

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 2:13-25: The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, give us ears that can hear and minds that can realise and hearts that believe that Jesus is the temple of God. Amen.

Dear congregation of Christ!

In recent times there is a considerable drive amongst some religious Jews, supported by the way by Christian Zionists, to rebuilt the "third temple". Many believe that this will usher in a time of prosperous peace amongst the nations for a thousand years, called the Millennium. All of them quote Scripture passages as their base. There are different drawings of how this could be realised. One of the options even shows the temple built right next to the current Muslim Dome of the Rock.

Well, whatever eventually materialises of building this third temple of stone or not, one thing is certain: It cannot be the temple of God! Jesus made this very clear after cleansing the second temple. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", He said. Jesus referred to the temple of His Body, the church! He has

already built the third and final everlasting temple of God. Any other building, even when built on the right spot, cannot be the temple of God! So, don't be deceived by these claims. But why does Jesus even bother to cleanse the temple if His Body will supersede the temple of stone in any case? We have to consider the prophecies mentioned. In Psalm 69,9 we read: "For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me." This Psalm speaks of the suffering servant of God whose love and zeal for God's house would cost Him His life. The anointed Saviour, the Messiah would have a great zeal for the temple of God. In other words, the Messiah would not come to destroy the temple. He would come to fulfil what the temple of stone foreshadowed! Another prophecy in Zechariah 14, 21 reads as follows: "And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day."

Speaking of the New Jerusalem we see that the sacrifices will be free. The house of God was never meant to be a house of trade, a house of bargaining, a house of bribing God. One cannot try to calm God's wrath over one's sins by sacrificing something that belongs to us and hope that He will be pleased with it. I do my part, hopefully God will do His part. The greater the sacrifice, the more expensive, the more God will be pleased with me- that kind of reasoning is paganism. It does not work with the true living God. Trying to bribe God has always been out of the question. God is not corruptible.

Sacrifices installed by God on Mount Sinai were never meant to function like that. Therefore, Jesus, the Holy One of God cleansed His Father's temple to purify the foreshadow! The Jews wanted a sign from Jesus. 'By what authority do you do these things?' This was an act of messianic proportions. You don't just go into the temple courts and start turning things upside down. They want a sign, and Jesus gives them a sign. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it. " What a sign! His own resurrection from the dead.

But they are thinking temple as in building. They say, "What are you talking about? It took forty-six years to build this temple. It would take another 38 years to

complete the work. And then six years later the Romans would knock it down. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it." The "temple" Jesus was referring to was the temple of His own body. The true temple where God meets man is His own human flesh born of Mary. This is where you meet God face to face. Not in a building, but in the crucified, risen, and glorified flesh of Jesus Christ. Here God and man are united as one Person. Here humanity is glorified. Here sins are forgiven. Here the dead are raised. This is where your life is, not in a building, but in the midst of the members of Christ's Body. All animal sacrifices point to His sacrifice. They only worked because they were foreshadows of His sacrifice with eternal consequences and effectiveness. Jesus is the true and ultimate temple, where God places His Name to save, where God makes His dwelling with man, where the Father is worshipped in Spirit and in Truth. Where the body of Jesus is, that's where God forgives and blesses. That's where heaven kisses earth, where the infinite meets the finite, where eternity breaks into time. It happens right here, among us, where sinners are baptised into the Triune Name of God, where sinners hear the full and entire forgiveness of their sins, where sinners eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. Peter wrote, "You (the baptised) like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). The church is God's temple built on the crucified and risen body of Jesus.

Please note, that although all baptised believers are being built into a spiritual house this does not mean "mystical" or "figuratively" or "non real", "virtual reality" etc. No. It means real. Let us remember that John states in his Gospel that "the Word became Flesh". Jesus' body is the temple! And we are baptised into His Body. When we eat of the consecrated bread, we partake of His Body. This Body is the same Body which was crucified, which was resurrected and which ascended into heaven, into the sphere of eternity, which is spirit.

That is why we gather, why we physically come together. Where this real and physical gathering in Spirit and truth takes place the Body of Christ assembles. This is never individualistic. We are genuine members of Christ's Body in a very concrete way where our Saviour is really present amongst us. So, this meeting is "live", it is

not some gathering amongst ourselves, like we would gather for braai tonight. Heaven breaks into our realm and attends this service, because the true Body of Christ is the Temple of God. Isn't that truly marvellous? Amen.

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever." Amen.

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P.S. This sermon was translated into Tswana and Zulu for a festival to remember the dedication of a church building 1540150726 Tr. 8. The reason why this sermon was published as such was that the sermon which was asked for the Sunday with a the text taken from Math. 5 was not sent.