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Jesus and the Temple John 2: 13-25.

The account of Jesus expelling traders and money changers from the Temple is given in all four gospels. The first three place the incident in the last week of Jesus' life, but John places it early in Jesus' ministry. Traditionally, most people have taken the view the incident occurred later and that it helps explain why Jewish leaders plotted to get rid of Jesus, but others think it may have been an early incident in which Jesus aimed to gain early attention to his claims and message and show how he would shake up people's ideas.

Jesus was horrified at the way in which traders were trying dishonestly to make a fast buck. Creatures for sacrifice in the Temple had to be paid for in special Temple money, not the normal money of the hated Roman occupiers. It does not take much imagination to see how advantage could be taken and an inflated exchange rate levied for the special Temple Hebrew money.

The exchanges took place in an outer court called the court of the Gentiles, where anyone could go (only Jews were allowed in the inner Temple). The Court was also a place where gentiles could pray and Jesus probably felt that this also destroyed the peace and quiet in which gentiles could go to meditate and pray.

Jesus made a prophecy at the time that puzzled even his own disciples. 'Destroy this Temple and in three days I will rise it up again'. It was only after his resurrection that they realised this related to his own body, raised up on Easter Day.

The Temple is where Jesus is regardless of any building in which we may meet.

Jesus was making a profound point about the difference in place of worship that would come about. The Jews believed that the highest and best form of worship was possible only in the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was saying that it was not the location that mattered in true worship but the person with and through whom worship is offered, that is Himself.

Later, as related in John Chapter 4, we read of him discussing this with a Samaritan woman. She asked Jesus whether the right place to worship was the Jewish Temple or the Samaritan one. Jesus said neither. What God wants is sincere worship 'in spirit and in truth', that is as aided by the Holy Spirit and through the truth, which He himself revealed through his example and teaching. What matters is not where exactly you worship-anywhere there can be true worship if it is worship of the God that Jesus taught us to call Father and we approach him through Jesus with the aid of the Spirit that Jesus would send to help us 'forever'.

Christian worship is possible anywhere if we are with Jesus and helped by the Holy Spirit. It is why so many prayers end 'through Jesus Christ, our Lord'.

David Carter.