represented for God’s people. In the immediate context of 2:16-17, however, we note that, rather than quoting Isaiah 56:7 as per the Synoptic tradition, John connects the temple-action to Psalm 69:9, changing the aorist verb (κατέφαγέ) to a future (καταφάγεται) and so making the reference point inevitably beyond the temple action itself to its pending fulfillment on the cross.²³ Thus in John’s typological exegesis of the psalm, it is not simply that Jesus is “eaten up” with indignation because of the flagrant corruption of the temple, but that Jesus’ identity as the one whose body is the true House of God (2:21) will inevitably consume him, as this “temple” is destroyed and rebuilt through his “hour of glory.” As he thereby suffers the consuming zeal of his Father’s house, so he will replace the Temple as the true focal point for worship of the Father.

²¹ Brown, 115.

²² F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 76.

²³ See Brown, 124.

1. Temple worship and the “coming hour” (John 4:21-26)

Lest this reading be accused of making exegetical mountains out of thematic molehills, we turn to the well known dialogue with the woman at the well, to see Jesus again portrayed as the Temple replacement, and to discover his identity as the true House of God intimately connected with his “coming hour” on the cross. Though the temple theme in this passage is not always heard in full harmony with the images that have preceded it, it is undeniable that the question of temple worship is central to their dialogue. The image of “living water” (4:10) and the invitation to come and drink (4:14), for example, will be taken up specifically again in 7:37-38, where they sound out as Jesus’ explicit claim to replace both the Temple and its festival institutions. More on this below. Here, however, we note that 4:7-26 moves quickly from an enigmatic offer of water “welling up to eternal life,” to the woman’s discovery of Jesus as “prophet,”²⁴ to a question about the true locus of worship. Unless the place in Jerusalem “where men ought to worship” (4:20) can mean anything other than the Temple, we have here a carefully narrated context in which Jesus will again be revealed as the true temple of God. As much as popular readings might try to psychoanalyse the woman’s comment in 4:20 as a diversionary tactic away from the adulterous guilt Jesus has so pointedly exposed, her observation about Temple worship actually forms the centrifuge of the whole narrative, spinning naturally on the temple motif that has underscored the book to this point, and fitting naturally into the historical context of the passage. As Bowman suggests, Samaritan Messianic expectation looked for a Savior, whom they called the “Taheb,” who would restore temple

²⁴ The anarthrous προφήτης allows either “a prophet” or “the prophet” (see, for instance, Carson, 221). Is the woman thinking Christologically here? Though John generally uses an articular ὁ προφήτης when he intends “prophet” to be understood as a messianic title (see 1:21,23,25, 6:14), the anarthrous προφήτης is often employed when Jesus’ messianic identity is in question in the background of the text (see 7:52, 9:17). That her declaration of Jesus as “prophet” is somehow connected with worship in Jerusalem in the Woman’s mind favours reading “The Prophet” here, inasmuch as first Century Messianic hope often included some sort of New-Temple expectation (see Sanders, 289-98).

worship on Mount Gerizim as a second Joshua.²⁵ Insofar as 4:29 makes it clear that Jesus' status as prophet—"a man who told me all the things I have done"—is intricately related to his status as the Messiah—"can this be the Christ?" the woman's question becomes perfectly natural. If this prophet standing before her is indeed the "Taheb," then surely he will fulfill the Samaritan expectation as the "Renewer" by restoring Samaritan temple worship in contrast to the Temple in Jerusalem.²⁶

Into a passage so replete with Messianic temple expectations, Jesus now speaks another enigmatic oracle, almost as a parallel to the temple-prophecy of 2:20, that announces a coming time when true worship of the Father will no longer be centred on the Temple in Jerusalem, nor on an anticipated temple on Mt. Gerizim, but on a temple "in spirit and truth." Though it is common to read 4:23-24 as prescribing a necessary emotional-intellectual dualism in authentic worship,²⁷ a close exegesis of ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ suggests that the phrase is a hendiadys pointing to a single concept: the Word-made-flesh person of Jesus Christ. D. A. Carson, for example, notes that the single preposition ἐν governs both nouns: "There are not two separable characteristics of the worship that must be offered: it must be 'in spirit and truth.'"²⁸ In a similar vein, C. John Collins compares John 4:24 to passages like 1 John 3:18 and 2 Pet 3:7, to suggest that καὶ ἀληθείᾳ is best understood epexegetically to ἐν πνεύματι: "in spirit, that is to say, in

²⁵ See John Bowman, "The Identity and Date of the Unnamed Feast of John 5:1" in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, Hans Goedicke ed. (London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 48-9. "[Joshua], who had routed their enemies, built their Tabernacle on Mt. Gerizim, and divided the land among the Tribes was the one they looked for not Moses. ... It is possible that the woman at the well did not think of Jesus as Moses returned, but Joshua who would restore the Temple on Mt. Gerizim, recapture the land and divide it among the Samaritans as the true Israel."

²⁶ See Bowman, 45.

²⁷ Reading ἐν instrumentally ("with"), and understanding πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ coordinately ("with the feelings and with the mind"). Thus Piper proposes that "in spirit and truth" implies, that "worship must have heart and head. ... [it] must engage emotions and thought" (*Desiring God*, 76).

²⁸ D. A. Carson, 224.

reality.”²⁹ In John’s Gospel the words *πνεῦμα* and *ἀλήθεια* consistently point to God’s self-revelation in Jesus (cf. John 1:14, 14:6, 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 17:17), thus “One might say ... that the true worship of Jn. 4:24 is oriented to the flesh and blood Jesus. *πνεῦμα*, then, does not mean man’s soul or understanding, that which is most like God in him, his immaterial or purely inward part. Like *ἀληθινὸν* it denotes the reality of God.”³⁰ Worship in (*ἐν*) “spirit and truth” therefore forms Jesus’ Messianic claim as the replacement Temple, the true focal point of worship in contrast to worship in (*ἐν*) “Jerusalem” and worship on (*ἐν*) “this mountain.”³¹ Notably, this second clear prediction that Jesus will replace temple worship is connected directly to his second clear reference to his “coming hour.” The motif of the coming “hour,” which sounds throughout this gospel as a portentous knell heralding the approach of Jesus’ exaltation on the cross (see 5:25, 28, 7:30, 8:20, etc.) tooled once previously in 2:4. Here, however, we are offered a first glimpse of its significance: when the “hour” arrives, it will mean a new centre of worship for God’s people. Like the temple-references that have gone before, this verse inevitably associates Jesus’ identity as the true Temple with his passion and death.

2. The death of Jesus and the eschatological fulfillment of Temple institutions

There is yet another layer to the temple theme as it unfolds in the Book of Signs that, though it cannot be explicated in full here, deserves a glance in passing. Throughout the narrative cycle of this first half of his gospel, John has carefully and subtly juxtaposed Jesus to each of the major temple pilgrimage feasts, using his symbolic words, gestures and signs to show that he takes up in himself the whole sacrificial liturgy of the Temple—ceremony, offering and altar—

²⁹ C. John Collins, “John 4:23-24, ‘In Spirit and Truth’: An Idiomatic Proposal,” in *Prybyterion* 21.2 (Spring 1995): 119-20.

³⁰ Gerhard Friedrich, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol IV: Πε – Ρ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 439.

³¹ So Kerr, 195: “The focus of true worship is now Jesus. ... This is especially true of the temple in Jerusalem, but also of Mt Gerisim and the Samaritan worship associated with it. Jesus is indeed the new locus for meeting with and worshipping the Father. That is the implication of 2:13-22. The body of Jesus is now the Temple (2:21), the Father’s house.”

by his death on the cross. Though thorough discussions of Jesus' identity as the fulfillment of the Jewish festivals can be found in a variety of sources,³² the connection of this theme to the Temple-Christology that overshadows it is not always fully developed. The motif begins with Jesus' symbolic gesture at the first Passover (2:12-45) and subsequently proceeds through the whole Jewish sacred calendar until the final Passover where Jesus himself becomes the true Paschal sacrifice, having subsumed in himself the liturgical year.³³ At a second Passover feast (6:4), Jesus ascends a mountain and offers the crowds "bread from heaven" as an explicit sign that he is the true saving act of God that Passover commemorates (6:32); thus at the feast when Israel's attention should be focused on the Temple Mount, remembering the Exodus, it is turned to a new Temple on a new Mount, seeing its fulfillment enacted.³⁴

In a similar way at the feast of Tabernacles (7:2) Jesus declares himself the true source of water (7:37-38) and the true light (8:12), in juxtaposition to the light used to illuminate the Court of the Women and the water poured around the altar during the festival ritual.³⁵ Jesus' claim that "rivers of living water" will well up out of the one who believes in him (7:38) is of particular significance here, given that the Scriptures in reference are likely Joel 3:18, Zechariah 14:8, or Ezekiel 47:1-11, each of which picture the Temple as the source from which living water will flow in the Messianic age. William Brownlee examines the potential Aramaic underlying this text to suggest that κοιλία is a translation of *ma'yān*, "which may mean either 'belly' or

³² See Gale Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989) for an overview.

³³ Of the three central pilgrimage feasts—Passover, Weeks and Booths—Passover and Weeks are specifically mentioned. Though its identity is much debated, the so-called "Unnamed Feast" of 5:1 might be read as a candidate for Weeks. I would not insist dogmatically on this—as Bowman suggests, "every feast of the liturgical year has been, at some time or other, suggested to fill the role of this unnamed feast" (43), and most commentators simply read it as a "Sabbath feast." However, given that Weeks was the celebration of the harvest firstfruits, it is suggestive that the 5:1's feast comes just after Jesus' discourse on the "harvest" (4:35-38). 5:1 seems to imply that it was a pilgrimage feast (ἀνέβη Ἰησοῦς εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα). Further, if John has the specific liturgical cycle in mind it would fit sequentially (Passover (2:13), Weeks (5:1), 2nd Passover (6:4), Tabernacles (7:2), Dedication (10:22), 3rd Passover (12:12 ff.)).

³⁴ Reinhartz, 7. She connects this sequence to the "mountain" imagery of Jesus' prediction in 4:21.

³⁵ See Carson 321, 337 for a description of the use of light and water in the Feast of Tabernacle celebration; see also Brown 343-4, 326-7.

‘fountain.’” Rather than reading αὐτοῦ as a pronoun for the one believing in Jesus, he reads it self-referentially, thus: “the indefiniteness of the pronominal reference was probably to allow for the dual reference to both the temple and Christ himself: “From the fountain [*or* midst] of the Temple [namely Christ] will flow rivers of living water.”³⁶ Further, Alan Kerr examines the Old Testament Temple references resonating in the background of 7:38, along with Jesus’ use of κοιλία,³⁷ suggesting that this Temple-imagery is fulfilled in the cross, where the haunting image of blood-mingled water flowing from Jesus’ spear-pierced side reveals him as the true Temple, the source of living water.³⁸

The same temple-Christology underlies Jesus claims in 10:34-38 at the Feast of Dedication. Here, at the festival when the Temple and its altar were specifically consecrated in memory of its cleansing and sanctification in 164 BC by Judas Maccabeus, Jesus proclaims himself the “one whom the Father has consecrated.” As Yee suggests, his claim “would not be lost on his Jewish audience as they celebrate the feast of Dedication ... For John, Jesus replaces the temple as the Holy One truly consecrated by God.”³⁹ If we grant that the dedication of the altar specifically was central to this ceremony, we hear sacrificial undertones in this statement that further connects Jesus’ role as the true altar with his death.⁴⁰

³⁶ William H. Brownlee, “Whence the Gospel According to John” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, James H. Charlesworth ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 186-7.

³⁷ Possibilities include: “belly” as a subtextual link to πλεῦρά in 19:43, or “navel” as an oblique reference to the Temple as the “navel of the earth”. See Kerr, 238-9.

³⁸ Kerr, 245: “In a remarkable way John has brought together the prophecy of the waters flowing from the eschatological Temple (Ezek. 47:1-11) and the proclamation of Jesus at the Festival of Tabernacles (7:37, 38) in the climactic moment on the cross. Here Jesus’ body, soon to become the new Temple (2:21), becomes the source of living waters—the Spirit.”

³⁹ Yee, 91.

⁴⁰ Brown, 411.

“Isaiah saw his glory”: Temple-Christology and the “Hour of Glory Discourse”

As John’s Gospel moves from Jesus’ public ministry into his last week in Jerusalem the chime of the “coming hour” motif tolls out a final time: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23). And with the arrival of “the hour” we see clearly how the temple imagery that has overshadowed Jesus’ word and deed to this point will follow him to and interpret his hour on the cross. It is commonly observed that for John, Jesus’ humiliation on the cross is his exaltation, its shame his glory revealed.⁴¹ What is important to note here is that in the “hour of glory” discourse (12:23-50), the revelation of God’s glory in Jesus’ humiliation is intimately connected to his identity as the replacement Temple, the true house of his Father’s glory.

This connection is implied first by Jesus’ allusive reference to the glorification of God’s name (12:28). The Old Testament understanding of the Temple as the place where the Lord had made his name to dwell⁴² has been taken up here in the person of Jesus, in whom the Father has now glorified his name (see also 17:12).⁴³ In a similar way, Jesus’ prophetic anticipation of his “lifting up” (12:32, ὑψόω) draws in temple imagery connected to his death. The “drawing all men” that Jesus’ cross-exaltation will effect portrays him as the eschatological Temple to which all nations will stream in the promised Messianic age.⁴⁴ Though Bruce is right to connect Jesus’ use of ὑψόω here to the Messianic portrait of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13,⁴⁵ there is another “lifting up” in Isaiah that, given reference to “drawing all men,” surely echoes in Jesus’

⁴¹ So Jerome H. Neyrey, “Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative,” *Semina* 68 (1994): 113-136: “The story of Jesus’ shame is ironically understood by his disciples as his ‘lifting up,’ his exaltation, his enthronement, in short, his honor.”

⁴² See, for one of many examples, 1 Chronicles 22:10, where the Temple of Solomon is a “house for the Lord’s name.”

⁴³ See Brown (754) for further discussion.

⁴⁴ Isaiah 56:6-8 (quoted by the Synoptics in relation to the temple-action); See also Isaiah 60:6-7 (with YHWH’s promise to glorify his glorious house); Amos 9:11 (LXX uses οἶκος for “tent of David” here).

⁴⁵ Bruce, 267; see also Carson, 437.

statement. In Isaiah 2:2 we read that in the last days, “The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above [ὑψόω, LXX] the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.” Just as Isaiah promised that Temple Mount, and by metonymy the Temple itself, would be “lifted up” and “exalted” and draw all men to itself, so too Jesus, when he is “lifted up” by the cross, will fulfill this promise as the true Temple of YHWH. Because the motif of judgment forms such an important theme here (12:31) and in the passion narrative later, we also note that the eschatological exaltation of the Temple in Isaiah 2:2-3 flows into a picture of YHWH sitting as judge of the nations (2:4).

1. The Temple and Isaiah’s theophany (12:20-36)

The Temple-Christology that has allusively tinted Jesus’ discourse to this point is painted in bold swatches with John’s declaration that Isaiah “saw [Jesus’] glory and he spoke of him” (12:41). The glory of Jesus that John is envisioning by this citation of Isaiah 6 is the vision of the glory of the YHWH enthroned, whose robe fills the Temple (LXX: πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). Here we see YHWH himself “lifted up” (again ὑψόω, LXX), and in this theophany we glimpse a vision of God’s glory-filled house that directly interprets Jesus’ death. John brings the motifs of “the hour,” Jesus’ “lifting up,” and Temple-replacement together here to point us directly to the cross: in his own hour of exaltation Jesus, as the true exalted Temple of the Messianic age, will be filled with the glory of YHWH enthroned. He is the smoke-filled House of Isaiah 6:4, in whose crucified body the glory of the Lord is revealed. At the risk of wringing hermeneutical water from rock, we might look back to Jesus’ anointing at Bethany as a subtle foreshadowing of this image. Just as the temple (οἶκος LXX) of Isaiah’s vision is filled with “smoke” (καπνοῦ 6:4 LXX), so when Mary anoints Jesus the house (the only οἶκος

mentioned in John other than the temple) is filled with fragrance (ὄσμῆς).⁴⁶ To the extent that John connects this anointing to the day of Jesus' burial (12:7), this fragrance-filled house in which Jesus is worshiped, like the smoke filled house in which Isaiah saw YHWH's glory, point ahead to the crucified Jesus as the Temple of God.

2. *The chief priests lose their "place."*

As we turn finally to Temple imagery in the passion narrative specifically, we should note here a temple-related example of the irony that is so characteristic of John's portrayal of Jesus' death. After the resurrection of Lazarus, when the chief priests take counsel because of the growing threat of Jesus' popularity among the people, John notes that their central concern is the loss of their "their place" (τόν τοπον). Comparing this expression to 4:20, Acts 4:13, 7:7 and II Macc 19, Raymond Brown concludes that "the place" in 11:48 explicitly refers to "The Holy Place"—the Temple.⁴⁷ Thus, for fear of losing their Temple, the priests conspire to kill Jesus, only to effect unwittingly the eschatological replacement of their temple with the true Temple of Jesus' crucified and exalted body. So in seeking to keep their "Holy Place" they have lost it and rejected its promised replacement.

"They will look on the one they have pierced": The Temple and the passion narrative

A broad range of images are present in John's passion narrative specifically that would illuminate our study of the Temple theme and the death of Jesus. We might look, for instance, at how John's portrayal of Jesus as the true prophet, whose word is fulfilled about the kind of death he would die (18:32) relates to his first prophetic word about his death in 2:19. Likewise we might examine John's portrayal of Jesus as Righteous Judge and compare it to the

⁴⁶ Alan Kerr has also drawn out this parallel. See 201-2 for similar and expanded comments.

⁴⁷ Brown, 439.

aforementioned promise in Isaiah 2:4 of judgment flowing from the Temple in the Messianic age. We might further explore the temple imagery underlying the reference to the stone pavement (Λιθόστρωτον) where the people are summoned to behold their scourged and humiliated King with its parallels to the λιθόστρωτον on which the people bowed when the glory of the Lord filled the Temple in 2 Chronicles 7:3.⁴⁸ In a similar fashion, we might draw parallels between the “elevated place” of Γαββαθα⁴⁹ where Pilate summons the people to “Behold your king!” and the Temple Mount on which the glory of the true king of Israel was said to dwell.⁵⁰ In turn we might look at the possible parallels between Pilate’s “Behold the man” (Ἴδού ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and Zechariah 6:12’s “Behold the man” (Ἴδού ἀνὴρ), “whose name is ‘Branch,’” and who is pictured as the eschatological Temple re-builder (6:13).⁵¹ While these are all evocative images relating the passion to John’s temple-Christology, there are three themes in particular that merit extended examination: Jesus replacing the temple priesthood, Jesus replacing the sacrificial cult, and Jesus becoming true throne of YHWH’s glory, the glory-filled House of Israel’s true King, as per the Isaianic vision.

1. The high-priest replaced

Jesus’ identity as the true high priest is a deeply debated question. Ignace de la Potterie rejects the suggestion of high-priestly imagery in John’s portrayal of Jesus, claiming the “the rich theme of Jesus-High Priest, in the category of the ritual order, which we find in the Epistle of

⁴⁸ As does David Garland, “John 18-19: Life through Jesus’ Death,” *Review and Expositor* 85 (Summer 1988): 492-3.

⁴⁹ Of obscure meaning: Brown (882) “elevated place”; Bruce (364) “ridge”; Lenski (1270), “raised place.” My NIV Study Bible offers the tantalizing, though otherwise unconfirmed “hill of the house.”

⁵⁰ See Sanders (71) on God’s special presence in the Temple: “Since he was creator and lord of the universe, he could be approached in prayer at any place. Nevertheless, he was in some special sense present in the Temple.”

⁵¹ If this seems an exegetical stretch, we might also note John’s penchant for interpreting Jesus through Zechariah’s prophesies elsewhere (12:15, 19:7).

Hebrews, plays practically no part [in John’s theology].”⁵² And if we approach this question seeking a Johannine correlation between Jesus and the high priest after the manner of the Book of Hebrews, we are likely to agree with him. If, however, we read the passion narrative through the lens of the Temple-Christology outlined above, we will see that John has carefully and explicitly juxtaposed Jesus to Caiaphas to show, not so much that Jesus *is* the true high priest, but that as the replacement Temple, Jesus takes up the function of the high priest into himself, supplanting the high-priestly office of the earthly Temple altogether. This juxtaposition between Jesus and Caiaphas, “the high priest in that year,”⁵³ occurs on a number of levels which we might briefly survey. First we observe that, by contrast to the Synoptic tradition, John identifies the man whose ear Peter struck off as the “servant of the High Priest” (18:10). David Garland notes that “Jewish history records incidents when the high priest was deliberately disqualified from his office by having his ear mutilated,” and that “in a shame/honour society, ‘He would be seriously and suggestively disgraced by having his servant mutilated in this particular manner.’”⁵⁴ In a similar way we should note the ambiguity over who the true high priest is, created by verses 18:19—“the high priest then questioned Jesus”—and 18:24—“so Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”⁵⁵ This ambiguity is reinforced when we note that Caiaphas himself is conspicuously absent as a character in the passion narrative, though his servant, a relative of his servant, and his father-in-law all make an appearance. Further juxtapositions are remarkable: the anonymous disciple, whom Jesus loved, is an anonymous disciple “known to the high priest” (18:15); we are reminded of Caiaphas’ prophesy as high priest that “it was expedient for one man

⁵² Ignace de la Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus According to John* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 87.

⁵³ A repeated formula (11:49, 51 and 18:13) that emphasize the “fatefulness” of Caiaphas’ priesthood in the year of Jesus’ death (Brown, 439-40) but also reinforces the juxtaposition between Jesus and Caiaphas by emphasizing the temporal limitation of his high-priesthood (See John Paul Heil, “Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57.4 (October 1995): 732.

⁵⁴ Garland, 487.

⁵⁵ See Heil (737) for further on this ambiguity.

to die on behalf of the people” (18:14), but it is Jesus’ prophetic word that is fulfilled about the kind of death he would die (18:32).⁵⁶

Besides this juxtaposition, there is clear priestly imagery associated with Jesus in the passion narrative. Jesus is anointed with fragrant oil before his passion (cf. Ex. 29:7). Jesus washes the feet of his disciples (13:5)⁵⁷ and then sanctifies himself (17:17-18). Jesus bears the wood of his own sacrifice (19:17) where he offers his own life (10:18) as a sacrifice on behalf of the people (18:14). In this matrix of priestly images, the controversial seamless tunic of 19:23 that the soldiers will not tear becomes generally evocative of, if not directly symbolic of the sacred priestly garments that could not be torn (Ex 28:32, Lev 10:6).⁵⁸ As Brown points out, “the word seamless (*arraphos*) is not found in LXX; but Josephus *Ant.* III.vii.4#161, describes the ankle-length tunic of the high priest as one long woven cloth, not composed of two pieces.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, Heil suggests that “just as Jesus’ unified tunic was woven ‘from above’ ... so it is repeatedly reinforced that the unified high-priestly vestments were designed by God’s decree (Exod 36:12,14,28,33,36,38).”⁶⁰ Taken as a whole these details reinforce the juxtaposition between Jesus and the priesthood, which, when read in conjunction with the temple-imagery in the narrative, serves to underscore Jesus’ role as the replacement Temple.

2. *The Passover sacrifice offered*

Inasmuch as John portrays Jesus as replacing the Temple priesthood, he also presents him as replacing the temple cult, depicting him through an array of allusive details as the true Passover sacrifice. In contrast to the Synoptic tradition for example, which records the time of

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 734, 787-8.

⁵⁷ Sanders (115-6) describes the ritual washing of priests, including special washing of hands and feet in a laver, before sacrificial service in the Temple.

⁵⁸ The high priestly symbolism of the tunic is hardly a matter on consensus. Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1984), 270, claims: “Of all the explanations, the symbolism of the tunic without seam pertaining to the priesthood of Jesus fits the context best.” Carson by contrast (614) concludes that “*the text itself* does not sanction such associations.”

⁵⁹ Brown, 920.

⁶⁰ Heil, 742.

Jesus' crucifixion as the third hour (Mk 15:22), John records the hour as six (19:14). Though some have tried with varied success to harmonize this with the Synoptics,⁶¹ these quests for modern historical precision miss the theological significance of the fact that the sixth hour "on the day of preparation" was the time when the Passover lamb was slaughtered.⁶² In John, Jesus is led to the cross even as, in the subtext of the passion narrative, the Jews are preparing the very sacrifice that his death. This juxtaposition between Jesus and the Passover sacrifice is further developed by the hyssop used to offer Jesus sour wine (19:20). As BDAG suggests, ὕσσώπω, lacking a long straight stalk, is problematic if we are to understand it as a literal replacement for Mark's καλαμῶ.⁶³ If, however, we allow it to take its place among the other Passover images in the passion narrative, it points naturally to the hyssop used in the first Passover to put the lamb's blood on the door posts (Ex 12:22).⁶⁴ Finally we should consider the sequence in the narrative whereby Jesus' legs escape being broken, "so that the Scripture should be fulfilled" (Jn 19: 31-36). The scripture in view here, most likely Exodus 12:46, directs the Passover celebrants not to break any of the lamb's bones; as many have pointed out, this detail further portrays Jesus as the true Passover sacrifice.⁶⁵ In the temple-Christology of the passion narrative, the Passover lamb theme resonates in harmony with the above themes to suggest that Jesus has replaced not only the Temple and its priesthood, but also the most significant sacrifice of its liturgical calendar. He is the "Lamb of God" whose portrayal as the true Passover sacrifice serves as a symbolic synecdoche whereby the whole expiatory function of the temple cult is taken up and replaced.

⁶¹ Claiming for instance that John is using Roman versus Jewish time. See Carson (605) for a summary of these and other harmonization proposals.

⁶² Yee, 68.

⁶³ BDAG, 1043.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Garland, 95. I also note here the statement in Hebrews 9:19-20 that Moses used hyssop to consecrate the tabernacle and its furnishings with the blood of the sacrifice.

⁶⁵ For a representative discussion see Bruce, 377-8.

3. The glory of the King enthroned.

In John's picture of the crucified Jesus as Israel's enthroned king, we see the various strands of John's temple-Christology brought together into an apocalyptic fulfillment of the Isaianic theophany mentioned in 12:41. Reading this theme in conjunction with the temple images that surround the death of Jesus helps to explain one of the notable contrasts between John and the synoptics. A variety of commentators have pointed out John's special emphasis on the kingship of Jesus in the passion narrative,⁶⁶ for which there is no paucity of support: Pilate's dialogue with Jesus about his kingship (18:37-38) and authority (19:11), Pilate's Ἴδε ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν (19:14), the Jew's claim to have no king but Caesar (19:15), the ambiguity over who actually sat in the judgment seat (19:13)⁶⁷, the emphasis on the multi-lingual inscription over the cross (19:20), and so on. But conspicuously absent from John's gospel is any hint of the tradition that Jesus is the Son of David. Gone are the Synoptic genealogies; gone the debate with the Pharisees over the Messiah as the son of David; gone even the cries of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" at the triumphal entry, which John renders simply: "Hosanna to the King of Israel!" (12:13). In fact David's name is only mentioned once in John, and this as evidence used by the Jews that Jesus was not the Messiah (7:42). John's unique emphasis here is especially evocative here if we understand it in relation to his special interest in Isaiah 6. For there it was not the Davidic king but YHWH himself whose throne was in the Temple. We might further pause to consider that Isaiah received his vision in the year Uzziah died: in the absence of the Davidic king we glimpse the glory of the true King enthroned.

The Isaianic theophany of John 12:41 echoes in the passion narrative with the final OT scripture said to be fulfilled in the cross: Zechariah 12:10. In a close analysis of the textual

⁶⁶ See de la Potterie, 85-6.

⁶⁷ See Garland (93) for a summary of the possibility that Pilate sat Jesus in the Judgement seat; though see also Carson (607-8).

sources underlying John's rendering of this passage in John 19:37, Maarten Menken notes that in the original, the one pierced seems to be YHWH, an unpalatable anthropomorphism that prompted the LXX translators to render the verse: καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς με ἀνθ' ὧν κατωρχήσαντο ("and they shall look on me because they have danced [presumably in derision]").⁶⁸ Here, however, John seems to be using an independent translation of the original—possibly a translation handed on in early Christian tradition—that identifies God as the "one they had pierced" and so brings together both the Jesus-as-king and the Jesus-as-temple theme. John points with Zechariah 12:10 to Jesus' pierced and broken body as the image of the glory of God himself: "For John, then, if God is King, Jesus also is King, and it is impossible to see God in his kingly glory without seeing the Son in his kingly glory, which, in contrast to human expectations, is manifested in the Son's suffering and death."⁶⁹ This is the glory Isaiah saw enthroned in the temple, the glory now manifest in Jesus' cross-enthroned body.

Conclusion

As an excursion in narrative criticism, this paper has been concerned with mapping out the "how" questions—how has John portrayed Jesus in his death as the Temple of God?—and left intriguing "why" questions—why would he have done so?—largely unexplored. These must remain for future inquiry, though we might in closure consider how "the Temple, or rather the lack of it after 70, became a focal point for both Jews and Christians seeking self-identification."⁷⁰ Surely for John, Christian self-identity is intricately bound up with Jesus'

⁶⁸ Maarten J. J. Menken, "The Textual Form and the Meaning of the Quotation from Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55.3 (July 1993): 499.

⁶⁹ Kanagaraj, 362.

⁷⁰ Joel Reizburg, "The Role of the Temple in Post-70 Rabbinic Judaism"; available from <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/psco/archives/psco18-19.htm#e>; Internet; accessed 22 Aug, 2006.

identity as the Word of God, made flesh and tabernacled among us, who replaces the temple with its priesthood and cult as the focal point of worship for God's people.

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