



THE TEMPLE

CF JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE-MT 21:12-17;
DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE - MT 24:1-2

ROLE OF THE TEMPLE:

- The Temple was centre of the Jewish religious, community and political life and was dedicated to the service of the one God. The Jews honoured Yahweh with prayers, offerings, sacrifices and songs. The concentration on only one central place of worship paralleled their belief in only one God.
- The Temple was imagined as the centre of the universe and its design moved through a series of concentric rings that symbolised the movement from a secular outside world into a sacred interior. For example, non-Jews could only enter the outer court of the Gentiles; Jewish women were only allowed as far as the Court of the Women. Jewish men proceeded further into the Court of the Israelites, while only priests could approach the altars in the Priest's Court.
- The most inner sanctum of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, could only be entered once a year on the Day of Atonement by the high priest. The Holy of Holies was where God's presence was thought to dwell in the midst of the people. A large curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the remainder of the Temple ('...the curtain of the Temple was torn in two.' - Lk 23:45).

TEMPLE SACRIFICES:

- Whilst Jews could perform many religious rituals in their synagogues (Ch 5.8), the practice of making sacrifices could happen in one place only - the Temple in Jerusalem. The purpose of sacrifices was to fulfil the command of God in the Scriptures; to imitate God's purity and power; and to attract God's presence through sincere prayer and fragrant smoke.
- Sacrifices signified the thanks of the Jews for the good things God had blessed them with, in the hope that God would continue to provide for them and look after his people. Sacrifices were also a form of acknowledgement of sinfulness and regret for having jeopardised their relationship with God and the community.
- The Books of Exodus and Leviticus laid out the rules for animal sacrifice in the Temple. Different animals were used for different purposes. For example, one animal may be chosen to atone for wrongdoing and another to pray for wellbeing. Sometimes the offerings consisted of flour and spices. A handful would be thrown onto the altar fire, with the rest being kept as a payment in kind to the priests for their services.
- Following a sacrifice - generally a lamb, sheep or dove - the officiating priest would enter inside the sanctuary, while those outside would begin to offer their personal and private prayers to God. The priest would slaughter the animal, splash its blood on the sides of the altar, and burn the body on the altar so that the fragrant smoke would ascend to the heavens.
- During the day private sacrifices were brought by the people and offered by the priests. When animals were offered, the fat of the animal and certain inner parts were burned on the altar; the hindquarter and breast went to feed the priests; while the remainder went to the people for a sacred meal consumed on temple property.

TEMPLE RITUALS AND PRACTICES:

- Jews who came to the Temple had to purify themselves in order to enter the Temple precincts (Ch 5.4).
- The only daily forms of formal worship at the Temple were the 'atonement offerings', for guilt or sin, at the beginning or end of each day.
- Money-changers exchanged foreign currency into Tyrian coins (which have no effigies of any kind) in the outermost court of the Temple, so as to not defile the Temple precinct with graven images and images of a 'deified' Roman Emperor. The exchanges also allowed for the correct coins to be used to purchase sacrificial animals and make the annual payment of the Temple tax (half a shekel) expected of every Jewish male.
- The treasury was a part of the Temple and its function, especially with regards to distributing charity, was under the exclusive control of the Sadducees (Ch 2.2).

PASSOVER:

- Celebrated in March-April, the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. The blood of a sacrificed lamb was daubed on the doorposts of the homes of the Jews so the Angel of Death would 'pass over' their dwelling and kill only the firstborn of the Egyptians.
- The Passover festival included a ritual meal with the eating of unleavened bread, cooked lamb and the drinking of a ritual cup of wine. Interspersed through the meal are a number of ritual stories and symbolic actions. The ritual concludes with the hope of celebrating "Next Year in Jerusalem; Next Year, May all be Free!".
- During the festival, many pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the feast in the holy city. However, the Passover ceremony did not take place the Temple or a synagogue, but at a home.

White, Dan & O'Brien, Kate. (2010). *Into the Desert*. CEO Sydney.

Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52)

As Luke's infancy narrative comes to a close, he makes a transition to John and Jesus' ministry through a single incident from Jesus' adolescence (L. T. Johnson 1991:60). This is the only such incident in the Gospels. The narrative of Jesus in the temple consists of the three elements common to all narratives: orientation, complication and resolution.

The Orientation: Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

The events leading to Jesus' exchange with his parents begin with their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The parents of Jesus were devout Jews. The Old Testament commanded such a trip for three festivals a year (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles; Ex 23:14-17; 34:22-23; Deut 16:16). But by the first century, God-fearing Jews made only one journey a year because of the distances involved. The Passover was the major feast celebrated at the beginning of the Jewish year. Only men were required to make the journey, so Mary's presence shows her commitment (Preisker 1964:373). Jerusalem was 129km from Nazareth, so the trip would take three or four days. Though some have argued that women and children travelled separately from the men as a way to explain how Jesus got lost, there is no ancient text that describes this practice.

Jesus is twelve years old. If the Mishna (the first written recording of the Oral Torah of the Jewish people) is relevant to the first-century Jewish practice, which is likely in this case, then religious instruction would have become more intense for Jesus upon his reaching twelve. The custom of bar mitzvah for a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy was not in place at this time (Fitzmyer 1981:440).

The Complication: Jesus goes missing

After the seven days of celebration, Jesus' family returns home. Luke records an incident that may give the impression of parental irresponsibility on the part of Joseph and Mary. For the whole first day of their return journey, they apparently failed to notice that Jesus had been left behind in Jerusalem; they assumed that he was somewhere among the group of pilgrims (friends and relatives) with whom they were "coming down" from Jerusalem. Rabbinic tradition may help to resolve this difficulty and show Jesus' parents in a more positive light. We learn from rabbinic literature that at the start of each pilgrimage pilgrims gathered in their towns and villages. Whole households would set out, leaving very few people at home. Along the way, the pilgrims joined other bands of pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem. After arriving in Jerusalem, members of these expanded groups tended to remain together, worshipping, studying and walking about the city in the company of those with whom they had journeyed to Jerusalem. By the time pilgrims began their journey home, they had spent more than a week with the members of their group. A self-confident child could easily have spent the first

day of the return journey away from his parents, among the large number of new and old acquaintances, without his parents becoming concerned or being thought irresponsible.

The Resolution: Jesus is found in the Temple

The next part of this story is also unusual. When Jesus is finally found, he is in the temple court, almost holding court himself, sitting and discussing issues of Torah with his elders (Lk. 2:46–47). How far should we believe this of a twelve-year-old boy? Two aspects of the episode should be taken into consideration.

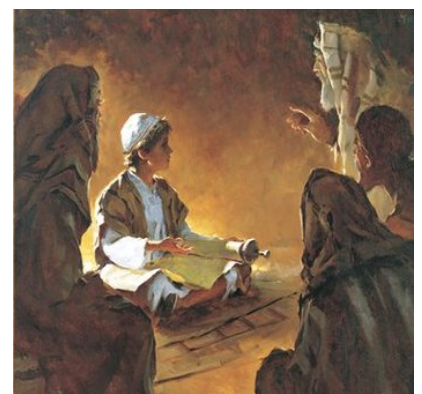
In the rabbinic world, a special effort was made to give everyone an opportunity to participate in discussion. When a question was raised, the first to answer was not the greatest scholar, but rather the youngest. Quiet was not considered of major importance. Neither was there a demand for uniformity of opinion. Students were encouraged to voice their opinions and argue their case. Therefore, it is quite possible that the boy was given a hearing and an opportunity to show his ability, even in the very exalted company of teachers found in the temple courts.

Apparently after one day's journey back to Jerusalem and a day looking for Jesus, it is on the third day that Joseph and Mary discover him at the temple, listening to and asking questions of the teachers. When the parents finally find him, Mary steps forward to address the young Jesus in a way that both parents and children can appreciate. She expresses concern about the anxiety Jesus has caused by remaining at the temple.

The mild parental complaint leads to Jesus' self-declaration of his mission. Jesus' parents and Luke's readers need to appreciate that Jesus understood his mission. From the very beginning he is reflecting on the will of God. He starts revealing himself right in the centre of Judaism's religious capital.

But there is a second key detail. Jesus refers to God as his *Father*. This alludes to the sense of family relationship and intimacy Jesus has with his heavenly Father (10:21-22). Such closeness to God not only is something Jesus' parents need to appreciate but also is a point the disciples will struggle to grasp (9:59-62; 14:26; Mk 10:29-30). In fact, Luke makes this the first note in a series of revelations that will build the case for who Jesus is. The infancy material stresses Jesus as Messiah, but this text is one of two hints early in Luke's Gospel that he is also much more. Luke reveals Jesus' identity gradually, bringing the reader along in an understanding of who Jesus is. So this first clue comes from Jesus himself. The other major clue comes in the infancy section, where Jesus' divine origin is tied to the Spirit (1:31-35). Jesus is breaking new ground with his parents here and they need to understand who he is, just as Luke's readers do. The text makes it clear that at the time they still *did not understand what he was saying to them*. But Mary *treasured* (or *pondered*) *all these things in her heart*, an appropriate response to Jesus' somewhat enigmatic remarks. Mary does what Luke wants his readers to do as well. It is good to pause and contemplate who Jesus is and the mission he performs. Even two thousand years of history does not do away with the need for such reflection.

Obedient to his parents, Jesus goes home with them to Nazareth. While there he grows *in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men* (Lk 1:80; 2:40).



of Sarepta and Naaman (4:25-28), the healing of the demoniac and Peter's mother-in-law (4:31-39), the centurion of Capernaum and the widow of Nain (7:1-17), Simon and the sinful woman (7:36-50), the women at the tomb and the Emmaus disciples (23:55-24:35), Lydia and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:13-34). **39. Nazareth:** Luke concludes his thematic development of the meaning of Jesus' presentation in Jerusalem's Temple by having the holy family journey to Nazareth. To that Temple they will return in 2:41-52. **40. he became strong:** See the description of John in 1:80. *God's favor:* There are echoes here of 1 Sam 2:21,26, the story of Samuel, which has informed so much of Luke's narrative in 2:21-40.

35 (D) Bridge Passage: Conclusion to Luke's Overture, Jesus' Pronouncement about Himself, and Anticipation of the Future Journey of Jesus, God's Son, from Galilee to Jerusalem (2:41-52).

The source of this passage seems to be a pre-Lucan pronouncement story that did not know of Jesus' virginal conception and whose focus is Jesus' pronouncement about his relationship to his Father in v 49. The kernel of this story would be 2:41-43,45-46,48-50. Modifications are found in vv 44,47,51-52, and the "must" theme of v 49. See *MNT* 157-62. The story may have its origin in the human tendency to find the man in the boy. A helpful parallel is found in Josephus, *Ant* 5.10.4 § 348, wherein Samuel, the son born to Elkanah and Hannah, is described as beginning to prophesy at the age of 12 although 1 Sam 3 does not mention any age whatsoever. Luke used this story because it allowed him to dwell on his themes of cross, faith, fatherhood, must, temple, and way/journey.

36 41. Passover: Regulations for the feast of Passover are found in Exod 23:17; 34:23; Lev 23:4-14. There is also an allusion to the yearly pilgrimages of Elkanah and Hannah (see 1 Sam 1:3,21; 2:19). **42. they journeyed up to Jerusalem according to custom:** Stress is laid on Jesus' family and its devout adherence to the law as the environment in which he was brought up. This story anticipates Jesus' later journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27), which he makes with his disciples, and reveals in word and deed his relationship to his Father. See LaVerdiere, *Luke* 39. **44.** This verse seems to be a literary device by which Luke heightens for his readers the anxiety of the parents. **46. in the Temple:** Luke began his overture in the Temple in Jerusalem (1:5-25). He concludes his overture in the Temple. This large *inclusio* prepares for the end of the Gospel, which describes the disciples in the Temple praising God. **47.** The connection with the "wisdom" motif of 2:40 should be noted. **49.** The entire story has been leading up to this "punch line" in which Luke records Jesus' first words. No longer does Gabriel, or Mary, or Zechariah, or angels, or Simeon pronounce who Jesus is, but Jesus himself pronounces who he is. *must:* The Gk word *dei* conveys the theme of necessity, which occurs frequently in the Gospel (18 times) and Acts (22 times) and "expresses a sense of divine compulsion, often seen in obedience to a scriptural command or prophecy, or the conformity of events to God's will. Here the necessity lies in the inherent relationship of Jesus to God which demanded obedience" (Marshall, *Gospel* 129). See further C. H. Cosgrove, *NovT* 26 (1984) 168-90. *in my Father's house:* This seems to be the sense of the difficult Gk phrase *en tois tou patros mou*, which could also mean "(involved) in my Father's affairs" or "among those belonging to my Father" (see *FGL* 443-44). Jesus has not underlined the meaning of his words in v 49 by miracles as in the apocryphal Gospels, esp. the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Rather he underlines them by a hidden life of participation in the everyday life of his family "in the almost unimaginably narrow and

primitive environment of a small near Eastern town" (Schweizer, *Good News* 64). **50. did not understand:** Jesus' parents do not comprehend that his relationship to his God takes precedence over his relationship to them. The sword of discrimination spoken of by Simeon in 2:35 is at work. **51. was submissive to them:** God's Son willingly submits to obedience. Thus this story "foreshadows the cross by insisting that Jesus preserved his identity in the role of a servant" (R. E. Brown, *Worship* 51 [1977] 485). Mary, the model believer, continues her journey of faith as she ponders the meaning and destiny of her son (see 2:19). **52.** See the refrain in 2:40.

37 (III) Preparation for Jesus' Public Ministry (3:1-4:13).

After a section on JBap (3:1-20), in which Luke shows that the responses given to John's ministry are similar to those which will be given to Jesus' ministry, he devotes three sections to the question of who is the Jesus who ministers in Galilee, on the way to Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem. He is God's beloved Son and agent of the holy Spirit (3:21-22); the culmination of God's plan for creation (3:23-38); the faithful Son who conquers the powers of evil (4:1-13).

38 (A) John the Baptist's Preaching (3:1-20).

This section is divided into four parts. Luke 3:1-6 describes John's call to prepare the way of the Lord. In 3:7-14 Luke depicts how ordinary and outcast folks prepare themselves for the Lord. Luke 3:15-18 highlights the difference between the one who prepares the way of the Lord and the Messiah. In 3:19-20 Luke concludes his presentation of John.

39 The quest for the historical JBap cannot be pursued in detail here. Important elements in that quest would be the independent witness of Josephus (*Ant.* 18.5.2 § 116-19) to the extensive influence that John had among the people and the hypothesis of J. A. Fitzmyer (*FGL* 453-54) about John's relationship to the Essenes at Qumran, who used Isa 40:3 of themselves, lived in the desert, and employed water rituals. The concern here is how Luke has adapted traditions about John into his proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. See W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (SNTSMS 7; Cambridge, 1968) xii.

40 Luke's adaptation of Johannine traditions is controlled by his christology and has the following components. John's ministry, as well as that of Jesus, is set in the matrix of world and religious history, with all its joys and sinfulness (3:1-2). John is God's prophet (3:2), who does not belong to the period of promise but inaugurates the period of fulfillment (Acts 1:22; 10:37), whose central figure is Jesus. As John completes his preparation (1:80) and becomes an itinerant preacher who prepares the way of Jesus, he does so in fulfillment of God's prophecy: that of Gabriel (1:15-17), that of his father Zechariah (1:76-79), and that of Isaiah (3:4-6). In fulfilling promises, God directs the ministry of John (and also that of Jesus). As will also be true of Jesus, John's ministry is for all (3:7-14). John is not Jesus, the Messiah (3:15-17). His baptism, which is preparatory for the way of Jesus, must be completed by Jesus' Way (Acts 18:25-26) and by faith in Jesus and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 19:3-5). John will meet a violent death (3:19-20; 9:7-9) because of his preaching; a similar fate awaits the one whose path he prepares.

41 Luke raises up John as a model for his churches. They, too, prepare for Messiah Jesus and are not the Messiah. They, too, are the pioneers leading others to the frontiers of faith in Jesus. Whenever John's story is preached as part of the good news, they are challenged to repent, so that they, too, may be prepared for the advent of the Lord Jesus. See Wink, *John the Baptist* (→ 39 above) 113-15.

