

Matthew 12:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

Analysis

'But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.' This statement is breathtaking in its implications. The temple was Judaism's central institution—the location of God's special presence, the site of sacrifice and worship, the heart of Israel's religious life. Yet Jesus claims to be 'greater than the temple' (μεῖζόν/meizon). He doesn't merely say He's important; He says He surpasses the temple in significance and authority. Since the temple represented God's dwelling with His people, Jesus's claim implicitly asserts deity—He is God dwelling with humanity (Matthew 1:23, 'Emmanuel, God with us'). If Jesus is greater than the temple, He possesses authority over temple regulations, sabbath laws, and ceremonial system. Reformed theology sees this as Christology: Jesus is the true temple (John 2:19-21), the ultimate meeting place between God and humanity. He supersedes all Old Testament institutions—they pointed to Him and find fulfillment in Him. The phrase 'in this place' (ἐδώ/ hōde) refers not to location but to Jesus's presence: wherever He is, there is something greater than the temple.

Historical Context

For first-century Jews, the temple was central to identity, faith, and practice. Rebuilt by Herod beginning in 20 BC, the temple was magnificent—Josephus describes its grandeur, white marble and gold gleaming in the sun. Pilgrims traveled from throughout the known world for feasts. The temple represented God's covenant with Israel, His dwelling among them, the means of atonement

through sacrifice. To claim superiority over the temple was either blasphemy or divine truth—no middle ground existed. Jesus's claim foreshadowed His prediction of the temple's destruction (Matthew 24:1-2, fulfilled in 70 AD), His identification as the true temple (John 2:19-21), and the new covenant reality where believers corporately are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19-22). The early church wrestled with this transition: Acts 15 and Galatians address whether Gentiles need temple-based Judaism. The book of Hebrews extensively argues Christ supersedes temple, priesthood, and sacrifices. Jesus's claim in Matthew 12:6 anticipated all this: the old order was passing; the new had come.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus being 'greater than the temple' transform your understanding of worship—from location-based to Person-centered?
2. What does it mean practically that believers are now God's temple through Christ's Spirit rather than through physical structures?
3. How should this verse shape your reading of Old Testament passages about the temple—seeing them as pointing to Christ?

Interlinear Text

λέγω	δὲ	ὑμῖν	ὅτι	τοῦ	ἱεροῦ	μείζων	ἔστιν
I say	But	unto you	That	G3588	the temple	greater than	is one
G3004	G1161	G5213	G3754		G2411	G3187	G2076

ὧδε

in this place

G5602

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 6:18 (Parallel theme): But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

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