

Matthew 26:61

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Analysis

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days (εἶπαν, Οὗτος ἔφη, Δύναμαι καταλῦσαι τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν)—The contemptuous οὗτος ('this fellow, this one') shows disrespect. They quoted Jesus's words (John 2:19) but distorted them: Jesus said, 'Destroy this temple' (imperative, challenging them); they claim He said, 'I am able to destroy' (δύναμαι, expressing ability/threat). Jesus spoke of His body's resurrection (John 2:21); they implied He threatened literal temple destruction. Truth twisted into lie through selective editing and interpretive distortion.

The charge was serious—threatening the temple meant opposing Israel's worship center, Judaism's heart. Stephen later faced similar charges (Acts 6:13-14). The 'three days' detail came from Jesus's words but divorced from resurrection context became mere boast. This demonstrates how Scripture can be weaponized through misinterpretation—Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus (4:6), misapplying it. Context matters; interpretation requires honesty. These witnesses used Jesus's own words against Him—the supreme irony since His words are life (John 6:63, 68).

Historical Context

Jesus's temple-saying (John 2:19) occurred at Passover early in His ministry (AD 27-28), three years before this trial. The witnesses dredged up old words, distorting them for accusation. The temple (ναός, naos, sanctuary proper) was

Herod's magnificent structure, recently expanded—boasting ability to destroy and rebuild it in three days sounded megalomaniacal. Jews told Jesus rebuilding took 46 years (John 2:20). In AD 70, Rome literally destroyed the temple. Jesus prophesied its destruction (24:2); ironically, they accused Him of threatening what God would accomplish.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How are Jesus's words still distorted today through selective quotation divorced from context?
2. When have you misused Scripture by twisting its meaning to support predetermined conclusions rather than submitting to its actual message?

Interlinear Text

εἶπον,	Οὗτος	ἔφη	Δύναμαι	καταλῦσαι	τὸν	ναὸν	
And said	This	fellow said	I am able	to destroy	G3588	the temple	
G2036	G3778	G5346	G1410	G2647		G3485	
τοῦ	θεοῦ	καὶ	διὰ	τριῶν	ἡμερῶν	οἰκοδομῆσαι	αὐτόν
G3588	of God	and	in	three	days	to build	it
	G2316	G2532	G1223	G5140	G2250	G3618	G846

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 27:40 (Temple): And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Isaiah 53:3 (Parallel theme): He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 49:7 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

Mark 15:29 (Temple): And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

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