

JOH 2:18 -25 "Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." 20 The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. 23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man."

As you'll remember from last week Jesus had gone into the temple area and found the Jews selling and buying there. They were selling animals for the people to sacrifice. They were exchanging money from Roman coinage to coinage suitable for the temple.

And though there was nothing wrong with any of this, the problem was that they were doing it in the temple area which was designated by God for worship purposes only. When the Son of God comes on to the scene and witnesses their utter disdain for the Father's house of worship He appropriately demonstrates His anger and clears, not destroys, the animals and merchants from the area.

The fact that the Jews did not call in the authorities to cart Jesus away demonstrates a couple of things.

- 1) They understood that what they were doing was out of accord with the law and therefore they knew they were wrong.
- 2) They recognized that Jesus came with an authority to do this.

Remember, Jesus made it clear that He was doing this on behalf of His Father.

JOH 2:16 "To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

And so, for those who heard Him, they understood Him to mean that He was sent from God the Father to ensure that this house of worship not be used for any other purposes.

And so, as we come to our text, the Jews now want to get a clear answer as to how and why this Jesus can claim such an authority.

JOH 2:18 "Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

This is an interesting question in light of what has just happened there in the temple area. When Jesus calls the Father in heaven His Father, He doesn't simply use that term in some generic way like we do when we call God our Father.

And the Jews understood this. They understood Jesus to mean that He was identifying Himself as a special agent of the Father who had an intimate relationship with Him and who was now representing Him in this instance.

And so, their first response to Jesus is, 'if you are sent from the Father then you must also come with the Father's authority and power. Therefore, show us a miracle as part of your credentials to prove you are His Son.'

But notice how Jesus responds in the next verse.

JOH 2:19 "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

Now, keep in mind they have just asked for a miracle. Jesus doesn't show them a miracle, but He most certainly intimates He has the ability to do one. Now, the Jews missed the intention of Jesus' response, and John will explain what Jesus meant by this in a moment, but the Jews didn't miss the implication of our Lord's response.

If Jesus meant that He would rebuild the physical structure of the temple in three days that would be no less a miracle. And so, it's not as though He denied that He could do a miracle, as far as they were concerned, they just didn't have ears to hear or eyes to see what Jesus really meant.

And so, in essence, what Jesus told them is that any miracle I show you will depend on your willingness to put your faith in Me. Look at the verse again. "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

What He suggests by this is, you destroy this temple and then I'll show you the miracle. Knowing that they would think He was talking about the physical temple He was putting the ball back in

their court. By faith, they would have to trust that He could do such a thing.

Jesus is always testing our faith. But these Jews didn't have such a faith, especially in Him. And this is why they respond the way they do.

JOH 2:20 "The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

They put two and two together as they did the math and came to the conclusion that Jesus was only a mere man and therefore He could not possibly rebuild in three days what took years to build.

But Jesus was not talking about the physical temple. He was talking about His physical body.

JOH 2:21 "But the temple he had spoken of was his body."

Now, we need to ask ourselves some questions here. For those of you who are going through our class on learning the Inductive approach to studying the bible you understand that there are questions we ask when approaching the Scriptures: who, what, where, when, why and how.

In verse 21 there are at least two *why* questions that fit.

- 1) Why does Jesus refer to His body as a temple?
- 2) Why doesn't He just come out and tell them He's not talking about the physical temple?

As to the first question, why does Jesus refer to His body as a temple?, we might be tempted to think He's using such a term as we might use it. Remember what Paul told the Corinthians?

1CO 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

Well, in one sense Christ's physical body is like ours in that the Holy Spirit of God is indwelt in our Lord's body. We saw this when the Holy Spirit descended on Christ when He was baptized in the Jordan. But what Jesus is referring to here in our text goes much deeper.

Keep in mind what the temple in Jerusalem was used for. It was the focal place in all of Israel where the living God was found to

dwell among His people. It was the place where all Jews would come to honor and worship their God.

What Jesus is doing through this metaphor is telling the Jews that He is the temple where God is in their midst. He is telling them that He is God and as such He is to be worshiped. They came to the temple for that reason. And now, instead of a temple made with hands, Jesus is showing them that He has fulfilled all the shadows and prophecies about Himself.

The Jews had turned the physical temple into some sort of religious icon instead of realizing what that temple represented. It represented God's presence in their lives, not that He was housed there and they were the only ones who had access to this God in a box.

Paul made this abundantly clear to the Greeks when he visited Athens and walked among their idols and then explained the significance of the idol to the unknown God.

ACT 17:24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

And by the way, when Jesus uses the word temple in our text He's using a different word from what is used in verses 14 and 15, where He is seen in the "temple" courts and "temple" area.

The word for temple in those two verses is the Greek word *hieron*, which is associated with the entire complex of the temple area. The word Jesus uses in verses 19-21 is the Greek word *naos* which denotes the holy of holies, which is where the Ark of the Covenant is located. In other words, the holy place where God meets the High Priests of Israel. (F.F. Bruce)

Unfortunately, the Jews had relegated God to someone who could only be found in a physical temple located in an ark or box in the holy of holies. Jesus points out that He's not in the box, but walks among them seeking a people who will trust Him by faith.

And the miracle He's pointing to, in response to their demand of such a miracle, is that He will demonstrate who He is by raising from the dead in three days after they destroy Him, the temple.

But our second why question is this. Why doesn't He just come out and tell them He's not talking about the physical temple? Why does He talk in parables?

Whenever we see Jesus using a parable, which is a story relating a truth, we usually think Jesus is trying to take a spiritual reality and make it simple for people to understand, like telling a child a simple story to clear up what it is we want them to understand.

But this is not what Jesus is doing in telling the Jews parables about the Kingdom of God, for example. Jesus is not trying to simplify the truth; He's actually trying to place a veil over it. How do we know this? Well, Jesus Himself tells us.

On one occasion He was speaking to the Jews and began teaching them about a farmer sowing seed and related that to faith. And the parable actually seems to be more of a riddle than plainly teaching a truth.

MAT 13:10 -16 "The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" 11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."

Jesus spoke in parables to point out how the heart of man, and specifically the Jews, was not able to hear and see the things of God even though Jesus would preface most of His parables with a parallel to some spiritual truth.

Even His own disciples had a problem with understanding some of the things Jesus was saying. When Jesus was told that Lazarus was sick our Lord decided to stay where He was, along with His disciples, instead of going to heal Lazarus. Well, it turns out that Lazarus dies.

JOH 11:11-15 ... "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then

he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

On another occasion our Lord was telling them how He had to die, but would be resurrected from the dead. But He used language which wasn't clear to them.

JOH 16:16-19,25,28-30 "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." 17 Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" 18 They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying." 19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?" 25 "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. 28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father. 29 Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

And yet, despite how Jesus spoke plainly to His disciples about His death and resurrection they still didn't fully understand the significance of such a reality as is seen in their utter grief and despair at His crucifixion and death.

If they had truly grasped this truth they would have been waiting outside the tomb until He rose three days later. But they didn't. In fact, our text tells us this.

JOH 2:22 "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."

It wasn't until Jesus physically rose from the dead that His disciples now understood all of those things they had been taught earlier. Now we might ask, how can this be? How can they not understand the clear words of Jesus regarding such an important truth, especially when Jesus went out of His way to teach them these things? And they were taught plainly.

MAT 16:21-23 "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

You'll notice that Peter only hears as far as Jesus being killed, not that He will raise from the dead. People have selective hearing. And in the spiritual sense people also hear what they want to hear or hear only what their own experience dictates.

It's when the Spirit of God takes that truth and opens our eyes to it that it really has a personal impact on us. And this is what happened to the disciples. Intellectually, they were taught and received the truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead, prior to His death. Spiritually, they couldn't discern how that would affect them personally until after the fact when Jesus rose and appeared to them.

LUK 24:36-47 "While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. 44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Even after He rose from the dead they had trouble grasping the reality of the truth of His resurrection. It isn't until after He opens their minds that they can fully receive and appreciate the truth.

We are talking about a spiritual truth which involved a spiritual problem caused by sin, and has only a spiritual solution in God, who is Spirit, coming to earth as He takes on flesh, who solves this spiritual problem by dying in our place and rising from the dead to reunite us to our heavenly Father.

All of salvation is spiritual. The problem with man is that though he too has a spirit it is spiritually dead and unable, in and of itself, to bring himself back to life. Only God, in Christ, can do this. He takes what was dead and gives it life.

Paul points this out when writing to the Ephesians.

EPH 2:1-5 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved."

It is the Spirit of God who opens our eyes, and then by faith we reach out to the solution to our sin problem, Jesus Christ. This is why we give all glory to God for our salvation. This is why we boast in no one except Christ. We have nothing to boast in from ourselves. It is all God.

And now, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to our text, these disciples had their eyes opened by the Lord and they truly understood and believed in a way they had not before His resurrection.

This is why I've always said that receiving Christ is not merely an intellectual exercise, as important as using our minds in the process is. The real issue is spiritual in nature because the real issue is an issue of the heart which only God can turn.

And so, if someone you share the gospel with doesn't immediately receive this great news by faith, don't become discouraged. Pray that God takes that truth and opens their eyes to receive it. They may not receive it tomorrow, or the next day, but God can open the eyes and bring life where there was death. God is faithful.

Let's finish up this section.

JOH 2:23-25 "Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man."

This again goes back to the heart of man. Evidently, while Jesus was celebrating the Passover with his family and disciples He was performing miracles which He wasn't willing to show the Jewish leaders when they asked him to show them His authority by some sign or miracle.

He was probably healing people, delivering them from evil spirits and so forth, and the people in Jerusalem came to believe on His name, as we're told in our text.

But here's the problem. Despite the fact that they believed on His name, which means they believed His claims to be the One sent from the Father, they didn't believe unto salvation.

How do we know they didn't? First, we're told that they believed, not because of their faith in Jesus' claim to be Messiah and Savior, but because they saw miracles. In other words, they saw and believed in the power of Christ, but only as it was beneficial to them physically.

As long as they were healed they believed. As long as they were fed, as in the case of Jesus miraculously multiplying the loaves and the fish, they believed. As long as they thought He could be their King to deliver them from Rome, they believed.

Remember how jubilant the Jews were when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the people put down palm branches to pave the way for their King?

JOH 12:13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!"

And yet, it would be many of these same people who only days later would be shouting, "crucify Him, crucify Him."

And this is where many in the world are today. The pay lip service to knowing Christ, but what they really mean is they know of Him, or are willing to follow as long as it's convenient, which means they never really believed at all. If God will do something for them, they say they believe, but once their faith is tested to see if

it's genuine, they fall by the wayside because they aren't willing to really trust Christ for their salvation.

They want life and salvation on their terms. However, God sets the terms and they are for our good. His terms: Repent, and believe in the Son of God for your salvation and you will be saved.

But the belief unto salvation is not a mere belief of convenience, but a belief which follows Christ no matter what. That separates the wheat from the chaff, the truly born again from the fair weather believers.

This is why we're told that despite the Jews believing on the name of Jesus we read in the last two verses of our text.

JOH 2:24-25 "But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man."

He knew why these people followed Him at this point. He knew He could not depend on them to be true followers because they weren't. What a sad testimony, that even after seeing the miracles of Jesus Christ people will not persevere in a true faith, only a faith of convenience, which is no faith at all.

Christ has come to give us life eternal and He only asks that in return we believe and follow Him as we love Him above all.

In Christ we have been forgiven of our sin. As Paul tells us in Romans 8:1, "there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

This doesn't mean we are promised a life without problems. It means we have God who goes with us through life as He ultimately will bring us home to be with Him forever.

He is faithful never to leave us or forsake us. May our faith be found to be true as we show Him our love with our lives of obedience and service to Him and each other.

Peter put our faith this way.

1PE 1:6-9 "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and

even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."