

From John 2.19 to Mark 15.29: The History of a Misunderstanding

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Against the consensus that John 2.19 alludes to the destruction of the temple and is dependent on Synoptic traditions, it is argued here that: (a) there is some interdependence between the Johannine and Synoptic sayings on temple destruction, but not so as to posit Johannine use of Synoptic material; (b) Jesus' saying in John 2.19 does not refer to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, but to his death and resurrection (proof of his temple-cleansing authority), formulated in distinctively and exclusively Johannine terms; (c) Mark takes Jesus to have predicted the destruction of the temple, but the notion that he also predicted its rebuilding (Mark 15.29) can be explained only as a distorted version of John 2.19, known to Mark via a source hostile to Jesus.

Keywords: John 2.19–21, Mark 14.58 and 15.29, destruction of the temple, rebuilding the temple, John and the Synoptics

According to the Synoptics, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple (Matt 24.2; Mark 13.2; Luke 21.6). At his trial, Jesus was accused of having said that he was able to destroy the temple and to build it in three days (Matt 26.61) or that he would destroy the temple that was made with hands, and in three days would build another, not made with hands (Mark 14.58). At his crucifixion, some people mocked him, recalling that he said that he would destroy the temple and build it in three days (Matt 27.40; Mark 15.29). Although John's gospel has no reference to a temple-destruction prophecy nor to a trial accusation regarding the temple, it is usually assumed that John 2.19 and 4.21 allude to the destruction of the temple. This interpretation is linked to the traditional dating of John's gospel in the last decade of the first century, which generally assumes Johannine dependence on the Synoptic gospels, especially Mark and Luke.

A number of scholars have called this consensus into question,¹ arguing for the literary independence of John's gospel, its value as an independent historical

1 Cf. M. A. Matson, 'Current Approaches to the Priority of John', *Stone Campbell Journal* 7 (2004) 73–100.

source, its strong Jewish identity, and its early dating (before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE).² Some others have suggested a reciprocal oral influence between John and Mark,³ or mutual influence between John and the Synoptics through successive stages of literary development,⁴ or even Johannine influence on Q, Matthew,⁵ and, particularly, Luke.⁶

However, the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 is still interpreted as originally concerning the Jerusalem temple, subsequently reinterpreted as referring to Jesus (John 2.21).⁷ From a different perspective, Dodd proposed that John 2.19 was from the outset associated with both the temple and Jesus.⁸

In this article I will argue that there is linguistic evidence for the interdependence of John 2.19 and Mark 14.58 // Matt 26.61; Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40, but I will demonstrate that the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 ('Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up')⁹ does not make reference to the Jerusalem temple and does not depend on the Synoptics. It could derive ultimately from Jesus himself in reference to his own death and resurrection,

2 J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) 307–8 n. 218; D. B. Wallace, 'John 5,2 and the Date of the Fourth Gospel', *Bib* 71 (1990) 179 n. 10; P. L. Hofrichter, ed., *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangelium: Symposium in Salzburg am 10. März 2000* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002).

3 P. Anderson, 'John and Mark: The Bi-optic Gospels', *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

4 M.-E. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Paris: Cerf, 1977).

5 K. Berger, *Im Anfang war Johannes* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1997).

6 B. Shellard, 'Luke as the Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Character' (M. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1997); M. A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke* (Atlanta: SBL, 2001).

7 Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 1.123; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 1.438 n. 15; W. L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 534; J. Kilgallen, *The Stephen Speech: A Literary and Redactional Study of Acts 7, 2–53* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976) 34; O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) 91–2; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 2nd ed. 1978) 196; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 392; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 72–3; M. A. Matson, 'The Contribution to the Temple Cleansing by the Fourth Gospel', *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) 501; J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 414 n. 18; L. M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (London: Routledge, 1997) 111–12; M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (London: Continuum, 2001) 304.

8 C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953) 302.

9 All biblical citations come from the New Revised Standard Version, unless indicated to the contrary.

but it has been formulated in distinctively and exclusively Johannine symbolic language. At the same time, I will suggest that the second half of the accusation against Jesus in Mark 14.58 // Matt 26.61; Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40 (the building of the temple in three days) cannot be explained by other evidence in the NT, except as a distorted version of John 2.19, which was known to Mark via a source hostile to Jesus.¹⁰

1. Linguistic Evidence for the Interdependence of John 2.19 and Mark 14.58; 15.29

There are striking similarities between the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 and the false accusations levelled against him in Mark 14.58 // Matt 26.61; Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40; but there are also some remarkable differences:

Λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν ('Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up', John 2.19)

Τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἕξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος, καὶ σὺ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερεῖς αὐτόν ('This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?', John 2.20)

Ἐγὼ καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω ('I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands', Mark 14.58)

Οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ('Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days', Mark 15.29)

Δύναμαι καταλύσαι τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν οἰκοδομήσαι ('I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days', Matt 26.61)

Ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις οἰκοδομῶν ('You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days', Matt 27.40)

The term ναός is very common in the NT, occurring 46 times (9 in Matthew, 3 in Mark, 4 in Luke, 3 in John, 3 in Acts, 8 in the Pauline Epistles, and 16 in Revelation). But, as M. D. Hooker has noted, the term for 'sanctuary' used in Mark 14.58; 15.29, and 15.38 'is ναός, instead of Mark's more usual word for the temple, ἱερόν... A similar interesting change from ἱερόν to ναός takes

¹⁰ My hypotheses do not depend on any particular theory about the Synoptic problem, but I will assume Markan priority in order to facilitate my investigation.

place in John 2.14–22'.¹¹ This coincidence does not prove, but it suggests interdependence between John 2.19 and Mark 14.58; 15.29.

The phrase *τρεις ἡμέρας* appears 7 times linked to the resurrection,¹² preceded 3 times by *μετὰ*¹³ and twice by *ἐν*.¹⁴ On the other hand, 'three days' appears 6 times associated with the building or raising up of a temple, preceded twice by *διὰ*¹⁵ and 4 times by *ἐν*.¹⁶ The common presence of *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις* in John 2.19, 20 and Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40 leads us to suspect interdependence between them, because they are the only four verses in the whole NT with the phrase *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις*, and all of them are about the raising up or building of a temple. But there is no reason to exclude *a priori* the common dependence of Mark 15.29 and John 2.19 upon a primitive source, or even the dependence of Mark 15.29 on John 2.19.

On the other hand, there are some remarkable differences between the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 and the false accusation against him in Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40. In fact, *λύω* and *ἐγείρω* are found only in John 2.19, while *καταλύω* and *οἰκοδομέω* are found only in Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40. Two observations must be made. In the first place, the verb *ἐγείρω* can be applied to a material building, but it is primarily used for raising the dead to life, both in John's gospel (2.22; 5.21; 12.1, 9, 17; 21.14) and in the rest of the NT.¹⁷ In the second place, the verb *καταλύω* in Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40 is also found in the accusation against Stephen concerning the destruction of the temple (Acts 6.14).

2. Mark 11. 17 and John 2.19 in Context: The Destruction or Cleansing of the Temple

The saying of John 2.19 ('Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up') was attributed to Jesus in the context of the so-called cleansing of the temple episode. If Jesus' action in the temple was a gesture prophesying its destruction and its replacement by a new temple, John 2.19 must be interpreted in the light of that prophecy. But in this section, I will argue that the overturning of

11 Hooker, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, 358.

12 Cf. Matt 12.40; 27.63; Mark 8.31; John 2.19, 20; Rev 11.9, 11.

13 Cf. Matt 27.63; Mark 8.31; Rev 11.11.

14 Cf. John 2.19–20.

15 Cf. Matt 26.61; Mark 14.58.

16 Cf. Matt 27.40; Mark 15.29; John 2.19–20.

17 See Matt 9.25; 10.8; 11.5; 14.2; 16.21; 17.23; 26.32; 27.52, 63–64; 28.6–7; Mark 5.41; 6.14, 16; 12.26; 14.28; 16.6, 14; Luke 7.14, 22; 8.54; 9.7, 22; 20.37; 24.6, 34; Acts 3.15; 4.10; 5.30; 10.40; 13.30, 37; 26.8; Rom 4.24, 25; 6.4, 9; 7.4; 8.11, 34; 10.9; 1 Cor 6.14; 15.4, 12–17, 20, 29, 32, 35, 42–44, 52; 2 Cor 1.9; 4.14; 5.15; Gal 1.1; Eph 1.20; 5.14; Col 2.12; 1 Thess 1.10; 2 Tim 2.8; Heb 11.19; 1 Pet 1.21.

the tables in John does not symbolize the destruction of the temple, only its cleansing, in the light of Zech 14.21.

E. P. Sanders has argued that Jesus' action in the temple—overturning the tables and driving out the traders and animals—was a prophetic demonstration symbolizing that the Kingdom was at hand and that the old temple would be destroyed, so that the expected eschatological temple might arise.¹⁸ Although Sanders argued that 'there was current in some circles the expectation of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple',¹⁹ C. A. Evans has shown that 'there are no texts that predict the appearance of a messianic figure who first destroys (or predicts the destruction of) the Temple and then rebuilds it. These texts only suggest that a new Temple will be built, perhaps through the agency of the Messiah'.²⁰ Since Sanders could not quote any Jewish text from the period of the Second Temple that predicts the destruction and rebuilding of the temple,²¹ he argued that the building of a new temple naturally implies the destruction of the old.²² But the only text quoted by Sanders that specifies the destiny of the old temple is *1 En.* 90.28, where the temple desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes is completely carried off (not destroyed) and laid 'in a place in the south of the land'.²³

In Sanders's view, Jesus' action symbolizing the destruction of the temple was reinterpreted by the embarrassed Mark as a mere act of protest against dishonesty, attributing to Jesus some words about a 'den of robbers',²⁴ a saying rejected by most scholars as an addition:²⁵ 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers' (Mark 11.17). But since Mark presents Jesus as prophesying the destruction of the temple explicitly in Mark 13.2 ('Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down'), C. A. Evans has rightly asked: 'why would the presentation of Jesus' symbolic action in the Temple, an action that only implied the Temple's destruction, be such a cause of embarrassment that he felt it necessary to reinterpret it as an act of cleansing?'²⁶ According to Evans, it seems highly unlikely that Mark has transformed a prophetic gesture portending destruction into a protest against business activities, since Mark wished to

18 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–90.

19 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 76.

20 C. A. Evans, 'Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?', *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 410.

21 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 80–87.

22 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 85.

23 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 81.

24 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 75.

25 Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 66.

26 Evans, 'Jesus' Action in the Temple', 397.

emphasize that Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple.²⁷ In fact, the Markan narrative of Jesus' action in the temple was intercalated between Jesus' curse of the fruitless fig tree (Mark 11.12-14) and the notice regarding the fig tree having withered away to its roots (11.20-21). This symbolizes a fruitless and doomed temple,²⁸ making use of the imagery of Jer 8.13 and Hos 9.10, 16. R. T. France confirms that the withering of the fig tree is a symbol of 'the failure and the coming dissolution of the temple worship'.²⁹ In his opinion, 'Mark, by associating Jesus' action with the cursing of the fig tree, ensures that his readers see it in this wider and more ominous perspective'.³⁰

Moreover, according to the Markan narrative, when Jesus died the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mark 15.38). The tearing of the curtain seems to symbolize the abolition of the old worship,³¹ a warning sign of the impending destruction of the temple,³² and the partial fulfilment of the prophecy in Mark 13.1-2.³³ The 'destruction of the sanctuary has already begun (or, indeed, is done)'.³⁴ 'For Mark the rending of the veil after the death of Jesus both effected a present destruction of the holiness of the sanctuary and served as a sign of a future, less symbolic destruction'.³⁵

In conclusion, Jesus' action in the temple was interpreted by Mark as an act symbolizing its destruction because (a) the Markan narrative of Jesus' action is preceded by the curse of the fruitless fig tree (11.12-14) and followed by its withering (11.20-21), symbolizing the destruction of the fruitless temple; (b) a prophecy of the temple's destruction was explicitly attributed to Jesus in Mark 13.1-2; and (c) Jesus' death was followed by the tearing of the temple curtain (15.38), symbolizing the partial fulfilment of this prophecy.

In this context, I propose that the 'den of robbers' saying attributed to Jesus in Mark 11.17 is not only a quotation of Jer 7.11, but also an allusion to Jeremiah's prophecy of the destruction of the temple, which is clearly established in the following verses:

27 Evans, 'Jesus' Action in the Temple', 435.

28 Evans, 'Jesus' Action in the Temple', 397-8.

29 R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 428.

30 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 437.

31 Cf. V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1962) 596; E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970) 355; C. S. Mann, *Mark* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986) 653.

32 Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 575.

33 D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 140-2.

34 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1.439.

35 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2.1104.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the LORD. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, says the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh (Jer 7.11–14)

In this sense, according to the saying attributed to Jesus in Mark 11.17, when he drove out the merchants from the temple, he was following Jeremiah, who denounced the profanation of the temple and prophesied its destruction.³⁶

This argument can also be applied to Matthew and Luke. In the first case, the expulsion of merchants and purchasers from the temple (Matt 21.12) is followed by the quotation of Jer 7.11 (21.13), the curse of the fruitless fig tree (21.19), and the temple destruction prophecy (24.2). In the second case, the expulsion (Luke 19.45) is preceded by the Jerusalem destruction prophecy (19.41–44) and followed by the quotation of Jer 7.11 (19.46), and another temple destruction prophecy (21.6).

This prophecy seems to have been known very early in the primitive community of Jerusalem, as it was preached by Stephen (Acts 6.14) and preserved by the three Synoptics. But its authenticity is very questionable, since the prophecy was not apparently preached by the Twelve or the 'Hebrews', and it is omitted in the rest of the NT, including key texts such as 2 Thess 2.4, Hebrews 8–10, and Revelation 11.³⁷

Unlike Mark, who interpreted the 'cleansing of the temple' episode in the light of the temple destruction prophecy attributed to Jesus, John interpreted this episode as an act of purification of the temple. According to his gospel, Jesus exclaimed: 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' (John 2.16). These words allude not to Jeremiah, but to Zechariah,³⁸ who prophesied the coming of God and the inauguration of his Kingdom (Zech 14.1–19), with Jerusalem and Judah wholly consecrated to God:

36 W. L. Lane wrote that Mark 13.2 'actually forms the expected sequel' to Mark 11.17: 'There, in a pronouncement of judgement upon the misuse of the Temple, Jesus cited Jer. 7:11. In the context of that passage the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar is seen as God's punishment of the rebelliousness of Judah in the time of Jeremiah (Jer. 7:12–14)'. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 452.

37 Due to limitations of space, I will develop this argument in a separate article.

38 Regarding John 2.16 as an allusion to Zech 14.21, see Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 300; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972) 139; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1.119, 121. See recent discussion in B. D. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Penn State University, 1992) 135–6.

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'HOLY TO THE LORD'. And the cooking pots in the LORD'S house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day. (Zech 14.20–21, NASB)

In this passage, the prophet says that Jerusalem and Judah, with all their utensils, will be consecrated to the worship of God, and that there will be no impure man or 'Canaanite' (כנעני in MT, Χαναναῖος in LXX) in the temple. But since the word 'Canaanite' was often used as a synonym for 'trader' (cf. Job 41.6; Prov 31.24; Hos 12.7; Zeph 1.11), Aquila translated the כנעני of Zech 14.21 by μετὰβολος (huckster, retail dealer) and the Targum of the Minor Prophets rendered it by עובד תגרא (someone doing business).³⁹ This was precisely the reading of John 2.16: 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' According to this Johannine saying, when Jesus drove the merchants from the temple, he was following Zechariah, who prophesied an eschatological higher level of worship.

If the Johannine allusion to Zech 14.21 in John 2.16 was constructed after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it would be inexplicable in terms of scriptural exegesis, because Zech 14.21 is not associated with the temple's destruction, but with a higher level of worship. That is very far from the Synoptic quotation of Jer 7.11 which is associated with Jeremiah's prophecy about the destruction of the temple in Jer 7.12–14. Since the destruction of the temple was prophesied correctly in the three Synoptic gospels, John 2.16 must be a pre-70 saying, which shows no literary dependence on the Synoptics.

C. H. Dodd maintained that the narrative of the cleansing of the temple is given in John's gospel 'with little substantial difference from the Marcan version, though with no great measure of verbal agreement'.⁴⁰ But as we have just seen, the Johannine allusion to Zechariah is linked to a higher level of worship, while the Synoptic quotation of Jeremiah alludes to the destruction of the temple. Moreover, in the following section we will see that, according to John, Jesus did not prophesy the rebuilding of the temple in three days if it was destroyed, but his own resurrection in three days if he was killed; John attributes the misunderstanding to his adversaries. The verbal disagreement between the Johannine and the Synoptic versions is also a substantial disagreement.

39 For the Greek and Aramaic translations of Zech 14.21, see H. J. de Jonge, 'The Cleansing of the Temple in Mark 11:15 and Zechariah 14:21', *The Book of Zechariah and its Influence* (ed. C. Tuckett; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) 90.

40 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 300.

3. John 2.19: Meaning and Function

According to John 2.19, Jesus proclaimed his power to raise up the temple in three days if it was destroyed by his opponents. This proclamation was pronounced by Jesus as a sign of his messianic authority to cleanse the temple:

The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (Λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν). (John 2.18–19)

In this section, I will argue that John 2.19 makes reference only to Jesus' death and resurrection, excluding any allusion to a supposed destruction and rebuilding of a physical temple or a spiritual temple of believers. In the cleansing of the temple episode, John 2.19 carries out the same function as Mark 11.29–30, that is, to proclaim the heavenly origin of Jesus' messianic authority: in the case of Mark, this occurs by associating the heavenly origin of John the Baptist's authority with Jesus' own authority, in the case of John, by proclaiming Jesus' power to raise himself from the dead in three days if he was killed by his opponents. In another context, Jesus' resurrection as a sign of his messianic authority is also found in Matt 12.39; 16.4, and, more ambiguously, in Luke 11.29 (the sign of Jonah).

Regarding the meaning of John 2.19, it might be argued that Jesus uttered these words in reference to the physical temple. But this option must be discarded. In the first place, we have already seen that prophecies about the building of a new temple in Jewish literature are never linked to the destruction of the old one. In the second place, Jesus' challenge to others to destroy the temple only makes sense if the 'temple' alludes to Jesus himself, since 'the Jews' had no intention to destroy the physical building. Thirdly, the notion of another physical temple being built or raised up by Jesus is completely absent from the NT, including Mark 13, John 4, Hebrews 8–9, and Revelation 21. Finally, although 'three days' is an expression that also means 'a short, but indefinite time',⁴¹ it is strongly associated with Jesus' resurrection. In this last sense, the phrase *τρίτη ἡμέρα* appears 13 times in the NT,⁴² while the phrase *τρεις ἡμέρας* appears 8 times.⁴³

41 Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1.123. Cf. Acts 25.1; 28.7, 12, 17. Cf. also John 2.1 ('on the third day').

42 Associated with Jesus' resurrection, *τρίτη ἡμέρα* ('third day') appears in Matt 16.21; 17.23; 20.19; 27.64; Mark 9.31; 10.34; Luke 9.22; 18.33; 24.7, 21, 46; Acts 10.40; 1 Cor 15.4.

43 Associated with Jesus' resurrection, *τρεις ἡμέρας* ('three days') appears in Matt 12.40; 27.63; Mark 8.31; indirectly in Matt 12.40 (Jonah's sign), John 2.19–20 (the temple's raising up), Rev 11.9, 11 (the two witnesses' death and resurrection). Although the allusion is distorted, Jesus' resurrection is implied in Matt 26.61; 27.40; Mark 14.58; 15.29 (the temple's rebuilding). It is possible that Jesus' resurrection underlies Matt 15.32; Mark 8.2 (feeding the multitude after

Another possibility is that Jesus alluded to his community. The temple as a symbol of the community can be found in many passages in the NT.⁴⁴ The believers are, collectively speaking, a temple (ναός; 1 Cor 3.16–17; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.21), a dwelling-place for God (Eph 2.22), and the house of God (1 Tim 3.15). The same idea is found in 1 Peter (2.5), and in one of the Qumran texts, where the new eschatological temple is the community itself, the ‘Sanctuary of men’ (4QFlor 1.6).⁴⁵ Individually, believers are identified with the stones and pillars of a building: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (Eph 2.20); the apostles and prophets are the foundation (Eph 2.20); James, Cephas, and John are pillars (Gal 2.9). Similar symbols are found in 1 Peter: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone (2.6), the head of the corner (2.7), a living stone (2.4)—a symbol which is applied also to believers (2.5). In the Synoptics, Jesus Christ is the head of the corner (Matt 21.42; Mark 12.10; Luke 20.17). The same idea was preserved in Acts 4.11. In Matthew, Peter is the rock upon which Jesus will build his community (16.18). In Revelation, the believer is a pillar in the temple (ναός; 3.12).

But the hypothesis that ‘this temple’ (John 2.19) refers to the believing community does not make much sense, since the saying in John 2.19 clearly implies that the temple to be raised has the same nature as the temple destroyed. But Jesus could not have challenged ‘the Jews’ to destroy his community, and promised to raise it up. According to Mark 13.13, 20 and Rev 11.1–2 he prophesied persecution and preservation, not destruction and reconstruction. Moreover, the reference to the ‘three days’ reveals that, in this specific saying, the temple does not symbolize the congregation of believers but the person of Jesus.

Individually, the symbolic identification between the believer and the temple can be found only in one of the Pauline epistles: the believer must not desecrate his body because it is a temple (ναός) of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6.19). But the Johannine literature reserves the symbol of the temple exclusively for Christ. His body is a temple (ναός; John 2.19, 21). The water that flows from the side of his crucified body (John 19.34) is linked to the rivers of living water that flow from the belly of his glorified body (7.37–39), in allusion to the stream of life-giving water that comes from under the eschatological temple and flows down from its side (Ezek 47.1–12). The eschatological corollary of this identification between Jesus and the temple is found in Revelation: at the end of time, God

three days); Luke 2.46 (Jesus found after three days); Acts 9.9 (restoration of Paul’s sight after three days). References without connection to Jesus’ resurrection can be found in Acts 25.1; 28.7, 12, 17.

44 B. Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the NT: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the NT* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965); R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the NT* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969).

45 G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Sheffield: JSOT, 3rd ed. 1987) 293.

and the Lamb will be the temple (ναός) of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21.22) and from their throne will flow the river of the water of life (22.1).

In this symbolic context, Jesus is presented as proclaiming—as a sign of his messianic authority—his power to raise up the temple of his body if it is destroyed by his opponents. The use of this distinctively and purely Johannine symbolic language of ‘Jesus as temple’ reveals that, even if Jesus actually prophesied his own death and resurrection in three days, the wording found in John 2.19 is completely and exclusively Johannine.

The phrase ‘Destroy this temple’ implicitly assumes that ‘the Jews’ looked for its destruction, an assumption that can only make sense if the ‘temple’ alludes to Jesus, not to the material sanctuary.⁴⁶ John clearly states that ‘the Jews’ want to kill Jesus, not to destroy the Jerusalem temple. Moreover, he maintains that the Sanhedrin decided to put Jesus to death in order to preserve the temple from destruction (John 11.47–53). That the ‘temple’ alludes to Jesus is confirmed by the presence of the verb ‘raise up’: as we have already seen, ἐγείρω can be applied to a material building, but is primarily used for raising the dead to life, both in John’s gospel and in the rest of the NT.

John’s gospel denies explicitly (John 2.21) that Jesus alluded to the Jerusalem temple when he proclaimed (2.19) his power to rebuild the temple in three days if it was destroyed by his opponents; John attributes the misunderstanding to ‘the Jews’:

The Jews then said, ‘This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?’ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. (John 2.20–21)

In fact, the topic of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple is missing from John’s gospel and there is no evidence that allows us to assume that John 2.19 alludes at all to the destruction and rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. In the first place, as we have already seen, the overturning of the tables does not symbolize the destruction of the temple, only its cleansing. Secondly, the allusion to Zech 14.21 in John 2.16 is linked to Zechariah’s prophecy about a higher quality of worship, in sharp contrast to the Synoptic quotation of Jer 7.11, associated with the destruction of the temple. Thirdly, Jesus’ announcement that the end of the Jerusalem temple worship would come in an imminent future (‘the hour is coming’, John 4.21), and that the time for worshiping God in spirit and truth had already arrived (‘the hour is coming, and is now here’, John 4.23) does not necessarily imply the destruction of the temple.⁴⁷ Fourth, all the Synoptic topics linked to the prophecy of the temple destruction (Jeremiah’s saying in the

⁴⁶ This argument does not work with the rendering of W. L. Lane (*The Gospel according to Mark*, 534): ‘if this temple be destroyed, in three days I will raise it up’, adopted from K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 252.

temple episode, the curse of the fruitless fig tree, prophecies about the throwing down of the temple and the setting up of the 'desolating sacrilege', the call to flee from Jerusalem, the false testimonies at Jesus' trial, and the tearing of the temple curtain) are missing from John's gospel.

John 2.19 fits rather into the following sequence:

Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (John 2.13)	Jesus' messianic entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21.1-9; Mark 11.1-10; Luke 19.29-38)
Jesus' expulsion of traders and money changers from the temple (John 2.14-15)	Jesus' expulsion of traders and buyers from the temple (Matt 21.12; Mark 11.15-16; cf. Luke 19.45)
The 'market-place' (John 2.16) associated with Zechariah's prophecy about a higher level of worship	The 'den of robbers' (Matt 21.13; Mark 11.17; Luke 19.46) associated with Jeremiah's prophecy about the destruction of the temple
Questioned about his authority to do this, Jesus proclaims his power to raise up the temple in three days if it was destroyed by his opponents (John 2.18-19)	Questioned about his authority to do these things, Jesus asks if the baptism of John came from heaven or was of human origin (Matt 21.23-27; Mark 11.27-33; Luke 20.1-8)

John 2.18-22 carries out the same function as Matt 21.23-27; Mark 11.27-33; Luke 20.1-8, that is, to proclaim the heavenly origin of Jesus' messianic authority, which had been called into question by his opponents. While the dialogue between Jesus and 'the Jews' was placed by John just after the overturning of the tables (John 2.18), the dialogue between Jesus and the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders was placed by Mark early on the next day (Mark 11.20; cf. Matt 21.18). Luke placed the discussion some days later ('one day', Luke 20.1). While 'the Jews' of John asked Jesus: 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' (Τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν, ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; John 2.18), the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of Mark asked him: 'By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?' (Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῆς; Mark 11.28; cf. Matt 21.23). By 'these things', Mark means the overturning of the tables, because Jesus did nothing more in Jerusalem after that. In Matthew, 'these things' seem to mean Jesus' teaching (21.23), which is clearly implied also in Luke 20.1. But 'it is often suggested that the question originally referred

47 In the (related) vision of the Johannine seer, the temple would be replaced by God and Christ as the new temple (Rev 21.22) of the New Jerusalem (21.2, 10) in the context of the eschatological renewal of all things (21.1), a renewal that excludes the profanation and destruction of the temple (11.1-13).

to the cleansing of the temple; indeed it would be surprising if that event had not provoked a reaction (cf. Jn. 2.13–22). Perhaps the whole activity of Jesus in the temple is in mind'.⁴⁸ Both John and the Synoptics present Jesus as proclaiming the heavenly origin of his messianic authority: in the case of the Synoptics, by associating his authority with the heavenly origin of the authority of John the Baptist (Matt 21.24–25; Mark 11.29–30; Luke 20.3–4); in the case of John 2.19, by proclaiming his power to raise 'this temple' in three days if it is destroyed by his opponents. As we will see, the heavenly origin of Jesus' messianic authority is better supported if John 2.19 does not allude to the building of a material temple, but to his own rising from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection as a sign of his messianic authority is found not only in John 2.19, but also in Matthew and, more ambiguously, in Luke:

The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' (John 2.18)	Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you'. (Matt 12.38)	The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven (Matt 16.1)	
Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2.19)	But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah' (Matt 12.39)	'An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah' (Matt 16.4)	When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, 'This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah' (Luke 11.29)
The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you			

48 I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 724–5.

raise it up in three days?' (John 2.20)			
But he was speaking of the temple of his body (John 2.21)	'For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth' (Matt 12.40)		'For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation' (Luke 11.30)
	'The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!' (Matt 12.41)		'The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!' (Luke 11.32)

There are several similarities between these passages. The sign asked for by 'the Jews' in John 2.18 is also requested in Matt 12.38 (by scribes and Pharisees), Matt 16.1 (by Pharisees and Sadducees), Matt 12.39; 16.4 (by an evil and adulterous generation), and Luke 11.29 (by an evil generation). While Jesus answers in John 2.19 with a cryptic allusion to the temple destroyed and raised up in three days, he answers with a cryptic allusion to Jonah's sign in Matt 12.39; 16.4, and Luke 11.29. This sign alludes to the well-known story of Jonah devoured and liberated after three days and three nights. While the allusion to the temple is explained in John 2.21, the allusion to Jonah's sign is explained in Matt 12.40 and, more ambiguously, in Luke 11.30.⁴⁹

49 The 'sign of Jonah' is absent from Mark 8.12, but the authenticity of Matt 12.39–40 and Luke 11.29–30 is irrelevant for my argument. Regarding the debate about the authenticity and meaning of the 'sign of Jonah', see R. A. Edwards, *The Sign of Jonah in the Theology of the*

Although John, Matthew and (more ambiguously) Luke agree that Jesus proclaimed his own resurrection as a sign of his messianic authority, there are a number of differences between them: (a) while Matthew and Luke made use of an OT figure to allude to Jesus, John used the symbol of Jesus-as-temple; (b) while the allusion to Jonah is a mixture of warning, promise, and prophecy, the Johannine saying is also an act of defiance: 'Kill me, and in three days I will raise myself from the dead'; (c) unlike the sign of Jonah, the Johannine saying not only prophesies Jesus' resurrection, but also proclaims Jesus' power to raise himself from the dead (cf. John 3.35; 10.17-18); (d) unlike the sign of Jonah, the Johannine allusion to Jesus' power to raise up his temple-body as a sign of his messianic authority is linked to the controversy about Jesus' authority to cleanse the temple.

In conclusion, there is no evidence that allows us to maintain the dependence of John 2.19 upon the prophecy of the temple destruction (Mark 13.2), the false accusation at Jesus' trial (14.58), or the mockery during his execution (15.29). John's gospel claims that Jesus proclaimed, as a sign of his messianic authority to cleanse the temple, his power to raise himself from the dead in three days if he was killed by his opponents. The same topic (Jesus' resurrection as a sign of his messianic authority) is also found in Matthew and (more ambiguously in) Luke, but with a different symbolic language: while John 2.19 made use of a Jesus-temple identification, Matt 12.39; 16.4, and Luke 11.29 made use of the sign of Jonah. Due to their conceptual affinities, John's allusion to Jesus' power to raise up his temple-body was linked to the controversy about Jesus' authority to cleanse the temple. According to John, some 'Jews' believed that Jesus had boasted of being able to raise the Jerusalem temple in three days. Due to this misunderstanding of the proclamation attributed to Jesus in John 2.19, it is explicitly denied in 2.21 that 2.19 had referred to the Jerusalem temple. In other words, John 2.19 does not here depend on the Synoptics.

4. The Second Half of the Accusation against Jesus in Mark 15.29: A Distorted Version of John 2.19

According to the Markan (and Matthean, but not Lukan) version of Jesus' trial, some witnesses falsely accused Jesus of having said that he would destroy the temple and that in three days he would build another (Mark 14.58). Although the

Evangelists and Q (London: SCM, 1971); A. J. B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005) 90-113; E. H. Merrill, 'The Sign of Jonah', *JETS* 23 (1980) 23-30; A. K. M. Adam, 'The Sign of Jonah: A Fish-Eye View', *Semeia* 51 (1990) 177-91; S. Chow, *The Sign of Jonah Reconsidered: A Study of its Meaning in the Gospel Traditions* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

witnesses did not agree (14.59) and the charge was thrown out (14.63), the accusation was repeated as a cruel mockery when Jesus was crucified (15.29).

The first half of the accusation against Jesus in Mark 14.58 ('I will destroy this temple'), repeated in Mark 15.29 ('Aha! You who would destroy the temple'), can be explained as a distortion of the prophecy attributed to him in Mark 13.2, according to which Jesus announced the destruction of the temple.⁵⁰ Regarding the second half of the accusation, I will argue in this section (a) that the building of a temple not made with hands in Mark 14.58 is secondary to the building of a temple in Mark 15.29; and (b) that the origin of this second half cannot be explained in the context of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics, Acts, and the rest of the NT, with the remarkable exception of John 2.19 (the raising up of the temple in three days). The common presence of *ναός* and *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις* in Mark 15.29 and John 2.19 leads us to suspect some interdependence between them. But the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 can be perfectly explained in the context of the Johannine narrative (Jesus' power to raise himself from the dead in three days, as a sign of his messianic authority) and as Johannine symbolic language (Jesus' body as temple).

In this context, I will propound the following hypothesis. The four gospels describe Jesus as prophesying his own death and resurrection in three days. By making use of his distinctively symbolic language, John has Jesus proclaim—as a sign of his authority—his power to raise the temple (of his body) in three days (John 2.19). This saying, attributed posthumously to Jesus, was misunderstood by some who believed that Jesus had boasted of being able to raise the Jerusalem temple in three days (John 2.20). This misunderstanding turned into mockery against Jesus, which was known to Mark through a hostile source. Mark mixed this mockery about the building of the temple in three days with the accusation concerning the temple destruction, attributing the double accusation to some witnesses in Jesus' trial and to hostile bystanders at Jesus' execution.

Regarding the authenticity of Mark 14.58, O. Cullmann maintained that: 'The *second* half of the (false) witness borne against Jesus probably corresponds to an actual saying of his, that he would "build a temple not made with human hands" (Mark 14.58); other sayings of his suggest that this was a reference to the eschatological community of disciples'.⁵¹ But in Dodd's opinion, 'the sophisticated Greek *χειροποιήτος* [...] and *ἄχειροποιήτος* are almost certainly secondary'.⁵² Brown wrote:

Neither Matt nor John make this distinction, nor does Luke in the claim attributed to Jesus in Acts 6:14 (although Luke is aware of it, as Acts 7:48 shows). In Mark itself the distinction is not repeated in the mockery of 15:29. The paired

50 Cf. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 494–5.

51 Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, 91.

52 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 302 n. 1.

positive and negative adjectives are a good Greek construction, but very difficult to retrovert into Hebrew or Aramaic. We can be relatively certain, then, that any statement made historically by Jesus about the destruction and rebuilding of the sanctuary did not contain these two distinguishing words—they are interpretations that arose among Greek speakers.⁵³

In fact, the Markan use of the term χειροποίητος (Mark 14.58) seems to be inspired by a very early negative attitude to the temple within the ‘Hellenist’ Christian Jewish faction headed by Stephen, for whom the Jerusalem temple was a house ‘made by human hands’ or χειροποίητος (Acts 7.48), ‘a derogatory word used of idol worship’.⁵⁴

The distinction introduced by Mark in 14.58 between the destruction of the worthless Jerusalem temple (‘made with hands’) and the building of a superior temple (‘not made with hands’) reveals that he thought that the statement attributed to Jesus was not totally false. In his view, Jesus had announced not only the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (cf. Mark 13.2), but also the building of another temple, whose superior nature was established by the Markan contrast between χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος. Mark affirmed that the accusation was false because the agent of the temple destruction would be not Christ—as the witnesses said—but a powerful enemy of God, who would try to enforce a pagan worship (the Danielic ‘desolating sacrilege’ set up where it ought not to be, Mark 13.14).

In conclusion, the second half of the accusation in Mark 14.58 seems to be a Markan development of a more primitive formulation, which is found in Mark 15.29 and Matt 26.61; 27.40.

But this more primitive formulation (the building of a temple in three days) also presents several difficulties. In the first place, it cannot be explained in the context of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics. It is striking that the prophecy about the temple destruction attributed to Jesus in Matt 24.2 // Mark 13.2 // Luke 21.6 does not make reference to the building of any temple, not even after the coming of the Son of Man in Matt 24.30–31 // Mark 13.26–27 // Luke 21.27–28. L. Gaston proposed that the second half of the accusation could refer to a saying actually uttered by Jesus, that is, the founding of the eschatological community as the ‘temple’ of God.⁵⁵ On the other hand, R. T. France has argued that the proclamation of the good news to all nations in Mark 13.10 must precede the temple destruction, so that the new ‘temple’ (that is, the gathering of the elect from all over the world in 13.27) replaces the physical building.⁵⁶

53 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1.439.

54 Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 146 n. 1.

55 L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 226, 241, 243.

56 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 516–17.

In fact, 'there is evidence that some Jews in the first century believed that the existing temple was to be replaced with a new one in the last days. And while this was normally regarded as the work of God himself, there were some who thought that the work of rebuilding would be the task of the Messiah'.⁵⁷

If this hypothesis is right, Jesus prophesied not only the destruction of the temple in Mark 13.2, but also the rebuilding of a new one in 13.27. But it is unlikely that the gathering of the elect in Mark 13.27 was the origin of the accusation against Jesus that he would build a temple in three days. In fact, a building of the temple-congregation 'in three days' is not attested in the NT. With regard to the Synoptics, the identification between the temple and the holy congregation is made loosely in only one verse. According to Matt 16.18, Jesus said that Peter was the rock upon which he would build his community, which implies the construction of a symbolic building, perhaps a temple. But the saying itself, 'you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (which is absent from Mark and the rest of the NT), can be considered the origin of the accusation that Jesus said that he would build a temple in three days only with great difficulty.

Although it has been argued that the period of 'three days' in Matt 26.61 'alludes to the change or decisive turn of events (see Hosea 6:2)',⁵⁸ the accusation about the building of a temple in three days must be linked in some way to the raising of Jesus, because 'the "three days" are too intimately linked with the resurrection to be used without implicit reference to it'.⁵⁹ In this sense, the temple to be built in three days in Mark 14.58; 15.29 may be an allusion to Jesus' resurrection. It could have been attributed to his accusers by Mark, weaving a true statement into the false charge.⁶⁰ R. T. France has argued that 'a Christian reader, even without knowing Jn. 2:19–22, could hardly fail to recognise...a reference to Jesus' resurrection... Mark, while dismissing the charge as false, has taken the opportunity to remind his readers that the prediction on which it was based (13:2) had more far-reaching implications than merely the destruction of a building'.⁶¹ On the other hand, B. Witherington sees a 'latent Markan irony' in 15.29, for 'the true conclusions are found on the lips of the mockers', that is, Jesus crucified 'is the one who will bring judgment on the temple and even be a temple raised up in three days'.⁶² But the verb οἰκοδομέω (Mark 14.58; 15.29; Matt 26.61; 27.40) is not consistent with the allusion to Jesus' resurrection implied in the expression 'three days', since this verb can only be applied to a material building,

57 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 607.

58 D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991) 382.

59 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 302.

60 On the truth spoken by adversaries in Mark, see E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981) 214.

61 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 607.

62 B. Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 397.

unlike ἐγγίρω (John 2.19), which can be applied both to a temple and to Jesus' body. More important, neither Mark nor Matthew wrote a word about Jesus' resurrection in terms of the raising of a temple.⁶³ Moreover, they never referred to Jesus as a temple (as in John 2.19) or as the eschatological temple (as in Rev 21.22).

In the second place, the second half of the accusation (the building of a temple in three days) cannot be explained in the context of the sayings attributed to Jesus in Acts. Stephen seems to have taught that Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, since he was accused by false witnesses of having said that Jesus would destroy 'this holy place' (Acts 6.13–14), but neither Stephen nor his accusers said anything about a new temple rebuilt in three days. Acts 6.14 seems to be more primitive than Mark 14.58; 15.29, because it only includes the first half of the accusation (the destruction of the temple), but not the second half (the building of another one). If Acts 6.14 depends upon Mark 14.58; 15.29, there is no reason for Luke to omit in Acts 6.14 the second half of the saying attributed to Jesus.⁶⁴ It is more probable that Mark added the second half, maybe following another source.

In conclusion, the second half of the accusation against Jesus in Mark 15.29 cannot be explained in the context of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics or Acts. The origin of this accusation must be found from elsewhere. But the building of a temple in three days, whatever is the meaning of 'temple' (material building, holy congregation, or Jesus' body), cannot be found in the rest of the NT either, with the remarkable exception of John 2.19. R. T. France recognizes that Mark has not recorded a promise to rebuild the temple:

As for the restoration διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν, the only remotely relevant sayings hitherto in Mark have been uttered only in private to the disciples, and have concerned Jesus' own resurrection μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας (8:31; 9:31; 10:34);

63 Ps 118.22 quoted in Matt 21.42; Mark 12.10, and Luke 20.17 mentions a stone rejected that becomes the cornerstone of a building, maybe a temple. Although it seems to have originally referred to Israel, it was applied to David in the Targum, and to Jesus in the Synoptics, symbolizing the rejection and vindication of the chosen one. Cf. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 462–3. Although the stone's rejection and vindication could have been interpreted as referring to Jesus' death and resurrection, the saying itself ('The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone') is very far from the saying attributed to Jesus in his trial: the building of a temple in three days.

64 Although F. F. Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3rd rev. and enlarged ed. 1990], 189) recognizes that 'Stephen is not charged with going on to say that Jesus will build a new temple in place of the old', he argues that 'the theme of the new temple, "not made with hands," may be read between the lines of his reply.' But the contrast argued by Stephen is not between the current temple made with hands and the future temple not made with hands (which is not mentioned or implied at all), but between the old tent of testimony made according to a pattern revealed by God, and the current temple made with hands, that is, according to human devices, not being part of the divine plan.

they bear no relation to the temple. It is John who connects the two ideas (Jn. 2:19–22), and nothing in Mark prepares us for such a symbolic connection.⁶⁵

R. H. Gundry has proposed that Jesus’ prophecy of the temple destruction in Mark 13.2 would have been reported to the authorities by Judas. In this process, the prophecy would have been mingled with Jesus’ prediction of his own resurrection.⁶⁶ If this hypothesis is right, the origin of the accusation can be found in Jesus himself, whose words were misunderstood by his enemies:

prophecies	accusers	double accusation
The temple will be destroyed	Jesus said: I will destroy the temple	Jesus said: I will destroy the temple and build another in three days
I will rise from the dead in three days	Jesus said: I will build a new temple in three days	

But how could a prediction about Jesus’ resurrection in three days be misunderstood and transformed into a prediction about the building of a temple in three days? The prediction of Jesus’ resurrection must have been formulated in a certain kind of symbolic language that made possible its transformation and its merger with the prediction of the temple’s destruction. That symbolic language must have been some Jesus–temple identification, the only one that makes possible that mutation:

prophecies	reformulation	accusers	double accusation
The temple will be destroyed		Jesus said: I will destroy the temple	Jesus said: I will destroy the temple and build another in three days
I will rise from the dead in three days	Jesus said: I will raise up the destroyed temple (of my body) in three days	Jesus said: I will build a new temple in three days	

But this Jesus-temple identification is distinctively and solely Johannine, a circumstance that excludes the trial of Jesus as the scenario for this process of mutation.

We have already seen that the common presence of *ναός* and *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις* allows us to suspect some interdependence between the saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 (misunderstood by ‘the Jews’ in John 2.20) and the

65 France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 605.

66 R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 905–6.

mockery in Mark 15.29 // Matt 27.40. In fact, there are only four passages with the phrase ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις in the whole of the NT, and all of them are about the raising up or building of a temple.

Καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγεῖρεῖ αὐτόν (John 2.19)	καὶ σὺ ἐν τρὶσὶν ἡμέραις ἐγεῖρεῖς αὐτόν (John 2.20)	καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις (Mark 15.29)	καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις οἰκοδομῶν (Matt 27.40)
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I have already argued that there is no evidence of dependence of John 2.19 upon Mark. The proclamation attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 can be explained fully in its own context and is formulated in distinctively Johannine language. On the other hand, the second half of the accusation in Mark 14.58; 15.29 cannot be explained in the context of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics or the rest of the NT—with the notable exception of John 2.19.

But Mark could not know John 2.19 directly from a Johannine source, because (a) he was not able to explain the origin of the second half of the accusation regarding the building of another temple in three days; (b) he thought that the temple to be destroyed was *χειροποίητος*, a derogatory adjective not applicable to the body of Christ; and (c) he used the verb *οἰκοδομέω*, only applicable to a material building, not to Jesus' body. We may conclude that Mark must have known the material underlying John 2.19 from another source, which misunderstood the Johannine saying attributed to Jesus. It is striking that this misunderstanding was mentioned in John 2.20, attributing it to 'the Jews'. In the light of John 2.20 we can conclude that Mark knew the saying in John 2.19 from a hostile source.

My hypothesis is the following: the Johannine saying attributed posthumously to Jesus in John 2.19 was misunderstood by some (Jews?) who believed that Jesus had boasted of being able to raise the Jerusalem temple in three days (John 2.20). This misunderstanding turned into mockery against Jesus, which was known by Mark through a hostile source. Mark mixed this mockery about the building of the temple in three days with the accusation concerning the temple's destruction, attributing the double accusation to false witnesses in Jesus' trial and to hostile bystanders at Jesus' execution. In my view, this hypothesis can satisfactorily explain the origin of both John 2.19 and Mark 15.29, including the interdependence between them.

5. Conclusion

The topic of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple is completely missing from John's gospel, including John 2.19, a saying which refers exclusively to Jesus' power to raise himself in three days as a sign of his messianic authority to cleanse

the temple. This Johannine saying, attributed to Jesus, was misunderstood by John's opponents, who believed that Jesus had boasted of being able to raise the Jerusalem temple in three days. Unlike the seer of Revelation, who saw in his visions that the Jerusalem temple would be replaced by God and Christ as the eschatological temple (Rev 21.22), Stephen preached that the Jerusalem temple would be destroyed. Although this prophecy was not taught by the Twelve, the 'Hebrews', or in the rest of the NT (including such key texts as 2 Thess 2.4; Heb 8-10, and Rev 11), it was preserved by the Synoptic authors. The first half of the accusation against Jesus concerning the destruction of the temple in Mark 15.29 (expanded in 14.58) can be explained as a distortion of the prophecy attributed to Jesus, preached by Stephen and misunderstood by his opponents (Acts 6.14). But the second half of the accusation, concerning the building of a temple in three days (Mark 15.29, expanded in 14.58) can only be explained as a distortion of the Johannine saying attributed to Jesus in John 2.19 and misunderstood by John's opponents. Both accusations were known to Mark through hostile sources, and inserted into his narrative of Jesus' Passion.