

# Josephus, fifth evangelist, and Jesus on the Temple

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This contribution aims at deconstructing a Christian master narrative that interprets Josephus as crucial support for the New Testament message that the Temple had to become a ruin, in line with the will of God. It argues for an alternative interpretation, namely that both Jesus of Nazareth and Josephus considered the Temple to be still relevant, albeit in different ways. For Jesus the Temple was the self-evident cultic centre of Judaism and a special place to experience his relationship with God. None of Jesus' statements about the Temple in their original context necessarily implies that Jesus assumed that the institution of the Temple would stop functioning in the near future or at the end of time. Josephus's perspective on the Temple changes in his works. The elaborate description of Jerusalem and the Temple in *War* 5 reads as a written monument of the past, but several passages in Josephus's *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* imply that the Temple was still important after 70 CE. Josephus may have reckoned with the possibility that the Temple was going to be rebuilt if the Romans allowed for it.

This contribution is dedicated to Pieter G.R. de Villiers, a modest but sophisticated scholar and a good friend.

## Introduction

Flavius Josephus, born as Joseph ben Mattityahu in 37 CE (died c. 95 CE), was a Jewish priest who acted as commander of Galilee during the Jewish rebellion against Rome (66 CE – 70 CE) until his arrest at Yodfat in 67.<sup>1</sup> When his prediction that the Roman commander Vespasian would become emperor materialised, he was rewarded by the new emperor and spent the rest of his life in Rome as a historian. He wrote four works (i.e. overall 30 books), including:

- a history of the armed conflict between the Jews and Rome (*The Jewish War*)
- a history of the Jewish people starting from the creation of the world up to Josephus's own time (*The Jewish Antiquities*)
- an apologetic work called *Against Apion*
- and finally an autobiographical work, which is, in fact, a defence against the accusations of opponents (*The Life*; Bilde 1988; Rajak 1983).

Josephus's own hints about his intended audience are mixed, but it is clear that his message was closely related to the early imperial Roman context in which he wrote his works (Den Hollander 2014; Mason 1998; 2003; 2005; differently: Price 2005). There is no evidence of a Jewish reception of his writings up until late antiquity, and there is not much evidence that Greco-Roman authors knew part of his work. Josephus's prophecy about Vespasian must have been well-known and is referred to by Suetonius (*Vesp.* 5, 6) and Cassius Dio (66.4), but that does not prove that these authors knew his works (Mason 1992:46; Schreckenberg 1972:69–70; Van Henten n.d.). The only pagan author who probably read Josephus at length was the 3rd century philosopher Porphyry (Price 2005:109; Schreckenberg 1972:76–77). However, Josephus was so popular amongst the Christians, that one can consider him the fifth evangelist.

I will take Josephus's impact on the Christians as a springboard for my contribution, because his Christian reception almost automatically brings us to his view of the Jerusalem Temple. In this article, I aim at deconstructing a Christian master narrative that interprets Josephus as a crucial support for the New Testament message that the Temple had to become a ruin, because that was the direction in which history was progressing, in line with the will of God. I will argue for a, perhaps rather bold, alternative interpretation, namely that both Jesus of Nazareth and Josephus reckoned with the reality of the Temple, although in different ways. For Jesus the Temple was the self-evident cultic centre of Judaism and a special place to experience the relationship with God. I contend that none of Jesus' statements about the Temple in their original context necessarily implies that Jesus assumed that the institution of the Temple would stop

1. I warmly thank Danielle Lee (Utrecht) for her meticulous correction of my English.

functioning in the near future or at the end of time. After Jesus' death, and especially after the actual destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, Jesus' statements were re-interpreted from the perspective that the Temple had to be destroyed according to a divinely determined scenario, because Jesus' death as saving event made the Temple superfluous. In his *Jewish War* Josephus argues that the Jewish revolt against the Romans had to fail because of the huge discord amongst the Jews and the takeover of extremely radical Jews. He implies that the Roman triumph and the destruction of Jerusalem were, in fact, a divine punishment for Jewish disobedience, dissension and the criminal behaviour of extremist leaders. With this view, however, he does not seem to imply that the Temple had lost is relevance. In my third section, I will argue that Josephus's perspective on the Temple changes in his works and that he presents the Temple cult as a continuum in certain passages in *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*. I will start, however, with a discussion of the more common reading of Josephus and Jesus' statements about the Temple under the heading of Josephus as fifth evangelist.

## Josephus as fifth evangelist

As is well known, Josephus's reception amongst Greeks, Romans and Jews has been minimal, but the Christians loved him. They alluded to his passages, paraphrased sections or even quoted him in full, sometimes in a systematic way (Hardwick 1989; Inowlocki 2006; Schreckenberg 1972; 1982; 1984; 1987). Although explicit references to Josephus as fifth evangelist only date from the modern era (Berggren 1862:xii; Keim 1878:1; Schreckenberg 1980:179), there are good reasons for characterising Josephus as such if one takes the Christian reception of Josephus in the first millennium CE into account. The early Christians appreciated Josephus not only for being the most important external source for the context of the Jesus movement and the origins of Christianity, but also because Christian re-interpretations of him support crucial points of the salvation history that started with Jesus Christ. Josephus mentions John the Baptist and Jesus' brother James in passing and even includes a passage about Jesus himself, the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum* (Carleton Paget 2001). He briefly reports the order of the high priest Ananus to execute James by stoning and he calls him 'the brother of Jesus who was called Christ' (*ton adelphon Iesou tou legomenou Christou*, *Ant.* 20.200; Bauckham 1990:80–84; McLaren 2001; Pratscher 1987:230–38; Rivkin 1986). Most importantly, Christian interpreters consider the destruction of the Temple to be God's punishment of the Jews for their execution of James (below). The brutal execution of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas is mentioned in connection with the explanation of a defeat of Herod, which is interpreted as the just and divinely orchestrated punishment for John's execution (*Ant.* 18.116–119). Josephus confirms John's epithet 'the Baptist' and his practice of baptising fellow-Jews. He characterises John as a good man (*agathon andra*), who called upon his fellow-Jews to live virtuous lives, to practice justice towards each other and to treat God in the proper way (*ta pros allēlous dikaiosunei kai pros ton theon eusebeiai chrōmenoīs*, *Ant.* 18.117; Webb 1991:31–45). The most complicated passage in this respect is

the *Testimonium Flavianum* (*Ant.* 18.63–64), the authenticity of which has been doubted by some since the 16th century (Wheatley 2003). One of the hotly debated issues concerning the reliability of this passage is the question of whether Josephus's reference to Jesus as the Christ or the Messiah (*ho christos houtos ēn*, 18.63) is authentic or not (Carleton Paget 2001:554–619). The English Schürer, an important handbook of the history of the Jews in the age of Jesus Christ, concludes that this reference is authentic:

Rather, it seems that Josephus did use the word *Christos* qualifying it in some way or other, perhaps as in *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200), for otherwise the reference to the tribe of the *christianoī*, 'so called after him' would be incomprehensible. (Carleton Paget 2001:547–548; Schürer 1973:435)

Most scholars assume that the *Testimonium* has a genuine basis but is reworked by Christian scribes or editors (Carleton Paget 2001:590–606; Meier 1990; Meier 1991–2009:1.56–88). Evidently, before the scholarly discussion of this passage most if not all of Josephus's readers must have considered the three passages mentioned authentic in their present form. This implies, amongst other things, that these readers presupposed that Josephus confirms the claim of the New Testament Gospels that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. The latter point can find support in the references to Josephus in the early Church, which point to the *Testimonium*, although some of the Christian authors acknowledge that Josephus himself did not think that Jesus was the Messiah (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.47).

It is obvious that Josephus 'occupies a place in Christian literature second only to the Bible itself in importance' (Hardwick 1989:1). His writings, like those of other Jewish authors, fulfil three functions within early Christian literature (Inowlocki 2006:287):

- they are an intermediary between Greek philosophy and the Bible
- they are a source of apologetic material
- they provide historical testimonies on the beginnings of Christianity.

The third function is relevant for this contribution and it concerns not only the beginnings of the Jesus movement, but also the theme of the destruction of the Temple, which is of crucial importance in Josephus's *Jewish War* as well Christian retellings of Josephus. Josephus indirectly confirms the fulfilment of certain statements by Jesus about Jerusalem and the fate of the Jewish people. He also points out that the destruction of Jerusalem was a punishment of God, which in Christian re-interpretations turns into God's punishment for the Jews' rejection and execution of Jesus Christ (Bardy 1948; Hardwick 1989:2; 80–90; 101; Inowlocki 2006:215–216; 284; 296). In his epoch-making *History of the Church*, Eusebius quotes Josephus at length (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.1–3.10). He directly connects the destruction of the Temple with the rejection of Jesus and refers to Josephus as support for his report (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.5.6; 2.6.3–4). He also highlights the tragedy of the event of the destruction and evokes the emotions of his Christian

readers by quoting sections of Josephus (Schreckenberg 1987:320). My point here is that Josephus as 'fifth evangelist' for many readers in the past and for at least some in the present is considered to be the Jewish author who confirms the message of the Gospels, including the Christian view on the Jerusalem Temple and its destruction. A key-passage in Origen, complex but with a great impact, explicitly connects Josephus's testimony to Jesus Christ with the destruction of the Temple (*Contra Celsum* 1.47; 2.13; Mizugaki 1987:335–336; Schreckenberg 1972:74–76). Origen first mentions Josephus's reference to John the Baptist in *Antiquities* 18 and then moves on by stating that Josephus was searching for the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. In this passage, Origen not only associates the destruction with the execution of Jesus' brother James, as he did elsewhere (e.g. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17; also Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.19–22; Jerome, *Vir. Ill.* 13), but he also directly connects it with the Jews' plotting against Jesus and Jesus' execution.

In the 18th book of his *Antiquities of the Jews* (*Ioudaikē Archaialogia*), Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and promising purification to those who underwent the rite.<sup>2</sup> Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (*zētōn tēn aitian tēs ton Hierosolumōn ptōseōs kai tēs tou naou kathaireseōs*), whereas he (i.e. Josephus) ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people (*toutōn aitia gegone tōi laōi*), as they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless – being, although against his will, not far from the truth – that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ), the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice (*Origen, Contra Celsum* 1.47; transl. F. Crombie).

Origen refers to Book 18 of Josephus's *Antiquities* when he mentions John the Baptist and his ritual of purification, which no doubt alludes to Josephus's passage about John in *Antiquities* 18.116–119. He briefly paraphrases the Josephan passage, as he usually does (Mizugaki 1987:330). Next he mentions Jesus without referring explicitly to the *Testimonium Flavianum*, but it is plausible that his comment that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (also *Commentary on Matthew*, on Mt 10:17) presupposes knowledge of this testimony.<sup>3</sup> The reference to Jesus brings Origen to the destruction of the Temple with Jesus' execution. He notes that Josephus tried to find an explanation for the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple and connects this with an explanation attributed to Josephus and found elsewhere in early Christian literature, namely the execution of Jesus' brother James the Just, briefly reported in *Antiquities* 20.200. Origen offers a free quotation of this passage (cf. *Contra Celsum* 2.13 and *Commentary on Matthew*

10:17),<sup>4</sup> but he corrects the explanation for the fall of Jerusalem by connecting it directly with Jesus' execution:

Whereas he [*Josephus*] ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they [*Jews*] put to death Christ, who was a prophet ... (*Origen, Contra Celsum* 1.47)

Origen probably considered the deaths of James and Jesus analogous and the implication of his re-interpretation is that the Jews were directly responsible for Jesus' death, as the high priest Ananus was for the stoning of James and certain others according to Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.200. Origen's rereading of Josephus in *Contra Celsum* 1.47 implies, therefore:

- the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was deserved
- it was a punishment by God
- not for the Jews' unlawful execution of James, the brother of Jesus
- but for the execution of Jesus Christ himself.

Eusebius, who was familiar with all of Josephus's works (Schreckenberg 1972:79–84), goes even one step further. He makes the same causal connection (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.5.6; 2.6.3–4; cf. 3.5; Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio* 2.12.1; Carleton Paget 2001:541–542, n. 12), but he refers to Josephus as a major source for the interconnection between Jesus' execution and the fall of Jerusalem (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.6.3–4). His re-interpretations of Josephus confirm the fulfilment of specific statements by Jesus about Jerusalem and the fate of the Jewish people and the destruction of the Temple ultimately becomes proof of the divinely orchestrated succession of Judaism by Christianity (Eusebius, *Dem.* 8.2.399a; 8.2.400a–d; 8.2.402d; Inowlocki 2006:215–16; 284, 296).

## Josephus on the Temple

Having seen how early Christian authors interpret Josephus's passages about the destruction of the Temple, resulting in a master narrative that builds on Josephus as external Jewish witness and constructs the destruction of the Temple as a crucial event in Christianity's salvation history, marking God's definitive choice for the Christians as his chosen people to the detriment of the Jews, it becomes highly relevant to see what Josephus passages actually say about the Temple.

Looking back, the Temple may seem already outdated in the year it was destroyed (cf. Schwartz 1996), but Ed Sanders rightly emphasises the importance of the Temple in the 1st century CE (1994:51–76). Sanders argues that the Temple was one of the three pillars of Judaism with the Torah and the covenant building perhaps on the famous statement of Simon the Righteous 'By three things is the world sustained: by the Law, by the [*Temple*] service, and by deeds of loving-kindness' (*m. 'Abot* 1.2, trans. Danby). He emphasises that for most Jews, even those in the diaspora, the Temple's function as a cultic centre was self-evident. Its importance

2. Origen also explicitly refers to *Antiquities* (*Archaialogia/Ioudaikē Archaialogia*) in *Selecta et fragmenta in Ieremiam*, on Jeremiah 22:24–26, and *Commentary on Matthew*, on Matthew 10:17.

3. It is debated whether Origen implicitly refers to *Antiquities* 18.63–64 or not (Carleton Paget 2001:557–561; cf. Schreckenberg 1972:75).

4. In the latter passage he refers to Josephus explaining the cause of the sufferings of the Jewish people and the destruction of the Temple (*ton naon kataskaphēnai*) once again as God's punishment for the execution of James (also with free quotation of *Ant.* 20.200).



would be confirmed by the fact that most Diaspora Jews faithfully paid the annual Temple tax.<sup>5</sup> After King Herod's renovation, the Temple was, in fact, one of the largest and most beautiful sanctuaries in antiquity, as Josephus (e.g. *Ant.* 15.381, 388; below) and Philo (*Spec. leg.* 1.71–72) emphasise. Michael Tuval (2013), the author of a recent monograph on Josephus's view of the Temple and its priesthood, argues that Josephus's ideas about the Temple changed over the years (Gussmann 2008:141–143; Levine 1994:234–235). In *The Jewish War* the Temple is still extremely important, not only because of its function as the centre of the Jewish cult and the most holy space in the world, but also due to it being the most important place of action before and during the war against the Romans:

The Temple was not only absolutely central in Josephus' presentation of the Judean religion, but of the vicissitudes of the revolt as well. The sins of the rebels polluted the Temple by the blood of their fellow-Jews, and they were also universal crimes against humankind. (Tuval 2013:128)

The prologue of Josephus's *The Jewish War* indicates already the centrality of this location highlighting Jerusalem with its 'triple line of walls and their dimensions' and the Temple as the most important locations in his history (1.25–26). Tuval also argues that Josephus's focus moves away from the Jewish territories in the Holy Land in the *Jewish Antiquities* as it is written from the perspective of a Diaspora Jew. As a consequence, the Temple would play only a marginal role in this work, and instead of the Temple the Law became the decisive factor in Jewish religion.<sup>6</sup> It is my intention to nuance this argument about the Temple in Josephus by discussing all three of the elaborate sections in Josephus's writings that deal with the Temple: *Jewish War* 5.136–247, *Antiquities* 15.380–425 and *Against Apion* 2.102–109. The latter two passages imply in my view that even after its destruction in 70 CE the Temple is still relevant in some way for Josephus.

Josephus's most elaborate description of a location in the entire *Jewish War* concerns Jerusalem and its Temple (5.136–247).<sup>7</sup> In this passage, Josephus provides his readers with the necessary background information about the upcoming battle against the Romans narrated in Books 5 and 6. It is significant that his description of Jerusalem and the Temple in *War* 5 appears in the past tense, unlike other descriptions of cities in Josephus's reports. He probably uses this tense in order to indicate that the location described no longer existed during the time in which he was writing. We can interpret the passage as a frame, which conveys a personal memory of Josephus himself, because he knew the city and the Temple well (see 5.182).

5. A half-shekel (equaling two drachmae or denarii in Josephus's time) paid by all male Jews, also those living in the Diaspora: *War* 7.218; *Ant.* 18.312–313 (Trebilco 1991:13–16, 196–197; Sanders 1994:52, 156, 163–168).

6. Tuval (2013:258): 'The necessity of living by the Mosaic Law is probably the single main idea of AJ ... idolatry is replaced with Lawlessness just as the Temple and its cult are replaced with the commandments of the Law and their observance'.

7. About Josephus's use of space as a narratorial tool, see Van Henten and Huitink (2012).

As usual, Josephus's description starts with the periphery and then moves over to the centre (Shahar 2004:232–235). He first mentions the geographical setting of the city on two hills as well as the hill on which the Temple was built (5.136–141) and then continues to outline the circuit of its three walls. This section stands out because the description is told in detail. The first and oldest wall, for example, is described as follows:

Beginning on the north (*kata borran*) at the tower called Hippicus, it extended to the Xystus, and then joining the council-chamber terminated at the western portico of the Temple. Beginning at the same point in the other direction, westward (*kata thatera ... pros dusin*), it descended past the place called Bethso to the gate of the Essenes, then southwards (*pros noton*) above the fountain of Siloam; thence it again inclined to the east (*ekklinon pros anamolēn*) towards Solomon's pool and after passing a spot which they call Ophlas, finally joined the eastern portico of the Temple. (*War* 5.144–145)

Moving on to the centre, the narrator finally turns his attention to the Temple itself and the attached fortress of Antonia, where the fire that destroys it will start. He describes it at the height of its splendour, the way it appeared as he knew it, after Herod's expansion and renovation. Gradually zooming in, the narrator guides an anonymous witness (cf. 5.193 *proiōntōn* 'when people go in') from the outer courts through the inner courts and finally into the Temple itself. He ends with a description of the altar, the officiating priests and even the high priest's garments. Measures are given throughout, the functions of each part are clarified and the costly materials are mentioned repeatedly, with an emphasis on colour and the shining of metal surfaces. The exterior of the Temple, for example, 'wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye' (*out' eis psukhēs out' eis ommatōn ekplēksin*). It is said 'to have appeared to approaching strangers from a distance like a snow-clad mountain', whilst people close to it had to avert their eyes because the gleaming gold blinded them with which it was covered (5.222–223).

The elaborate description of Jerusalem and Temple in *War* 5 serves several narrative functions. It indicates what is at stake when the siege of Jerusalem begins, and of what was lost when the Temple burnt down because of a fire started by the Jews themselves (6.249–253). It also enhances the readers' awareness of the magnitude of the crimes of the Jewish insurgents in defiling the Temple (Gelardini 2014:89–92; 96). The final glimpse of the city that we get in *The Jewish War*, now razed to the ground by Titus, also contrasts its former grandeur with its pitiable present state. This is offered in a flashback of Titus (7.112–113):

On his way he [Titus] visited Jerusalem, and contrasting the sorry scene of desolation before his eyes (*blepomenēn*) with the former splendour of the city, and calling to mind (*eis mnēmēn ballomenos*) the grandeur of its ruined buildings and their pristine beauty, he commiserated its destruction ... (*War* 7.112)

In this brief frame, Titus' sees the ruins, but he also recalls Jerusalem's former beauty of which Josephus illustrates in great detail (Eliav 2005; Gelardini 2014:89–100). Apparently,



Josephus wanted to preserve a memory of a city and a monument, primarily for his Roman readers, which had, by the time of writing, become a ruin. The details of the description in Book 5 imply that his ambition went even further. Whilst his own memories were still relatively fresh, he apparently wanted to preserve the memory of Jerusalem and its Temple as a visualised monument in writing. Even after the city's actual destruction, Jerusalem and God's Temple form the centre of Josephus's universe.

*The Jewish Antiquities*, written more than 20 years after the destruction in 70 CE, also includes a detailed description of the Temple (15.380–425). This passage concludes Book 15 of *Antiquities*, dealing with the rule of Herod the Great, and it characterises the king as an ambitious builder (15.380; 15.382, 384; Netzer 2006). It can also be perceived as an attempt by Josephus to preserve the memory of the Temple in writing, this time through the lens of King Herod, who took the initiative to expand and renovate the Temple complex in his 18th year (*Ant.* 15.380).<sup>8</sup> The focus on the Herodian Temple in the concluding section of Book 15 corresponds with the importance of the Temple elsewhere in *Antiquities*, which is apparent from the Temple-orientated ring composition of this work (Bilde 1988:89–92; Landau 2006:124; Mason 2000:xx–xxii; 2001:xxiii–xxiv; 2003). Once again, his detailed description invites the readers to imagine the grandeur and beauty of the Temple. First Josephus takes a panoramic viewpoint to look at the Temple as if he was standing on one of the hills nearby. Then he zooms in on the Temple's highlights, starting with the foundations of the sanctuary (15.391–395). Next, he moves over to the outside of the complex with the double porticoes along the exterior walls, 'the greatest work heard about by humans' (15.396). In 15.397, he once again changes the perspective by focusing on Herod's adaptation of the Temple Mount in order to create several platforms, moving from the outside to the inside, the area around the sanctuary (15.397–401). From 15.402 to 15.417, Josephus's focus is on the exterior Temple complex, describing the outside from various angles. From 15.417 he zooms in again, moving from one precinct to the other towards the sanctuary as the centre, going from one concentric circle to another and ending with the Priestly Court in front of the sanctuary, where the sacrifices took place. The technique of description implies that the Temple was still of central importance in Josephus's geographical system (differently: Gussmann 2008:143). His description differentiates between profane and sacred space. He moves from the periphery to the centre and back, and indicates in this way that the area of the sanctuary of 'the greatest God' (15.385) within the Temple precinct is the most holy place in the world. His zooming-in technique goes hand in hand with the differentiation of levels of holiness of the spaces referred to, which implies that the sanctuary itself was the most holy place (15.417–419):

Further within this precinct [*i.e.* the area within the walls around the sanctuary] was the sacred area (*to hieron*), which was inaccessible to women. And deeper inside this precinct was a third precinct,

8.The 18th year of Herod's rule is mostly equated with 20 BCE –19 BCE (Van Henten 2014:285–286). Differently, Schwier (1989:56) (23 BCE – 22 BCE); Mahieu (2012:147–49) (19/18 BCE).

into which only the priests were allowed to enter. The sanctuary was within this (precinct) and in front of it was an altar on which we used to bring the burnt-offerings to God. (15.419)

The notion that the sanctuary of Jerusalem's Temple is the most holy centre of a series of concentric circles of holiness is also reflected by other passages in Josephus, but it is explicit in this passage in *Antiquities* 15.<sup>9</sup> The question is, however, why is this still relevant at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, decades after the destruction of the Temple? The implication of Josephus's geographical presentation of the Temple is that the area on which the sanctuary was standing is still the most holy place in the world. That such an ambiguous view is possible is proven by the multitude that prays everyday at the Wailing Wall, which clearly functions as a sacred place connected with the Temple although every visitor knows the Temple itself has been destroyed. The pertinent question is, however, how Josephus's description of the Temple as a continuum and the most holy space in the world would appeal to the cultural elite of Rome at the end of the 1st century? The Jerusalem Temple could be understood in a symbolic way, as the centre of an ideal cosmological system.<sup>10</sup> This is, however, an implausible view in a Roman setting. An alternative explanation is that the description in *Antiquities* 15 reflects a later insight of Josephus, namely the idea that the rebuilding of the Temple would become a serious option if the Romans would allow for it. This is a serious possibility, because at least one passage in *Antiquities* implies that the Temple cult somehow is still functioning. In *Antiquities* 15.248 Josephus explains the need for two citadels in Jerusalem, one is protecting the city and the other – the Antonia Fortress – protects the Temple. He continues his description as follows:

For it is not possible for the sacrifices to take place without these [*i.e.* the two fortresses], and it is impossible for any of the Jews not to present these [*sacrifices*]. They are more ready to sacrifice their lives than to give up the cult they are accustomed to perform for God. (*Ant.* 15.248)

This passage implies that the Temple cult was still a reality, and that if necessary the Jews were willing to sacrifice their lives for maintaining the Temple cult. Even if this note has a symbolic meaning, the sacrificial cult is still such a crucial item of Jewish identity that Jews would be willing to sacrifice their lives for it. This statement may well hint at an ideal situation, implying that the Temple cult is still relevant and that if necessary the Jews were willing to sacrifice their lives for contributing to the Temple cult.<sup>11</sup>

9.In *War* 5.207 Josephus indicates that the sanctuary was roughly in the middle of the Temple complex (*ho naos kata meson keimenos*) and in *Against Apion* 1.198 he notes that the Temple was 'roughly in the middle of the city' (*kata meson*), which must be taken symbolically. See also *War* 5.227; *Apion* 2.102–104; also *Mishna Tractate Kelim* 1.6–8; Schwartz (2013:163–164 with footnote 120).

10.Josephus elaborates the cosmic function of the Temple, or its predecessor, the Tabernacle, in *Ant.* 3.179–187: the Temple cult is a divinely established kind of worship at a place chosen by God, which is carried out by chosen priests on behalf of the Jews and all humankind (Gussmann 2008:162–171; 340–344; Tuval 2013:76; 101–102; 110; 164; 279).

11.Cf. *Antiquities* 3.224–257: when Josephus deals with the biblical sacrificial regulations, he describes the sacrifices almost consistently in the present tense (e.g. 3.225–326).

Josephus's third elaborate passage on the Temple is *Against Apion* 2.102–109.<sup>12</sup> It is part of Josephus's refutation of Apion's accusation of the annual ritual slaughter of a Greek in the Jerusalem Temple (*Apion* 2.89–96), which would have been discovered by Antiochus IV (Bar-Kochva 2010:253–279; Bickerman 2007; Stern 1974:1.410–412). Josephus could have referred to one of his other descriptions of the Temple, but he does not do so. He starts his refutation based on arguments (*verba*, 2.97–102), raising several points that make the accusation highly implausible. In 2.102, he moves on to the facts (*opera*), which concern the place where the Greek would have been hidden (2.102–109; Barclay 2007:222 n. 360; Van Henten & Abusch 1996:300–305). He argues that the limited accessibility because of its sanctity and the organisation of the cult made it simply impossible to lock up and fatten a non-Jewish person at the Temple. Josephus starts with the system of sanctity that underlies the set up of the Temple:

All those who saw the design of our temple (*constructionem templi nostri*) know what it was like and how its sanctity was kept intact and impenetrable (*intransgressibilem eius purificationis integritatem*). (*Apion* 2.102; transl. Barclay)

This description underlies a similar concentric pattern as we have seen in connection with the *Antiquities* passage (above). Josephus indicates that the Temple complex had four courts, which surround each other (2.103–105). Jewish law determined the access to these courts (2.103; Bauckham 1990:328–334). Each time one would move from one court to the other the access to the court was further restricted to a specific category of persons, ending with the fourth court, which only priests in the state of purity could enter. The inner sanctuary admissible only to the high priest is once again the centre of the spatial system of sanctity (2.104). The conclusion is obvious: a Greek man could only have been admitted to the outer court, as it was the only court accessible to foreigners (2.103).

Josephus next explains the laws of what could be brought into the Temple and what not (*Apion* 2.105–107), clearly implying that it was completely impossible that a Greek would have been kept and fed up there (cf. 2.107, 110–111; Bauckham 1990:328–329). It is significant that he switches from the past tense to the present when he does so<sup>13</sup>:

Indeed, so careful is the provision for all aspects of the cultic activity (*Tanta vero est circa omnia providentia pietatis*) that a time is set for the priests to enter at certain hours ... Finally, it is not even permitted to carry any vessel into the Temple (*portari licet in templum*). The only items placed therein were (*erant in eo*) an altar, a table, an incense altar, and a lampstand, all of which are listed in the law. ([author's emphasis]; *Apion* 2.105–106; transl. Barclay)

This switch to the present tense can be explained by the fact that the law had not changed, contrary to the Temple itself. However, we can observe a similar change when Josephus moves on to his description of the performance of

the sacrificial cult by the priests (2.108–109). Here the present tense is used consistently:

For although there are (*Licet enim sint*) four tribes of priests<sup>14</sup> ... they perform their duties in smaller units for a fixed period of days. When these are completed, other priests come to take over the sacrificial tasks (*alii succedentes ad sacrificia veniunt*). They assemble in the temple at midday and receive (*percipiunt*) from their predecessors the keys of the temple and all the vessels, counted out, with nothing by way of food or drink being brought into the temple. For it is forbidden (*prohibitum est*) to offer such things even on the altar, apart from what is prepared for the sacrifices (*ad sacrificia praeparantur*). (*Apion* 2.108–109; transl. Barclay)

In *Apion* 2.102–109 Josephus counters Apion's accusation by explaining the layered sanctity of the Temple complex, ignored by Apion (2.110), and the performance of the priestly duties related to the sacrificial cult. The passage serves an apologetic purpose. The laws of access to the various courts and the close supervision of the priests simply imply that the presence of a non-Jew stupefied by a feast of sea-foods and meat (2.91) could only be a terrible and impious lie (2.109–111). At the same time, Josephus highlights the unique sanctity of the Jerusalem Temple and it strikes the reader that the priestly duties are being described as if they were still taking place.<sup>15</sup>

In short, Josephus's perspective on the Temple changes in his works. In the *War* the Temple is the major focal point in the dramatic description of the conflict with the Romans and a literary monument of its past. In two of Josephus's later works, *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*, the Temple becomes a reality again. More than two decades after its destruction, Josephus did not imagine Judaism without the Temple (Bauckham 1990:347). *Against Apion* almost consistently refers to the Temple without mentioning its destruction, but the focus is mostly on the priestly duties connected with the cult. The Temple and its priests seem to have been important for the theocratic constitution Josephus elaborates on in the second part of *Against Apion*. That the Jews would pay for the sacrifices for the emperor and the Roman people and that the Temple would have a universal significance, as articulated in *Apion* 2.76–77 (see also 2.193, 196), may serve an apologetic function (Gerber 1997:197 with n. 151; Barclay 2007:280, n. 771). But this point can also be interpreted as a hint to the Romans to re-consider their policy concerning the Jerusalem Temple and to allow this holy place to be rebuilt (with Goodman 2007:154).

## Jesus and the Temple

The previous sections argue that there is a huge difference between Josephus's own views of the Temple and the

14. Discussion of the four priestly courses in Bauckham (1990:339–46) and Barclay (2007:225–226, n. 385).

15. In *Apion* 2.76–77, 193–194 Josephus also refers to the Temple sacrifices in the present tense (Barclay 2007:222 n. 361; Bauckham 1990:347). In *Against Apion* 2.76–77 Josephus mentions the continuous sacrifices on behalf of the Emperor and the Roman people in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. *War* 2.197: twice a day), whilst highlighting that these communal honours were unique but principally different from those bestowed on God. Further discussion and references in Barclay (2007:210–211).

12. Discussion in Bauckham (1990) and Barclay (2007:222–226).

13. As observed by Barclay (2007:222, n. 361).



Christian re-interpretation of these views. We encounter a similar gap between Jesus' actions and statements related to the Temple and their expansion and re-interpretation by the evangelists in the process of their editorial work. In this section I will argue first that there is conclusive evidence coming from various sources that the Temple cult was a self-evident and therefore unproblematic Jewish institution for the historical Jesus. Subsequently, I will briefly discuss three key passages in Mark's Gospel that are sometimes interpreted as evidence that Jesus announced that the Jerusalem Temple would be destroyed—according to one passage even by himself. I will argue that it is implausible that these passages in their present form reflect the ideas of the historical Jesus about the Temple.

In an important survey of the relevant passages about Jesus' attitude towards the Temple, Ed Sanders argues that the basic picture is simple and coherent: for Jesus the Temple was the self-evident central cultic institution, the obvious place of gathering during the pilgrimage festivals as well as the dwelling-place of God (Lettinga 2014; Meier 1991–2009:3.498–502; Sanders 1985:61–90; also Sanders 1997; Sanders 2005).<sup>16</sup> There is no indication that Jesus protested against the sacrificial cult as such. He celebrated the Jewish high festivals in the usual way, implying that he went to the Temple during the three pilgrim festivals (Passover, Sukkot and Shavuot), which is confirmed by the synoptic passion narratives for Passover. Since I am in agreement with Sanders here, I will only mention a few examples of a much larger corpus of passages, which imply that the Temple was a self-evident and important institution of Judaism for Jesus.

Several New Testament writings indicate that the Temple was for Jesus the obvious place where God dwelled and sacrifices were performed. Mark reports Jesus' healing of a leper in a short pericope (Mk 1:40–45). Jesus cleans the man as requested and commands him to bring a sacrifice in the Temple, as the Law of Moses prescribes: 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'. In Luke 17:14 we find a similar command by Jesus to ten lepers, who are made clean by him: 'When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean'. When Jesus denounces the scribes and the Pharisees according to Matthew 23, he speaks about swearing in the sanctuary in a way that shows that the sanctuary is the self-evident place of residence of God (Mt 23:21). Matthew also refers to tithing in the same passage as an obvious obligation (parallel in Lk 11:42). The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9–14 implies that both go praying in the Temple, which presupposes that Jesus saw the Temple as an obvious place to pray. Even John implies that the Temple was an important institution for Jesus, when he reports Jesus' statement before Ananias during his trial (Jn 18:20): 'Jesus answered: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have

always taught in synagogues and in the temple"'. These passages indicate that most, if not all, of the relevant sources transmitting traditions about the historical Jesus (Mk, Q, Mt, Lk and Jn) suggest that Jesus considered the Temple to be an important and obvious institution of Jewish religion. This means that the criterion of multiple attestations is clearly met for this point.<sup>17</sup> John Meier, therefore, rightly concludes with Ed Sanders' argument: 'there is no countervailing tradition in the Gospels that Jesus throughout his public ministry shunned the temple and refused to take part in its festivals' (Betz 1997:461; Meier 1991–2009:3.501).

Sanders and Meier nuance their position, however, by indicating that a distinction should be made between Jesus' views of the actual Temple in his own time and the fate of the Temple at the end of times. Meier refers amongst other passages to Jesus' statements in three Markan passages, which are sometimes considered as evidence that Jesus announced that the Temple would be destroyed. I will focus in the remaining part of this contribution on these three passages, because a full discussion of all of Jesus' acts and sayings connected with the destruction of the Temple and the relevant secondary literature goes far beyond the scope of this article. I concentrate myself on the three Markan passages in order to make the point that it is crucial to distinguish between Jesus' own ideas about the Temple and the views ascribed to him by the redaction of the evangelists. The three passages are<sup>18</sup>:

1. Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Temple in Mark 13:2, which is part of Jesus' speech about the end phase of history (parallels Mt 24:2; Lk 21:6): 'Then Jesus asked him [*one of the disciples*], "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down"<sup>19</sup>
2. The so-called episode of the cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11:15–19; Mt 21:12–13; Lk 19:45–48; Jn 2:13–17) and Jesus' statement about the Temple: 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"?, But you have made it a den of robbers' (Mk 11:17; Mt 21:13; Lk 19:46; Jn 2:16).
3. The accusation in the passion narrative that Jesus would have threatened the Temple: 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands"' (Mk 14:58; paralleled in Mt 26:61). The accusation is repeated in the mocking statements of passersby in Mark 15:29–30: 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days' (paralleled in Mt 27:39; see also Jn 2:18–22; 18:19; Ac 6:13).

Meier interprets Jesus' interference in the activities within the Temple complex (Mk 11:15–19; cf. Jn 2:13–17) in line with Sanders' interpretation (below) as a symbolic and prophetic

16. For critical interactions with Sanders's argument, see Bockmuehl (1994:60–76), Adna (2000:354–58) and Evans (1997a).

17. Elaborate discussion of the criteria in historical Jesus research in Theissen and Winter (2002).

18. Discussions of the Temple motif in Mark include Telford (1980), Dschulnigg (1995), Paesler (1999) and Gray (2008).

19. All translations of biblical passages derive from NRSV.



act that foretells and 'unleashes the imminent end of the Temple' (Meier 1991–2009:3.501; Sanders 1985:61–76). Jesus' saying in Mark 13:2 (paralleled in Mt 24:2 and Lk 21:6) and the reference in Mark 14:58 to his being accused of announcing his destruction of the actual Temple, made with hands, and his building of another Temple in three days, not made with hands (paralleled in Mt 26:61 and Jn 2:19; cf. Mt 23:38; Lk 13:35; 19:41–44), would explain Jesus' prophetic action in the Temple in Meier's view in the perspective of the destruction of the Temple at the end of times. Meier (1991–2009:3.501) concludes that both the criterion of multiple attestation and that of coherence are matched by these three passages.

A distinction between the actual Second Temple, renovated and expanded by Herod the Great, and the Temple at the end of times – whether the Second Temple or another Temple – is certainly relevant, also because of the many Jewish references to the eschatological Temple (Evans 1992; Sanders 1994:289–98). It is doubtful, however, whether statements by the historical Jesus refer to the latter Temple. There is no evidence in Jewish passages that a messianic or prophetic figure would destroy the Temple at the end of times (Evans 1997a:409–410; 435; cf. Yarbrow Collins 2007:600) and the depiction that Jesus would do that, as implied in Mark 14:58 (below), is a radical novelty from the perspective of Jewish traditions. The pericope about the action in the Temple in Mark 11:15–17 is embedded in a Markan context and most likely was edited by Mark (with Lettinga 2014:18–21; Wedderburn 2006). The response to Jesus' deed by the chief priests and the scribes, who are keen on murdering Jesus (11:18), and the reference to Jesus' teaching (11:17), are both points that are characteristic for Mark's depiction of Jesus and his opponents. The introduction to Jesus' saying in 11:17 ('He was teaching and saying ...') probably results from the Markan redaction (Yarbrow Collins 2007:527). Adela Yarbrow Collins (2001:45–47; 2007:526–527) notes that the saying does not match Jesus' action very well, as his deeds do not focus on the Gentiles and their connection with the Temple. Several scholars consider the saying an editorial addition (Bultmann 1957:36; Benoit & Boismard 1972–1977:2.334–36; Harvey 1982:132; Roloff 1970:90–96; Sanders 1985:66–67; 1994:185), which re-interprets the acts described in verses 15–16.<sup>20</sup> Sanders (1985:61–76) argues that the saying in verse 17 is an editorial addition, but that Jesus' act of overturning tables and chairs is authentic (differently: Wedderburn 2006:6).<sup>21</sup> It is a portent of the imminent destruction of the Temple and does not point to corrupted practices by the priests, for which there is no evidence in Sanders' view (Sanders 1994:89–92). Other scholars argue that the saying does not imply that the Temple itself was assessed negatively

by Jesus (e.g. Betz 1997; Lücking 2002:151–153; Wedderburn 2006:3). Evans (1997a:410–428) provides a long list of Old Testament and extra-canonical Jewish passages that imply that the cult or the priesthood was corrupted.<sup>22</sup> He also points to the meaning of the two Old Testament passages quoted in Mark 11:17 (Is 56:7 and Jr 7:11; Evans 1997a: 438–439; 1997b). From the universal perspective of Isaiah 56, which focuses on Gentiles who decided to serve God and who will be brought to the Temple Mount and have their sacrifices accepted by God (Is 56:6–7), the saying in Mark 11:17 would not announce the Temple's destruction but its transformation into an institution that functions on behalf of Jews and non-Jews alike.<sup>23</sup> In the larger context the saying also implies a shift of focus from the cult to the Temple as a place of prayer, a theme that is taken up again in Mark 11:24–25 (Yarbrow Collins 2007:530–531). In short, there are serious reasons for attributing the entire section about the Temple in Mark 11 to the Markan redaction. Even if the act is authentic, as most scholars argue, it is not necessarily the case that it implies the destruction of the Temple in its original setting. If we connect Jesus' act with the saying and the two quotations incorporated in it, a plausible reading would be that Mark invites us to interpret Jesus' performance as an interruption of business as usual in the Temple and a wake-up call that the believers – Jews and non-Jews alike – should act according to the proper attitude towards God and to righteousness, which are both urgently needed because of the dawning end of times (cf. Roloff 1970:95).

Jesus' saying in Mark 13:2, that not one stone of the Temple buildings will be left upon another, is part of Mark's introduction to Jesus' eschatological speech (Mk 13, paralleled by Mt 24:1–44; Lk 21:5–33). The setting of the saying – a question by one of the disciples at the moment Jesus was leaving the Temple – and the location of the speech on the Mount of Olives opposite to the Temple (Mk 13:3) are mostly attributed to Mark's redaction (e.g. Bultmann 1957:36; 64; Benoit & Boismard 1972–1977:2.360; Yarbrow Collins 2007:600–601; differently: Pesch 1984:2.268–269; 272). Mark connected the brief pronouncement story about the Temple (13:1–2) with Jesus' speech on the Temple Mount because of a close thematic correspondence between the two, but the change of audience implies that the story originally circulated independently from the speech. In Mark 13:1–2 the audience is plausibly formed by the entire group of disciples, as in the previous narrative section of 11:27–12:44, but the section with the speech focuses on the four disciples who ask Jesus about the time his prediction about the Temple will happen (13:3–4; Yarbrow Collins 2007:594). Despite Mark's redactional

20. The elaborate analysis of Mark 11:15–19 by Ådna (1999; 2000:157–430; 444–448) leads to the conclusion that both Jesus' acts and his sayings are authentic as a Messianic performance that signifies that the Temple cult will end and be replaced by Jesus' atoning death.

21. Lücking (2002:151; 155) indicates that the verbs in Mark 11:15 imply that Jesus' performance focusses on the economics of the Temple. Fredriksen (2008:251–266) argues that both the saying and the act are inauthentic. The implied location of Jesus' act and statement is the outer court of the Temple (later called the Court of the Gentiles), which was huge, which makes it implausible that many people noticed Jesus' performance (Fredriksen 2008:263–265; Roloff 1970:95–96; Yarbrow Collins 2007:526–527).

22. Sanders (1994:185; also 2005:365) emphasises that Mark does not accuse priests of being robbers but states that the Temple was a den of robbers, referring to bird-sellers and money-changers. He considers it implausible that Jesus objected to the usual transactions in the Temple, which were necessary for the continuation of the cult.

23. Borg (1987:175) argues that Jesus provoked the conservative Jewish authorities with this universalistic saying. Meier (1991–2009:3.501) acknowledges that it is unclear whether Jesus expected a new or better Temple to be built after the disappearance of the Second Temple or not. He states that the context of Jeremiah 7:11 indicates that if the Judeans will not commit idolatry and will live righteously, God will dwell with them in the Temple (Jr 7:1–7).



interference, Jesus' saying itself could still be authentic,<sup>24</sup> but if so, Jesus most likely said it in a different context and possibly in a different form.<sup>25</sup> The saying as transmitted by Mark builds on Haggai 2:15–16 in the Old Greek version (with Lettinga 2014:41–42) and re-interprets this prophecy concerning the new Temple (in the context of Haggai the Second Temple): 'And now, do place it in your hearts from this day and beyond, before laying one stone upon another (*lithon epi lithon*) in the Lord's shrine, who you were ...' (transl. G. Howard, NETS). The characteristic phrase *lithon epi lithon* in the Old Greek of Haggai is probably taken up in Mark 13:2. Haggai's point in this prophecy is a criticism of the people of God, because the work of their hands was unclean. In the Old Greek, God urges the people to return to him and to subject their hearts to him (LXX Hag. 2:17–18). This reading of Haggai's prophecy makes an allusion to Haggai 2:15–16 Old Greek in Mark 13:2 more probable, because it corresponds with the message of Jesus' performance in the Temple as discussed above. The salient point of the saying from the perspective of Haggai 2:15–16, therefore, seems to be a call for repentance and a return to God. It is obvious that this view is very different from the expectation that the Temple would be destroyed at the end of times, as the saying in its present context in Mark 13 implies.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, Mark 14:58 (paralleled by Mt 26:61; repeated in Mk 15:29; see also Jn 2:19 and Ac 6:14) reports a testimony that aims for a conviction of Jesus on the ground of blasphemy (Yarbro Collins 2006:167–168, 2007:701–702) because it implies that Jesus acted against God – who was dwelling in the Temple – and presupposes superhuman powers because no human being could rebuild the Temple (or rather its sanctuary, below) in the course of three days. The statement is connected with Mark 13:2 through the verb *kataluō* ('throw down, destroy'; 13:2 'all [stones] will be thrown down'; 14:58: 'I will destroy this temple'). Mark probably added the phrase *hos ou mē kataluthēi* in 13:2, which does not connect very well with the previous words (Pesch 1984:2.271–272). The testimony in Mark 14:58 differs in three significant points from Jesus' saying in 13:2:

- Mark 13:2 only announces the destruction of the Temple and not its rebuilding as in Mark 14:58 (and 15:29).
- In Mark 13 the agent who brings about the destruction is not specified, although the passive forms can be understood as *passiva divina* (Ådna 2000:118–19; Lücking 2002:153; Wedderburn 2006:15, n. 64; Yarbro Collins 2007:701), whilst Jesus is clearly the person who will destroy and rebuild the Temple in Mark 14:58 and 15:29.
- The vocabulary referring to the Temple differs significantly: Mark 13:2 refers to buildings and stones,

implying that the entire Temple precinct was meant, but Mark 14:58 refers specifically to the sanctuary (*naos*; likewise Jn 2:19) of the Temple (Jouön 1935:331–36; Pesch 1984:2.433; Simons 1952:392).

The differences between Mark 13:2 and 14:58 are considerable and one wonders whether Jesus himself could have plausibly stated both sayings, because they contradict each other. Mark's position on the saying of the testimony is clear; he notes that the witnesses did not agree amongst each other (14:59). His introduction of the accusation (14:56–57) already emphasises that this was a false testimony (note the double *epseudomarturoūn* in 14:56–57; cf. Mt 26:59–60: *pseudomarturia* and *pseudomartures*). Mark's view on the testimony is understandable from a post-70 perspective, because the saying obviously had not become true. Scholars, however, are actually divided whether the accusation in Mark 14:58 derives from an authentic saying by Jesus. Graham Stanton (1991:264) argues that Mark's 'partial "cover-up" makes us suspect that he [Jesus] may well have done so, at least indirectly!' (Ådna 2000:128). Kelli O'Brien (2006:217; see also Aune 1983:173–175) points to the close parallel in John 2:19 and argues that both sayings derive from 'the Jesus tradition' (differently: Dschulnigg 1995:170; Paesler 1999:179–202). Fredriksen (2008:257–259) concludes that the saying in Mark 14:58 does not match the criterion of multiple attestation because the parallel passage in Matthew 26:61 and John 2:19 may be dependent on Mark 14:58. If we read the contrast 'made with hands/not made with hands' (*cheiropoiēton/acheiropoiēton*) from the perspective of Septuagint and other Second Temple sources, it probably implies an opposition between an unworthy sanctuary built by humans, perhaps even an idolatrous sanctuary, and an ideal sanctuary built by God or his Messiah (Pesch 1984:2.434; Siegert 2002:112; Yarbro Collins 2007:702–703). Such a reading is not plausible in the light of the coherent picture of Jesus' view about the Temple as discussed above. Even if Mark 14:58 ultimately goes back to the historical Jesus, which is not very likely, we should acknowledge that its original form can hardly be reconstructed (Aune 1983:175; differently: Ådna 2000:90–153),<sup>27</sup> because it has been adapted and reformulated by the post-Easter community (Roloff 1970:104)<sup>28</sup> or by Mark or by both.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus functioned as a fifth evangelist within the Early Church not only because he

24. Walter (1966:41–42) and Theissen (1989:206; 271) argue against authenticity; Bultmann (1957:64; 132; 135) is hesitant. Dschulnigg (1995:168) defends the authenticity of the saying, because it is short and succinct and would have been formulated differently from a post-70 perspective.

25. Yarbro Collins (2007:601) concludes that it is impossible in this case to reconstruct its original form and original historical context.

26. Pesch (1984:2.272) considers Mark 13:2 in its present form a *vaticinium ex eventu* (referring to Josephus's reference that Vespasian ordered the entire city with the Temple to be razed to the ground, *War* 7.1), which is an important clue for a post-70 CE date of Mark's Gospel for him (similarly Theissen 1989:270–272); critical discussion in Yarbro Collins (2007:601–602); see also Roloff (1970:97); Ådna (2000:440–441).

27. Ådna (2000:127–128) considers the saying authentic and offers an Aramaic retranslation.

28. Pesch (1984:2.433) argues that the saying derives from Jewish polemics against Jesus originating from Jesus' trial (see also Gaston 1970:70).

29. Scholars mostly argue that the reference to the three days is not connected with Jesus' resurrection, but Fredriksen (2008:259) points out that Mark 14:58 reflects the central Christological drama of Jesus' death and resurrection (see also Siegert 2002:111). She reaches a similar conclusion as I do in this section, although partially on other grounds. Her argument starts with the observation that Jesus was crucified as an individual (i.e. his group was not dangerous for Pilate), which makes the connection with the Temple that is so important in Mark's Gospel (cf. the note in Mk 11:18 that the chief priests and the scribes kept looking for a way to kill Jesus right after Jesus' act in the Temple) implausible. She prefers the Johannine chronology for Jesus' public activity to Mark's and also notes that Paul remains silent about a prophecy by Jesus about the destruction of the Temple.

mentions John the Baptist, Jesus' brother James, as well as Jesus himself as the Messiah, but also because he connects – according to Christian interpretations – the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple with the execution of Jesus' brother James or even with the plot against Jesus himself. Christian re-interpretations also connect statements by Jesus about the ruin of Jerusalem and its Temple with Josephus, resulting in a master narrative that the Jews themselves were responsible for the destruction of the Temple, interpreted as the divine punishment for their murderous actions. In sections 3 and 4, I have argued that this narrative reflects neither Josephus's views of the Temple nor those of Jesus. Josephus's views are complex and they differ considerably in his two historical works, *The Jewish War* and *the Jewish Antiquities*. Josephus's elaborate description in *War* 5 functions as a written monument of the glorious Temple, which was such an important institution for the Jews. Several passages in Josephus's *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* imply that the Temple is still relevant after its destruction. A plausible explanation of this observation is that Josephus somehow reckoned with the possibility that the Temple would be rebuilt. Many New Testament passages imply that the Jerusalem Temple was a self-evident and positive religious institution for Jesus and his early followers, who, for example, celebrated the so-called pilgrim festivals at the location of the Temple. This positive view is contrasted by certain passages that imply criticism of the Temple or predict its destruction. The three passages in Mark (11:15–17; 13:2; 14:58) discussed here most probably do not reflect Jesus' own views in their present form, because they have been reformulated by the post Easter community and/or Mark. Mark 11:15–17 and 13:2 may ultimately go back to an act or statement by Jesus referring to the Temple, which, however, does not necessarily imply that Jesus was announcing the destruction of the Temple.

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