

Jesus, True Dwelling Place of God's Power: John 2:19 and Similar Words

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**Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
(John 2:19)**

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Gospels this phrase appears in various contexts. John 2:19 is, perhaps, the most famous and complete rendering of this prophecy. Many commentators understand these words one-dimensionally, as dealing with the metaphorical connection between the image of the Temple and the actual body of Jesus. While we will not take issue with this rendering, and will try to establish its worth, we will propose and maintain that Jesus had a different, deeper, meaning, that can be found only in the literal reading of the text.

Jesus knew well the full meaning and impact of His words. He was pulling upon the very roots of Judaism, even the late Hebrew faith which centered on the Temple. To approach the imagery of the Temple was certain to capture the attention of all listeners.

THE TEXT OF JOHN 2:19

John, as his usual style, writes the text as a direct witness. The words of Jesus gain its full impact by being delivered in Jerusalem, as this the location of the Temple, thus bringing the contrast found in Jesus' words into bold relief..

The text reads;

Ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Λύσατε τὸν ναὸν
τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν.

Which reads:

Jesus answered and said to them, “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

The first clause is a basic textual exchange. Jesus uses the term “*lysate*” to convey destruction. It derives from the original word “*luo*”. The forms of the terms are usually understood to mean “I loose”, “untie”, or “release”. It connotes a breaking or destruction, to bring something to naught. The semantic field includes “annul” or “dissolve”. The term refers to loosening a person or thing that is tied or fastened. By extension, it can refer to breaking the bonds of something that is compacted together. It also can refer to the doing away, or depriving, of authority whether by act or decrees. Metaphorically, it can mean to overthrow or to do away with something.

This verb is paralleled by the Hebrew פודה, “*pada*”, a term related to ransom and the price of redemption. In both Greek and Hebrew, the word expresses the unbinding of that which was previously tied up or the dissembling of what was previously integrated. By using this term, Jesus is introducing a concept, or prophecy, that suggests that older rites and rituals that have grown together over the centuries will now be separated. The idea of a new order of things echoes the words of Mary, in the Magnificat.

**He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers
from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:51-53)**

Just as Mary is suggesting that the established order of society will be overturned, Jesus is continuing the train of thought with a more individualized context.¹

Jesus now brings the focus to “this temple”. The term He uses is very specific and its true meaning goes overlooked throughout the texts of the Gospels. The term used is ναὸν, “*naon*”. The term is used in classical Greek and was used of the Jerusalem Temple. However, it did not refer to the entire Temple environs or entire enclosure. This was a term reserved for reference to the sacred edifice, or sanctuary, itself. This consisted of the Holy place and the Holy of Holies. The Greeks used it for the sanctuary or “cell of the temple”, the place where the image of the deity being worshipped was placed and was separated from the general enclosure as it consisted of two inner compartments or rooms. Only the Priest was allowed to enter this area. Harkening back to the Mosaic era, this was the place of Divine manifestation.

J.L. McKenzie states that the Temple was the seat or symbol of YHWH among His people.² He argues, “ultimately, the theological significance of the Temple is based on the saying of Jesus which identifies his body with the new temple. His body in turn is identified with the church, and the church herself is the new temple. The church is now the place of God’s presence, not merely symbolic, but real through the indwelling of the spirit”.³ While his insight is beyond doubt, McKenzie’s words might reflect a more developed Theology than is reflected in John 2:19.

Jesus’ words, heard in the context of the early 1st century, would evoke other imagery than the new Church. According to C. Meyers the usual Hebrew word for “temple” is “*hekal*”. This term was understood as “great house”, “residence (of a deity)”,

¹ J. Roskoski, “From This Day Forward All Nations Shall Call Me Blessed”, AJBT 15 (40) 10/5/14.

² J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Chicago: Bruce, 1966), 876.

³ *Ibid.*, 877.

“large building” or “palace” and referred to the major interior space of building. The audience of Jesus knew well this term, from religious and profane uses. The Greek-speaking people knew of the distinction between “*hieros*”, which referred to the sacred compound in its entirety, and “*naos*”, which was, as noted, the actual building or sanctuary.⁴ Therefore, His listeners would have perceived a special meaning to Jesus’ words. However, after His cleansing of the Temple and the proximity of the structure, John seems to have Jesus inviting a misunderstanding.

Jesus then invokes the imagery of “three days”. The number which Jesus invokes is hardly random. According to some scholars, in Scripture the number three is one of the so called “perfect numbers”, with the others being seven, ten, and twelve. The number signifies completeness or perfection and points to what is solid, real, and substantial. Because of its connection to completeness, the number is usually tied to a major event in Salvation History. Often a three-day period points to an act of Divine intervention which impacts Salvation History. This echoes Hosea 6:1-2;

“Where Yahweh tells His prophet a time will come when His covenant people will acknowledge their sins and seek redemption and restoration, as they cry out Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him”.

Furthermore, there seems to a strong Jewish belief which prompts Jesus to point to three days. First, resurrection after three days of death proved to Jesus’ opponents that He truly rose from the dead. According to Jewish tradition and mysticism, a person’s soul/spirit remained with his/her dead

⁴ C, Meyers. ,*Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 vols (NY: Doubleday, 1992) 4:352.

body for three days. After three days, the soul/spirit departed. If Jesus' resurrection had occurred on the same day or even the next day, it would have been easier for His enemies to argue He had never truly died. However, there are some conflicting beliefs about the Jewish soul, or spirit, lingering for three days after death. While some believe it is three to seven days, it may be that the soul is restless for 12 months. These beliefs are attributed to the ancient wisdom contained in the Kabbalah. Kabbalah, which translated means "that which is received," is a Jewish study based on mysticism that has been passed down among mystics and rabbis for centuries. *Neshama* is a Hebrew word that means both breath and soul.

According to the Torah, that which breathes is alive, and since only God can give breath, the breath is equivalent to the soul or spirit. According to the Zohar, "There are three levels that comprise the soul, and therefore the soul has three names,: *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*. *Nefesh*...is the lowest of all. *Ruah* is the (power of) sustenance, which rules over the *nefesh* and is a higher level than the *nefesh*, sustaining it throughout, as is fitting. *Neshamah* is the highest (power of) sustenance, and rules overall, a holy level, exalted by all." The Kabbalists speak of *Hibbut Ha-Kever*, a three to seven-day process of separating the *nefesh* portion of the soul from the body. The Zohar states: "For seven days the *nefesh* goes to and from his house to his grave from his grave to his house, mourning for the body...and it grieves to behold the sadness in the house." This is the reason for the immediate burial of the deceased. Jewish folklore suggests that the soul will become confused and linger around the body for those three to seven days. The body must be laid to rest, so the soul can move on and find peace in the afterlife.

In his book "Jewish Views of the Afterlife," Simcha Paull Raphael says: "Immediately following death, there is a period known as *Hibbut Ha Kever*, pangs of the grave. During this period, the soul is confused, lingers around the body and tries to go back to his home to be with his loved ones. "After this,

there is a maximum period of 12 months in Gehenna, which is a realm described as fiery, where the soul is purified of its sins.” After the twelve-month period, it is believed the soul rests permanently in the afterlife. We propose that Jesus knew of these traditions, if not in their fullest form, but in their early development and used them to help relate His words to the Jews. This is not to suggest that Jesus grounded His words in folklore and mysticism, rather He understood the mentality of the common people around Him and used imagery for His high Theology which all levels of society could understand.

Brown suggests that a possible understanding is a messianic rebuilding. Jesus uses the image of the cleansing of the Temple as His introduction. He is saying that they are destroying the Temple, echoing Ezekiel xi-xlvi and Tobit 13:10.⁵ Jesus returns their challenge with an “eschatological proclamation”, referring to the Jerusalem Temple, which becomes unintelligible for those with only an Old Testament background.⁶ Unique to John, the cleansing and the destruction prophecy are joined, which suggests a new historical level of understanding.⁷ The term Jesus uses for “destroy” seems to be in the form of a Semitic Imperative, suggesting that that the form is archaic and may hint of irony.⁸

Perkins points out that a demand for signs is a common Gospel theme. Interestingly, the answer Jesus gives could be considered “enigmatic”, as Jesus is contrasting the majesty of the Temple of Herod to His physical body. Such a juxtaposition is part of John’s Theology, as, for John, Jesus is the “reality of all great religious symbols of Israel”.⁹ The richness of the exchange derives from the fact that Jesus did

⁵ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John; Chapters 1-12* (Doubleday: Garden City, 1966) 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115 Cf. Amos 4:4 and Isaiah 8:9.

⁹ P. Perkins, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary 2 vols* (Englewood Cliffs 1990), 2:954.

foretell the destruction of the Temple, representing His Death and Resurrection, which served as an “adequate sign” for believers (3:21). However, attendees took the words literally, but John insists that the “house of the Father” is a different edifice than that which will be readied by the Resurrection. Vawter shows that, as many times throughout the Gospels, Jesus’ words contain a double meaning; Church and Resurrection.¹⁰

Some scholars argue in a similar way in showing that Jesus’ comment is, perhaps purposefully, ambiguous.¹¹ John uses this to illustrate that to the Jews the comment is a legitimation of the cleansing and that they were incapable of understanding the layers of meaning in His comment. Farley shows that the cleansing was the first public controversy. However, the Cross hovers in the background of His entire ministry. Because the cleansing was so public the people misunderstood the words of Jesus and applied them to the newly cleaned Temple. The apparent enigmatic answer was initially thought to have been a way of evading the challenge.¹² However, as Beutler contends, Jesus did not refuse a sign, He offered one that was beyond their immediate understanding. He is pointing to His own body to replace the Jerusalem Temple. Since the Temple was the preferred place for teaching, Jesus is indicating that only after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple could He be the “sole place” of God’s presence among men.¹³

Tholuck states that Jesus purified the seat of the ancient theocracy by a prophetic action, or comment. The “*naos*” was the center of the entire Theocracy. By the juxtaposition Jesus

¹⁰ B. Vawter, *Jerome Biblical Commentary* 3 vols (Englewood Cliffs, 1968) 2:49.

¹¹ Jesus often uses a purposeful ambiguity, but to study all of them would take this word far afield from our hypothesis.

¹² Some scholars have suggested that the apparent evading this challenge is part of the misunderstanding of the listeners.

¹³ The “sole place” of God’s presence is part of the new identification of Jesus with the new Zion.

is speaking to the speed with which the former will be destroyed and how quickly the new one will raise from the ruins.¹⁴ Many linguists claim that a better rendering than “destroy” would be “break down” the Temple. It is an image and type of his body. “Three days” is ‘not a reference to the indefinite future, but a specific time frame for the raised body. It might be based on the old Jewish religion.

Some scholars see a cleansing, possibly a wedding, background for the prophecy. Moreover, they argue that Jesus’ use of the term signifies the presence of God among the people and becoming visible in Jesus, the living sign of this presence.¹⁵ It has been proposed that the key to understanding Jesus’ comments is the enigmatic nature of the words and designations which refer to the Temple. They become “enigmatical” in that the completion of the words is to be afterward. The essence of the Temple, the dwelling of God, points to the earthly continuance of the earthly Temple, which is now no longer needed. Jesus is changing the religious order, as now worship is not restricted to one place.¹⁶ This concept has deep roots in the Hebrew Scripture, where prayers and worship were often done away from the Temple. Similarly, A. Kirk argues the Jesus builds a shift into the text. Jesus points to the Jewish leaders, which will tear down, and Jesus will raise it up. It is an example of “Theology in dialogue” with history. Therefore, The Theology presented by Jesus does not transcend History, but builds upon it.¹⁷ Godot offers the argument that His words come from the depth of consciousness. It points to conduct of the present and the future of the Jews. The death of Jesus, designating the

¹⁴ A. Tholuck, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark.1860)103.

¹⁵ Again, the theme of Jesus is the new Zion is present. Also, his argument seems to be based on the Isaiah prophecy in 7:14.

¹⁶ In many ways this is another echoing of Mary’s Canticle (Luke 1) where God’s hand will overthrow the current order and turn the structure of society into a shambles.

¹⁷ A. Kirk, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (NY :Fortress, 1981)54-55.

destruction of the Temple also heralds the restoration, through the Resurrection, of the messianic line. The Temple lives again in a new form, a higher form.¹⁸

Jesus, by using the imagery of the material temple, as Hengstenberg argues, brings this authority unto Himself. The future will confirm these words.¹⁹ The Temple is the symbol and pledge of God's connection to His people.²⁰ This is the advent of Christ and only in Christ does God truly dwell among His people. Indeed, herein we see another connection to Isaiah 7:14, the Emanuel prophecy.²¹ Hendriksen sees this as an example of a "mashal", a type of wise saying. His words are a veiled and pointed remark. This leads to a complete misunderstanding of the remark.²²

The weight of scholarship seems to point to Jesus' words containing an embedded ambiguity. It is upon this conflation of the human and heavenly realms that the ambiguity rests. It also forms the basis of conflict between those who cling to the Temple and the new follower of Christ.

PARALLEL TEXTS

It is important to note that all four of the Evangelists incorporate these words of Jesus, albeit in different forms and versions. This suggests the authenticity of Jesus' words and the new order which will be brought by Jesus. The key elements which appear in all iterations are "temple" and "three days" which set up the clash between the old order, represented by the Temple that took many years to build, and the new order,

¹⁸ F. Godot, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979)365-366.

¹⁹ E. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1865) 144,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

²² W. Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953)124.

represented in the authority of Jesus which will be established in a matter of only days.

Mark 14:58

“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’”

Unlike John, Mark and the Synoptic Gospels look to the authority of Jesus. The authority of Jesus rested upon the power of the Kingdom of God. The disdain the people showed to the words of Jesus echoes Psalm 22:7, **“All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.”** Mark tends to prefigure the disdain of the Psalm and the false testimony in 14:50, **“Then everyone deserted him and fled.”** E. Mally argues that the mention “false testimony” is a Christian value judgement whose purpose was to show the disagreement among witnesses. Jesus is illustrating that He and His followers will be the new Church, Zion, and Temple. However, the witnesses took Jesus’ words literally, not seeing the future meaning.²³

In a way that parallels John, Mark uses the tool of misunderstanding, or misdirection. Whereas John always points to the people misunderstanding the identity of Jesus, Mark points to the people misunderstanding the message of Jesus.

Matthew 24:2

Matthew brings a different perspective to Jesus’ words when he expands upon Mark’s original message. He writes in 24:2,

²³ E. Mally, “The Gospel According to Mark”, *Jerome Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 2:56.

“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.”

B. Viviano argues for a powerful shift in Jesus’ words. Jesus contrasts the grandeur and majesty of the visible Temple to the future fate of the city. It seems to have apocalyptic undertones.²⁴ J.L. McKenzie suggests that this builds on Mark 13. This chapter continues the theme with the Old Testament fall of the Temple with the New Testament eschaton and historical events. It is an example where the reality of the final judgement breaks into present history.²⁵ These words point to a “Parousia”, a technical term that originally referred to a visit from a god, emperor, or potentate. Matthew, according to scholarship, was written in the thought that Jesus’ return would be imminent and he is trying to bolster faith in the face of questions regarding Jesus’ return. The traditional apocalyptic symbols are cast in a new lens with Jesus’ words. Natural disasters, once thought to be signs for repentance, were supplanted by a call for continued faith.²⁶ The words of Jesus helped to make this technical term into an application to His Second Coming.

Acts 6:8–15

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able

²⁴ B. Viviano, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2:667.

²⁵ J.L. McKenzie, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2:104.

²⁶ A. Kirk, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Academic Renewal Press, 2002) 242.

to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon *him*, seized him, and brought *him* to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel”.

Luke, the author of Acts, takes a different approach. He is not quoting Jesus directly, rather he is reporting what was said by others. He is presenting this as hearsay. However, the similarity to the other texts vouches for its credibility that, indeed, Jesus uttered these words. His account is more of a condemnation of the so-called witnesses than any dispersion on any false or blasphemous words of Jesus. Dillon, et al, argues that Luke’s intention is to portray the similarities between Stephen and Jesus. Moreover, it is the confrontation between Judaism with Christianity.²⁷ This type of quote of Jesus, not appearing in Luke’s Gospel, shows that Luke is building a different focus, a future-oriented movement that looks to the life of the Church.

Luke is portraying Stephen as an exemplary bearer of the Spirit. Unlike the charges that would be brought against Paul, these are specific charges.²⁸ It must be noted that Stephen as capable, noble, and mighty in ability and ushered

²⁷R. Dillon, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2:282.

²⁸ R. Dillon, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2:740.

in the ministry of Paul.²⁹ It heralds the time for the entrenched religious leaders to be scattered, which echoes Mary's words in the Magnificat (Luke 1:51).

Significantly, Luke, a gentile, had a unique understanding of the Jewish mentality. Stephen, before being executed, launches into a historical recital. Such a recital echoes the historical records that are numerous in the Old Testament. They serve as rhetorical tools, serving to give a sense of identity to the listeners and to illustrate the faithful power of God.

Historical recitals are a part of, to use the term of T. Thompson, "Israelite historiography". They are a literary genre presenting descriptions and evaluations of the past reality and events in relation to the current circumstance. Thompson concludes that such historiographical recitals, recounting and reminding of the past, is a major element in Biblical literature because "a main component of Biblical writings is narrative about past persons and events".³⁰ The literary device of a "historical recital" is part of Israel's "theology of history". McKenzie comments that "the unity and continuity of the historical process comes from Israel's recognition of itself not only as a people, but as the people of YHWH. There is one God and one historical process. YHWH is the Lord of History whose will unfolded throughout Israelite history. The purpose of Israel is told through the storytellers and historical recitals". The purpose of such recitals was "to present a true picture of the reality of God operating in history and of man's response to God's operations".³⁰ Therefore, historical recitals were always of interest to the Jews and the words of Stephen must have demanded the attention of the Sanhedrin. He invokes the image of Moses and culminates with the recent memory of Jesus. Stephen speaks of the execution of Jesus as the climax

²⁹J. Coffman, *Commentary on Acts* (Austin: Firm. 1976)128.

³⁰ T. Thompson, "historiography", *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 vols (NY: Doubleday, 1992) 3:205.

of their actions. Conzelman points out that Luke is following the example of Jesus and presents material which may have been problematic. Stephen's words were offered to stir conflict, which tends to echo the words of Simeon in Luke 2. The messiahship of Jesus is the keynote to his words. However, according to the observations of some scholars, Luke, through Stephen, states this position on Jesus' messiahship more radically than others as he connects Jesus to the "abiding validity" of the Mosaic covenant and order of the Temple.

Clearly, Luke is presenting Jesus, through his narrative, as the new Temple; the place where God dwells. It is understandable that Luke chooses Acts to present this statement. It agrees with earlier texts in Lukan writings and it looks forward to the new life of the Church, a major theme in Acts.

MARIAN IMPLICATIONS

Jesus is presenting Himself as the new Zion. Zion, the easternmost of the two hills of ancient Jerusalem, was seen as God's holy mountain (Psalm 2:6). The theological importance rests on the presence of the Temple, the place where God's name dwells (1 Kings 11:13, Isaiah 60:1).³¹

The *Catechism of the Church* writes;

"In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while revealing the transcendence of his glory- with Moses on Mount Sinai at the tent of meeting, and during the wandering in the desert, and with Solomon at the dedication of the temple. In the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures. The Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "overshadows" her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus. On the mountain of

³¹ McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 431.

Transfiguration, the Spirit in the “cloud came and overshadowed” Jesus. Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John, and “a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’” Finally, the cloud took Jesus out of sight of the disciples on the day of his Ascension and will reveal him as the Son of Man in glory on the day of his final coming. The glory of the Lord “overshadowed” the ark and filled the tabernacle”. (CCC 697)

From this we can argue the Mary is the new ark of the Covenant.

Similarly, the *Church* also argues;

“The Virgin Mary is the living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the New and Eternal Covenant. In fact, St. Luke’s account of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary nicely incorporates the images of the tent of meeting with God in Sinai and of the Temple of Zion. Just as the cloud covered the people of God marching in the desert (cf. Num 10:23, Dt. 33:12, Psalm 91:4) and just as the same cloud, as a sign of the divine mystery present in the midst of Israel, hovered over the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Ex. 40:35), so now the shadow of the Most High envelops and penetrates the tabernacle of the New Covenant that is the womb of Mary.)cf. Lk. 1:35). (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Shrine: Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God*).

From other Gospel texts Mary has been traditionally seen as the ultimate daughter of Zion.³² However, Jesus words cast her as the mother of the new Zion. This could be seen as a major shift, even transition, for Mary. Through the words of Jesus Mary,

³² Cf. Isaiah 1:8, 62:11, and Micah 4:13, among other Old Testament texts.

once again, becomes a mother figure. This progression has powerful parallels to the transition which occurred through the words of Jesus on the Cross (John 19:25-27). With John, the “beloved disciple”, representing all Christians Mary becomes the Mother of all Christians;

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Through the conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus, Mary was the host, or house, of the sanctuary, which John 2:19 portrays as Jesus Himself. It is a masterful piece of writing, consistent with John’s style of narration. In 2:19, John introduces the concept and authority of Mary’s motherhood. This concept finds its completion in John 19.

CONCLUSIONS

Jesus through His words and actions tended to speak to an overturning of the old order of Judaism and introduces the messianic age of the new Christianity. With this transition, Mary emerges as a key figure. Mary was the physical house of the sanctuary in which God allowed His name to dwell. This elevated her from the daughter of Zion, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, to the mother of Zion, which is embodied in the person of Jesus. Similarly, Mary went from the Virgin Mother, foretold in Isaiah 7:14, to the mother of all Christians. Both instances were based on the authority of the words of Jesus.

Jesus knew well the impact of His words and the conflicts they would cause. As recorded in Luke 2:34-35;

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

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