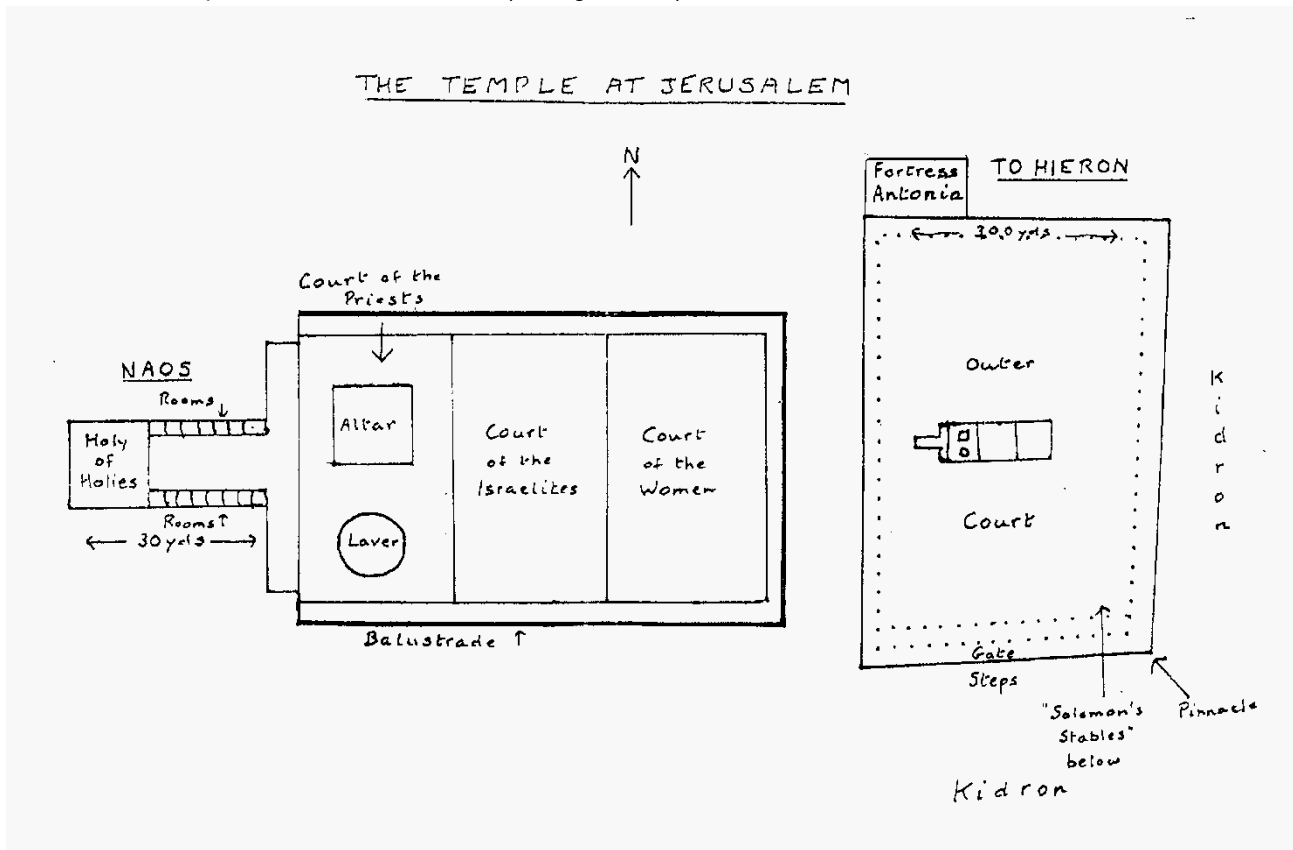


The Temple in Jerusalem

Part One of a talk by Professor Mary Smallwood on Palm Sunday 2010
Christ Church Morningside, Registered Charity SC003009

The Temple in Jerusalem was the focal point of worship for all Jews, those of the Diaspora as well as those in Palestine. It was the duty of all Jews in the homeland to go to Jerusalem for the three major festivals every year - the Passover in the spring, Pentecost 50 days later (as its Greek name denotes) and the Feast of Tabernacles in October. And all who could did. It was the aim of all practising Diaspora Jews to make at least one pilgrimage to Jerusalem for a festival in their lifetime. We all know the magnificent roll-call of the Diaspora pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost ten days after Jesus' Ascension - Parthians, Medes and Elamites from Mesopotamia (descendants of the Jews of the Exile who had not returned home when they were allowed to) and Jews from Asia Minor, from Cyrene in North Africa and from Rome.

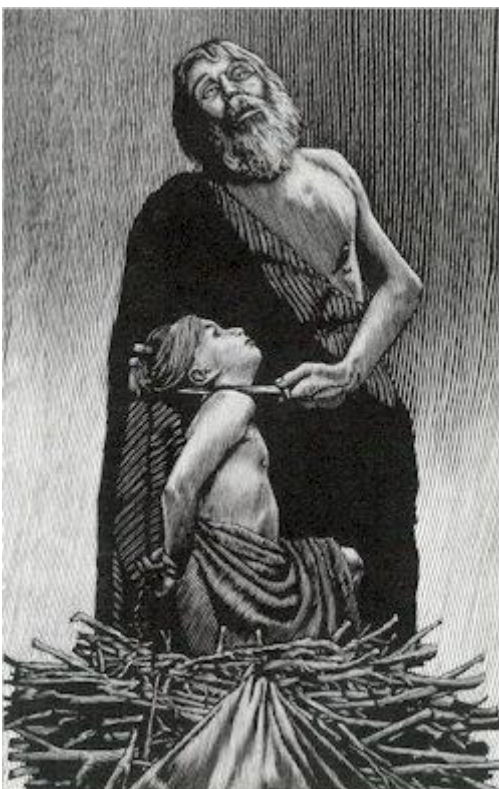
For local worship of course there were the synagogues. But the Temple and the synagogues cannot be equated with our cathedrals and churches, because we do not have just one Cathedral for the world-wide church. The Temple was unique, and it was the successor of the portable Tabernacle, constructed to house the Ark of the Covenant which held the two tablets of the law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. It accompanied the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert to the Promised Land. But it was centuries before a permanent building replaced it, the Temple in Jerusalem built in the 10th century B.C. David's dream had been to build it (Psalm 132) but the country was too disturbed, and his dream was only realised by his son Solomon, when peace had been restored (1 Kings, 5: 3-5)



The Temple was designed to be unique. God could only have one dwelling- place. But what did it look like? Well, the answer is that we really do not know, except in a very general way, and all sorts of attempts have been made to draw plans or pictures or to make models of it. Of course, there was not just one Temple lasting over 1,000 years, but three in succession:- there was Solomon's Temple, which lasted for over 500 years until destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.; then there was the Temple built, probably within a century or so, by

the Jews who began to return from exile in the later 6th century; and finally there was Herod the Great's Temple built late in the 1st century B.C. and destroyed by the Romans in A.D.70 at the end of their siege of Jerusalem, the culmination of their suppression of the Jewish revolt. (Actually, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, Titus, the Roman commander, wanted, against the advice of some of his army officers, to spare the Temple because of its aesthetic value, but was foiled by an over-zealous soldier who threw a firebrand inside. Titus' orders to try to extinguish the flames were ignored by the troops, by then out of control, even when Titus went personally into the burning building to salvage the gold sacred objects. Some scholars dismiss this story as an attempt to whitewash Titus. But the question of its truth or otherwise does not alter the fact that the Temple was burnt down.

So what did any of these Temples look like? One of the main problems that we face is that you cannot describe any building adequately on paper without ground plans and elevations. Architects in the ancient world must have had them, but ancient writers did not include them in their works. They could give us measurements, in cubits in the case we are dealing with.



Abraham and Isaac by Barry Moser

A cubit is the length of the forearm and hand, c.18 inches. So some arithmetic is needed to turn cubits into feet, yards or metres. And writers can give us spatial relationships - in front, behind, along the sides, etc. But that is all. To make matters worse, we have no archaeological evidence at all for any of the three successive Temples. We all know what Greek temples and many Roman buildings were like because they survive at least in part. No such luck with the Jewish Temple. We cannot really hope for any evidence for the first two buildings, since each was surely thoroughly demolished to allow for re-building on the same site. If any parts of Herod's Temple survived the fire of A.D.70 above ground, they will have been demolished in Hadrian's re-building of Jerusalem after the second Jewish revolt of A.D.132-5, which included work on the Temple site. And if any foundations survived that building-work and still exist, they are irretrievably buried under the late 7th century mosque, the Dome of the Rock, built on the bare rock of Mount Moriah, the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac and of Mohammed's ascent to heaven.

Solomon's Temple is described in great detail in II Chron. 3⁴ and very briefly in I Kings 6. I suggest that you look at Chronicles for yourselves (you would not want me to read it here) and see what you can make of it, I doubt if you will get any clear picture of the building. I once saw a 19th century model purporting to be of

Solomon's Temple. It was fantastic, with a vague family resemblance to St Paul's Cathedral, dome and all. Well, apart from anything else, the Jews did not have the dome. It was invented by the Romans.

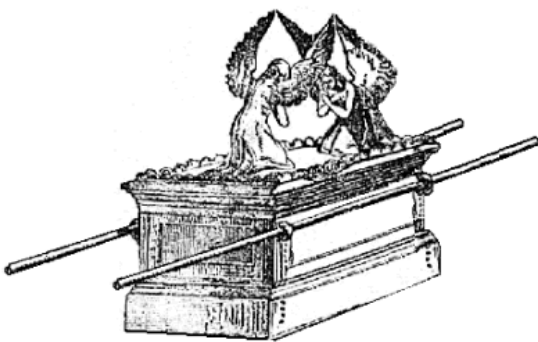
About the post-Exilic Temple we (or at least I) know little, except that it was a poor building compared with Solomon's. Its builders were, of course, short of money and resources, and could not, like Solomon, buy cedars of Lebanon from a friendly neighbouring king. But at least it provided a focus for the revival of the Jewish cult, a place of sacrifice. The building of synagogues must have begun in this period, perhaps before the new Temple was available, as they were a well-established feature of Judaism by the 1st century B.C.

This Temple was obviously considered adequate, as no proposal to replace it by a better building is recorded until Herod the Great decided to have a go. He, an Idumaeen, from a people living south of Judaea who had been conquered, annexed and forced to convert to Judaism in the late 2nd century B.C., had been foisted on

the Jews as king by Rome in 40 B.C. As what the Jews sneeringly called a 'half-Jew', he was not popular from the start, and things got no better as his reign progressed. So in 23 or 22 he decided to make a great bid for popularity: he would replace the existing Temple by a new one on a lavish scale, at his own expense. His Temple was to reproduce, or out-do, Solomon's. But his generous offer did not meet with the expected enthusiasm. On the contrary, the Jews suspected that this was just a ruse to destroy the heart of their religion. But they were wrong, Herod meant what he said and work began. To respect Jewish feelings Herod even took the trouble to have priests trained as masons, so that the sacred ground would not be defiled by lay-workers. But his benefaction failed to win for Herod the popularity which he craved.

We have short descriptions of Herod's Temple in two of the four works of Josephus, who lived from 37 to the 90s and who was a priest, with personal knowledge of the Temple, interior as well as exterior, and all its functions. But even so it is very difficult to get an adequate picture of the Temple from him. Herod's aim was, as I said, to reproduce Solomon's Temple, and his architects had the lengthy description of it in II Chron. 3.4 to use. It could be supplemented by oral tradition. This was a vast quantity of material supplementing and elucidating parts of the Scriptures, especially the Law of Moses, which had accumulated over many centuries in the hands of the rabbis, and the architects may well have consulted the rabbis to get help from it. This oral tradition was eventually codified and written down, but not till c. 160 A.D. This work is fully extant. One section, or hactate, entitled "Measurements" is a very detailed description of Solomon's Temple, eight pages of it in English translation. But in dealing with any ancient sources, one meets problems of transmission. Mistakes can occur in oral transmission, especially with numbers ('Excuse me - did you say 15 or 50?'), and in written transmission one scribe makes a mistake which the next one copies. In the three extant descriptions of the Temple there are discrepancies between and even within them, with some numbers that are hard to interpret, that do not add up, or that seem barely credible. We can only do our best.

The Temple was not large - that at least is certain. It did not have to accommodate big congregations. Only priests and Levites (similar to lay-brothers) ever went inside. One thing that does seem quite clear from all the descriptions is that the main part of the Temple was a simple rectangular hall running west to east 30 yards long by 10 yards wide. It may or may not have been as high as it was long. Across the front on the east was a wide, tall projecting porch, making a T-shaped building. This porch seems to have had a square facade, three times the width of the hall behind, or perhaps bigger. But it is hard to believe the figure 50 yards square given twice for its dimensions, and one suspects that the figure is corrupt. This square, flat slab, whatever its size, must have been inelegant and uninspiring, and it was gilded all over, which made it painfully dazzling in the morning sun. It had a very high and wide open entrance, letting light into the interior and allowing people outside to see. Across the top of this opening hung a gold vine with grape-clusters "the size of a man" - well, they were very high up. Brilliant white stone was used throughout the building, with some gilding on the walls of the hall, so that from a distance the Temple was said to look like a snow-capped mountain. Very practically, there were spikes all over the roof to keep the birds off.



19th century idea of the ark of the covenant

Inside the Holy of Holies (the Hebrew idiom for the superlative - the Most Holy place) occupied the whole of the western third of the building. It had needed to be big in Solomon's Temple because the Ark of the Covenant was kept there, protected by a pair of cherubim with 15-foot wing-spans. The Ark had disappeared for good in Nebuchadnezzar's sack of Jerusalem (at least unless you accept the Ethiopian Church's claim to have it still, purloined for them by the Queen of Sheba and her son-by-Solomon, and kept in a small shrine where only its priest-custodian ever sees it). So there was nothing to put in the Holy of Holies in the post-Exilic Temple or Herod's. It was

empty. But anti-Semitic slander said that an ass's head was kept there for worship. When the Roman general Pompey had to fight his way to the Temple in 63 B.C, (he had been called in to settle a dynastic dispute and

met unexpected opposition), he went into the Holy of Holies and was amazed to find it empty. Quite probably he did this just out of curiosity (was there really an ass's head there?) and not as a deliberate act of sacrilege. But to the Jews it was unforgivable, and in 115 A.D., in the cause of some serious disturbances, a Jewish mob in Alexandria destroyed the tomb containing Pompey's head, presumably as a belated act of vengeance.

The only priest who ever entered the Holy of Holies was the High Priest, and that only on the Day of Atonement in October. Then and then only he pronounced the sacred name Jahweh. Otherwise, whenever the Tetragrammaton JHWH occurred in the Scriptures or in any other writing, it was read as Adonai, My Lord (in English translation just Lord). When "God" appears in translation, it is a different Hebrew word.



A menorah

In front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies stood the sacred solid{old Temple furniture - the Menorah or 7-branched candelabrum, the Table of the Shewbread and the altar of incense. When they had been salvaged from the burning Temple in A.D. 70, they were, of course, taken to Rome, where they were displayed in Titus' triumphal procession through the city. We can see them through Roman eyes as depicted (whether accurately or not we cannot know) in the relief carvings on the Arch of Titus in the Forum. But the actual objects have almost certainly gone beyond any hope of future discovery. They were looted by the Vandals in the 5th century, recovered in the 6th, and after a short stay in the then Roman capital of Constantinople, were sent home, more or less, to a church in Jerusalem. They were still there in the 7th century, but at an unknown later date they disappeared, probably melted down by the Muslims.

Along both sides of the eastern part of the main hall were rooms, three storeys of them, all inter-connected, in Herod's building. No-one tells us their use, but my guess is that at least some were storage rooms for the many items used in the Jewish cult - oil for the Menorah, incense, implements used in sacrifices, priests' vestments, all the things needed for Temple maintenance, daily services and the elaborate ceremonies held at the major festivals. Traditionally, the High Priest's vestments were kept in the Temple, but under Herod they were transferred to the Antonia fortress, where they stayed until A.D. 37, when Tiberius allowed them to be returned to the Temple - to be destroyed, of course, in A.D. 70. Priests and Levites may have slept in some of the rooms for night duties and security, just as Eli and Samuel had done in the Tabernacle.

Stretching out from the Temple were three open-air courts. Right in front of the facade was the Court of the Priests, in which stood the huge Altar of Sacrifice and the Laver, an almost equally large circular tank of water, a very necessary amenity. In the Jewish cult, as in some or many pagan cults, the animals presented for sacrifice were dedicated to God and killed and then at least part of the flesh provided the priests' dinner. Only rarely was there a holocaust, a "complete burning" (such as Elijah organized on Mt. Carmel). That extravagance was kept for very special occasions.

Next came the Court of the Israelites (adult Jewish men), while furthest from the building was the Court of Women. Our sources make this the largest, which is very puzzling. But the figures for the three courts together do not add up and there may well be mistakes in them. (In my plan I have been impartial.) It is entirely unclear whether the courts formed concentric circles round three sides of the Temple or formed a series eastwards. It does not matter much, and for my plan I have chosen the latter arrangement, partly because it was easier to draw. What is absolutely clear is that the three courts were surrounded by a balustrade with 14 entrances, at each of which was a pair of inscriptions on stone, one in Hebrew and one in rather poor Greek, warning gentiles that they risked death if they trespassed inside. One of the Greek ones survived after A.D. 70 and is now in a museum in Istanbul. Half of another is in a museum in Jerusalem.

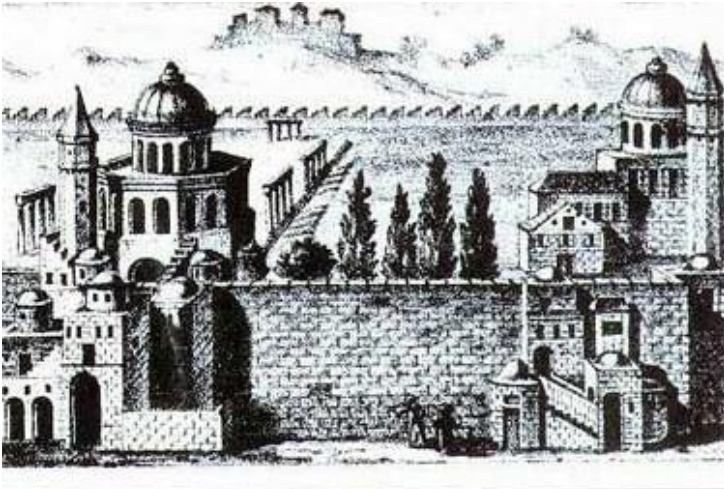
Part 2 will be published in April Magna

The Temple in Jerusalem

Part Two of a talk by Professor Mary Smallwood on Palm Sunday 2010
Christ Church Morningside, Registered Charity SC003009

Until I got on to the Courts I was talking only about the Temple building. The Greek word for a temple, a building, is NAOS. But the Jewish Temple stood in a very large open paved area, and the Greek term for the whole complex is TO HIERON, an adjective in the neuter, meaning "the holy" thing, or here "place" understood. N.T. writers are punctilious in distinguishing between the two terms. Unfortunately, both have to be translated "Temple" in English, because there is no simple alternative. We shall be distinguishing between them later, but meanwhile I have a bit to say about the sacred area.

The Temple in its sacred area was somewhat like a cathedral in a close, except that in Jerusalem the boundaries of the sacred area were clearly demarcated by a massive wall. The Muslim holy area, Haram esh-Sharif is exactly the Temple enclosure of Herod's Temple. But that was c.25% larger than that of its predecessor. For to enhance the magnificence of his new Temple's setting, Herod had the enclosure extended southwards. But there was a problem. At the S.E. the land sloped downwards towards the Kidron valley. Undaunted, Herod simply had it levelled up on pillars. Under the S.E. section of the present enclosure a forest of pillars supports the pavement above, starting a couple of feet high and getting taller and taller towards the south. At some unknown date this extraordinary crypt-like structure acquired the ridiculous name "Solomon's Stables"! The extended enclosure is nearly 500 yards north to south and as big as several football fields. The whole of it except the three courts was open to anyone; hence its popular name, the Court of the Gentiles. Its correct name was the Outer Court.



Chotel Maarbi, or West Wall.

Kotel engraving 1850

Herod's wall masonry was magnificent; you all know pictures of the Wailing Wall. That is towards the south end of the west wall, i.e. it is Herodian. Many of the stones are enormous, weighing tons. Josephus says that "stones 60 feet long" were used, but this is a clear example of corruption in transmission. The longest surviving visible stone is barely half that length (still impressive enough). You remember the disciples on perhaps their first visit to the city reacting exactly like any modern tourist - Gosh! Just look at those stones. If you walk along the outside of the east wall, you can see clearly the join between the Herodian masonry and the much smaller stones of the earlier wall running northwards.

There were several gates in the west wall of the enclosure facing the city, none along the east wall above the Kidron valley, and a monumental one in the south wall, approached by a splendid stairway, now excavated. Through it one entered the Royal Portico. To add splendour to his enlarged enclosure, which must have been very stark, Herod had pillared porticoes built all round the walls, Greek in style. That on the south was double, with especially elaborate decoration.

Herod's ambitious project was started in 23 or 22, and the Temple itself Josephus says, took only 18 months to complete, with a further 8 years for the rest. Then why, when Jesus spoke metaphorically of his future death and resurrection, did his incredulous hearers say 'You can't rebuild the Temple, NAOS, in three days! It took 46 years to build'. The explanation of this extraordinary discrepancy probably is that the basic structure of the

NAOS was complete enough in 18 months for the building to be taken into use, but that work on the decoration (or possibly repairs) went on until the 20s A.D.

Now (at last) for some N.T. episodes involving the Temple. Jesus' first visit there was at the age of 40 days when he was taken to be presented to God. You may have seen paintings in which Mary is handing her baby to Simeon inside an impressive building. Well, I think you realize now that that was impossible. Joseph and Mary could not enter the Temple, NAOS. Nor, incidentally, could Anna, who must have spent her 60 or so years of widowhood in TO HIERON, i.e. in the Court of the Women or, in inclement weather, under the porticoes. And Luke correctly says that Jesus was taken to HIERON. So where exactly did the Presentation take place? We do not know. It may have been in the Court of the Women, though I have a nasty suspicion that High Priests and fathers would have felt it *infra dig.* to be seen there, even if the Court was not actually barred to men. Alternatively, and I think more probably, Presentation rites could have been held, in any weather, under the porticoes.



Jesus discusses with the Rabbis by Gustave Doré, 1865

The next occasion was when Jesus, aged 12, was taken to Jerusalem for the Passover and went missing. Mary and Joseph eventually found him "in the Temple" - but where exactly? Certainly not in the Temple building, NAOS, to which even rabbis had no access. Luke correctly puts the episode in TO HIERON. Possibly Jesus and the rabbis were in the Court of the Israelites. But I think it more likely that the rabbis held their informal schools under the porticoes, where anyone, gentiles included, could come to ask questions or receive instruction. It must also have been a place where Mary as well as Joseph could get right close to Jesus, for her to administer to the 12-year-old what from 'a human standpoint was a well deserved ticking-off. As an incidental parallel: - the Stoics took their name from the Stoa, a portico in Athens where their founder taught. (As an irrelevant aside - I often wonder where Jesus spent the nights in Jerusalem. Did a nice rabbi put him up?)

Next, the Temptation. In one temptation the devil invites Jesus to jump off "the pinnacle of the Temple". I used to think, and perhaps you do, that Jesus visualized the devil depositing him miraculously on the highest point of the Temple roof (NAOS). No. Think of the anti-bird spikes. But seriously, the "pinnacle of the Temple" (TO HIERON is again the term used) was the name for the S.E. corner of the enclosure, with the greatest drop to the deepest part of the Kidron valley and the wall rising 130 feet above bedrock. It is an impressive spot. I have been there. There are stairs up to the wall-top in places, needed, e.g., by priests when they had to watch there for the new moon and when they saw it blow their rams' horn trumpets to announce the start of a new month. In the temptation Jesus surely visualized himself being taken to a dangerous spot which he could have reached in real life under his own steam.

On a number of occasions Jesus teaches or talks with people "in the Temple". I know at least one painting in which the episode of the tribute money takes place in a building, NAOS. This would have been quite impossible, as you now know. It is in TO HIERON that this and all the other episodes are correctly located. And I would suggest that they took place, not in the Court of the Israelites but in the Outer Court where gentiles could be present - under the porticoes when the weather so dictated. And the Outer Court was, of



An image of the El Greco painting
will be on the website edition of Magna

course, the scene of the Cleansing of the Temple. This also has been mis- represented in Art, e.g. by El Greco, with Jesus expelling traders from a building clearly meant to be the Temple, NAOS. To digress for a moment: - A market for the sale of sacrificial animals was needed close to the place where they would be offered. Pilgrims making a journey of several days or much longer would not have wanted to include a pair of flapping pigeons in their luggage. And as the Temple-tax, paid by all adult male Jews, had to be paid in Jewish coins, not in the Roman ones then in current use, money changers were needed. In the Synoptics it is not against the market as such that Jesus reacts with uncharacteristic violence but against the blatant profiteering and swindling. In St. John it is the market that arouses his fury.

And now briefly to Acts. I am sure that I need not now tell you that when Peter and John met and healed a lame man at one of the gates of the Temple, Luke is talking about TO HIERON (ch. 3). Two interesting, and to this talk irrelevant, points come out of this episode. There was a regular period of public prayer every afternoon somewhere in TO HIERON, a practice not mentioned in the Gospels. And one of the gates in the W. wall was called, probably only in popular usage, 'the Beautiful Gate', a name not otherwise recorded.

There is only one other episode involving the Temple in Acts, in ch. 21. The story of Paul's arrest by Roman troops, his trials, and his transfer to Rome begins with a riot. Some Jewish pilgrims from Asia Minor saw Paul in the Temple and stirred up trouble by alleging that he had taken a Greek from Ephesus into TO HIERON, 'thus defiling the holy place' (a different word for 'holy') This makes no sense. Gentiles had always been admitted to the Outer Court and Paul had every right to take his friend in there. What the rioters thought and said was that Paul had taken him through the balustrade surrounding the three courts, past the inscriptions threatening gentile trespassers with death. That would have been nonsense, Paul would have done no such thing. He had more sense.

So much for episodes involving TO HIERON. What about NAOS, which has barely had a look-in so far? Well, NAOS is used, correctly, a number of times in the New Testament. I got a list from a Concordance, but a few will do at this late hour. I have already given you the one about the impossibility of rebuilding the NAOS in three days. At his trial Jesus was accused of having threatened to destroy the NAOS. At his death the "veil of the NAOS' was rent in two. (I did not include the "veil" in my description of the NAOS because I have no idea what it was.) In Paul's epistles the human body is metaphorically the NAOS of the Holy Spirit, and the Christian community is the NAOS of God. There is no confusion in New Testament writers between NAOS and TO HIERON. It is just muddling to us that a deficiency in the English language means that both have to be translated "Temple".

With thanks to Professor Mary Smallwod, who is Marion Richardson's cousin