

The Temple of John 2:19-21

By Howard Mazzaferro
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This letter will be in response to Mr. Bowman's article on John 2:19 titled "The Temple of Jesus' Body." I have gone over it closely, and it seems like Mr. Bowman has covered all the bases. However, a closer examination of it reveals some serious errors, in the form of possible deliberate misrepresentation or not exploring all the facts. In either case, I would like to share my findings with you.

A lot of what Mr. Bowman had written was correct. Nevertheless, what I feel is the key issue here was briefly touched upon and with misrepresentation as well. What is the Temple that is being referred to in John 2:19-21. Under the heading of Mr. Bowman's article: "This Temple" Is Jesus' Physical Body." Mr. Bowman tries to equate the word body with the word temple, relying on the unbiblical concept that each persons body is a temple. Mr. Bowman wrote:

"In case this statement is not clear, the expression "of his body" (*tou sômatos autou*) uses the genitive (a case commonly used to denote possession) to denote identity. We do this in English, for example, when we speak of "the city of Philadelphia" (which means "the city *that is* Philadelphia"). Grammarians sometimes call this use of the genitive an "epexegetic" genitive or a "genitive of apposition." Thus, John means that Jesus was speaking about *the temple that was his body.*"¹

Mr. Bowman's first mistake is not completely quoting the Grammar rule of possession. This is "to denote the identity of the owner."² Then for his example, he gives a different grammatical construction. In John 2:21 has (noun) of his (noun) and Mr. Bowman used (noun) of (proper noun). Philadelphia is the *name* of a city. Body is not the name of a temple. Therefore, this example is very unacceptable. Not only that, but Mr. Bowman's example is not even a true genitive of apposition. According to the "Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar" under the heading "Apposition" it says:

"A relationship of two (or more) words or phrases, especially noun phrases, such that the two units are grammatically parallel and have the same referent.

e.g.

Our longest reigning monarch, Queen Victoria, reigned from 1837 to 1901
The second edition of OUP's biggest dictionary, the Oxford English Dictionary, was published in 1989

Grammarians vary in their use of apposition. In the narrowest definition (*full apposition*), both parts are noun phrases, they are identical in reference (i.e. in an *equivalence* relationship), and either part could be omitted, as in the examples above, without affecting the grammaticality or the essential meaning of the sentence."³

¹ "The Temple of Jesus' Body" *John 2:19-22 and the Resurrection Revisited* By Robert M. Bowman, Jr.

² Greek Enchiridion, A Concise Handbook of Grammar for Translating and Exegesis. Page 79

³ Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar.

By this definition, it shows that Mr. Bowman has not made a clear point in applying the “genitive of apposition” to John 2:21 nor to his example for that matter. Can either of the nouns (body) or (temple) be omitted and still not affect the meaning of the sentence? Then he says that “the temple of his body” really means “*the temple that was his body.*”⁴ If that is what John meant to say, why did he not just say it that way? Why did he use the “genitive of possession”? Because that is what he meant, that his body possessed the temple, not that his body was the temple.

I had mentioned earlier, about the unbiblical belief that the individual’s bodies as temples. The Bible clearly does not teach this. There is only one verse in the whole Bible that comes close to this belief. That is 1 Corinthians 6:19 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” At first, this verse appears to be teaching this. However, upon closer examination, it is teaching something different. The fact that the Greek word for “body” and “temple” are in the singular, but the two occurrences of “you” are in the plural, show us that it is not each individual’s body. On the other hand, it would have said, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the holy spirit. What it is teaching is that the many people who make up the Christian congregation are one body, as can be attested to with other scriptures.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

1 Corinthians 10:17 “For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

Romans 12:4 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:”

Therefore, 1 Corinthians 6:19 is teaching the same thing as these other verses and not that every persons physical body is a temple. Therefore, in reality, there is not a single scripture to back up Mr. Bowman’s statement that Christ physical Body was the temple in question.

We can learn a few things about what this temple may have been. First, the Greek word here used for temple was not the usual word to describe the building, but the inner sanctuary only. Therefore, it does not necessarily have to be referring to the building (body). The sanctuary was the symbol of God’s presence. (Ex 25:8) So it has more to do with the presence of God’s spirit, and not what kind of body. Mr. Bowman had tried to equate the temple with Jesus physical body, but I will show that this type of use for temple is not of a physical nature. The scriptures I used to show that the Christian congregation make up the one body also show us that this one body is the same as the temple it refers to in 1 Corinthians 6:19. Therefore, if many people make up this one temple, they must be sharing something that makes them one. Can they be sharing anything physical? No, they are sharing the one spirit. 1 Corinthians “12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...” Now the Bible also tells us that Jesus is part of this temple, the “foundation cornerstone.” Ephesians 2:19 “Certainly, therefore, YOU are no longer strangers and alien residents, but YOU are fellow citizens of the holy ones and are members of the household of God, 20 and YOU have been built up upon the foundation of the apostles and

⁴ “The Temple of Jesus’ Body” *John 2:19-22 and the Resurrection Revisited* By Robert M. Bowman, Jr.

prophets, while Christ Jesus himself is the foundation cornerstone. 21 In union with him the whole building, being harmoniously joined together, is growing into a holy temple for Jehovah. 22 In union with him YOU, too, are being built up together into a place for God to inhabit by spirit.”

So what have we learned? 1. The temple is a possession of the body. A physical or spiritual body can possess God’s spirit. 2. The temple in this type of use is not a physical thing, As many people can possess it at the same time. 3. The Bible tells us that Jesus and the rest of the Christian congregation make up this temple or body. Now before we go on, Mr. Bowman drew a distinction between Greg Stafford’s view and an “older” Watchtower view, that the temple was Christ’s Church. I plan to harmonize these two views. John 2:19-21 is referring to both Jesus personal resurrection and the Christian congregation. In my view, I said the temple is not Jesus body, but the presence of God’s spirit with him. When Jesus died, they did destroy this temple.

Mark 15: 33 “When it became the sixth hour a darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus called out with a loud voice: “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” which means, when translated: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 And some of those standing near, on hearing it, began to say: “See! He is calling Elijah.” 36 But a certain one ran, soaked a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and began giving him a drink, saying: “LET [him] be! Let us see whether Elijah comes to take him down.” 37 But Jesus let out a loud cry and expired. 38 And the curtain of the sanctuary was rent in two from top to bottom.”

As can be seen by Jesus’ cry, Jehovah had taken his spirit from Jesus, and died. Thus destroying the temple. Note the reference to the sanctuary. According to the Witnesses view, Jesus no longer existed anywhere for the three days. Therefore, no place for God’s spirit, until his resurrection. Then when he was resurrected and God’s presence was with him again, He again became the temple. Thus, the temple had been raised in three days. And by association, so had the temple of the Christian congregation with Christ being the foundation cornerstone. It is the one Spirit from Jehovah that Jesus and all of Jesus’ followers possess that make them the one temple. So it has nothing to do with what kind of body possesses this spirit. The fact that Jesus possesses God’s spirit in any form makes him the temple. So, it is the same temple that was raised. It was the same spirit in the same person of Jesus that makes up the same temple. Which does not affect the idea that he died a man but was raised a spirit person.

Now we move on to “made with hands.” Mr. Bowman seemed to have missed a critical point in the understanding of that phrase. Because of the fact that he brings it out so nicely, that the phrase “made with hands” meaning a physical creation, would be a foreign thought to Jews of the first century, only proves that Jesus may have very well said it. Mr. Bowman apparently did not see the narrow definition of this phrase in the Bible. Mr. Bowman tried to explain it away by proving that the physical creation was made by God’s hand and that the phrase cannot be talking about physical things. Mr. Bowman neglected to see that the phrase “made with hands” is only used with reference to the temple. Moreover, what is our discussion about? The temple. The Bible teaches

that a temple made with hands is earthly and one not made with hands is not of this creation. Just the point Greg Stafford tried to point out. We are told:

Acts 7:47 However, Solomon built a house for him. 48 Nevertheless, the Most High does not dwell in houses *made with hands*; just as the prophet says, 49 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What sort of house will YOU build for me? Jehovah says. Or what is the place for my resting? 50 My hand made all these things, did it not?'

Hebrews 9: 24 For Christ entered, not into a holy place *made with hands*, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us.

Hebrews 9:11 However, when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come to pass, through the greater and more perfect tent *not made with hands*, that is, *not of this creation*,

This clearly shows that when referring to the temple, made with hands means of the physical creation and not made with hands is not of this creation. Jesus accusers may have changed a few things in what he said to make it look bad for him, but it is hard to believe they invented this phrase. Especially since the only other times these two terms “temple” and “(not) made with hands” are used in the Bible is from inspiration of the holy spirit. I believe the accusers have accurately quoted Jesus on this matter, and it does not contradict John 2:19-21 as far as the view I just explained. The insight we get from Mark’s account is of the change from an earthly temple to a spiritual temple.