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EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ἱερόν AND ναός IN MARK 11–15

The purpose of the analysis undertaken in this article is to present exegetical and theological implications of ἱερόν and ναός in Mark 11 – 15. The author of the second Gospel writing about the temple uses two different terms: ἱερόν in context of the activity and teaching of Jesus, when Jesus visits the place (Mark 11 – 15) or when he mentions the Jerusalem sanctuary at his apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:48–49). Subsequently in the narrative of the Passion of Christ, where the scenery is different the evangelist introduces the term ναός. So the events of the Passion have a different location – it is not the Jerusalem temple. Thus we can draw a conclusion that the theme of the temple in the narration of the Passion of Christ does not have the same meaning as in Mark 11 – 15; 14:48–49 and cannot be understood as such. The aim of this research is to investigate whether the theme of the temple in the account of the Passion of Christ was presented in a different way. We also have to answer the question of whether this change of ἱερόν into ναός merely means a reconstruction of the place of action.

However to arrive at possibly comprehensive conclusions we must also examine the relationship between the meaning of ἱερόν and ναός as the terms used to describe the Jerusalem temple in extrabiblical Greek, other Gospels as well as other references in the Gospel of Mark. For obvious reasons this outline of the usage of the terms ἱερόν and ναός will be presented in a concise form and will be utilized in further research of the theology of the temple in the Gospel according to St. Mark.

Ἱερόν AND ναός IN LXX GREEK AND EXTRABIBLICAL GREEK

The term ναός is a noun derived from the verb ναίειν which means “to dwell”. The noun, contrary to the verb, has a restricted usage and oc-

curs only in the context of the sphere of worship. It indicates the place where the gods dwell.

Whereas the term ἱερόν belongs to the semantic family of the word ἱερός which defines how close someone or something is in relation to the sacred. So we can draw a conclusion that ἱερόν has a broader meaning than ναός. Thus we can assume that ἱερόν will be used to describe a place of worship with all the adjacent locations whereas ναός will be used in reference to the temple, especially to the holy place. Ναός is a special place inside the temple. In the most immanent sense¹ this is the place where God dwells and where holy objects can be found².

In the Greek Bible LXX the term ἱερόν is very seldom used in reference to the Jerusalem temple since it evoked bad connotations because it denoted a seat of idolatrous cults of the pagans. The Greek Bible prefers another simple and common word οἶκος. The use of the term ναός is more frequent when LXX refers to the sanctuary of the chosen people in Jerusalem as the centre of their religious life. Analyzing the LXX text one can notice that there are two instances when ἱερόν and ναός are not used interchangeably. In Ezek 45:19 [(LXX) – “And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put [it] upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court”, where ἱερόν replaces the Hebrew term *azarah*³ and describes the inner sanctuary.

Josephus Flavius also uses two terms in reference to the temple:

- * the sanctuary proper (αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ ναός);
- * the holy temple (τὸ ἅγιον ἱερόν); to get into the inner part of it one had to go up twelve stairs⁴;
- * he calls the whole temple area ναός when he mentions its eastern gate: “The eastern gate of the temple (τοῦ ἐνδοτέρῳ ναοῦ) [...] was seen to open by itself”⁵.

Ἱερόν AND ναός IN THE GOSPELS

We can ask a further question: What is the relationship between ἱερόν and ναός in other New Testament books, particularly in the Gospels ex-

¹ One can say so about ναός in terms of the philosophy of religion.

² In pagan religions it is the place where the statue to which all attributes of deity are ascribed is located. For example in Herodotus (2, 63): “The previous day the statue (of divinity) made of gilded wood was carried into the temple (ναός) from another holy building (ἱερόν)”. Ναός also means a portable wooden case containing the statue of god carried outside the temple in a procession during festivals.

³ Which probably meant „the atrium of the temple” or “the frame of the altar” (?).

⁴ Cf. *O wojnie żydowskiej*, 5, 207.

⁵ Ibid. 6, 293.

cept the Gospel of Mark? Is this distinction always clearly presented and explained?

The Gospel of John in the pericope about “the sign of the cleansing of the temple” (John 2:12–22), quotes the words of the Jews that it took forty six years to build the ναός (Τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἕξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος, καὶ σὺ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερεῖς αὐτόν – John 2:20)⁶. Their response proves the fact that they failed to understand the meaning of Jesus’ answer (Λῶσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν – John 1:19b) to their request of the sign which would prove that he indeed had the right to do the deeds they were witnessing (τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν, ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς – John 2:18b). The Jews did not comprehend that Jesus was not talking about the temple ἱερόν as such but of the temple of his body – ναός (ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔλεγεν περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ – John 2:21).

Neither is the term ναός used in its proper sense in the Gospel of St. Matthew in the pericope about devastated Judas (Matt. 27:3–10) returning the thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus to the high priests and the elders (καὶ ἰψας τὰ ἀργύρια εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἀνεχώρησεν, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἀπήγγατο – Matt. 27:5). A more suitable and accurate word here would be the term ἱερόν in its physical sense of the Jerusalem sanctuary.

Ἱερόν AND ναός IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

In the second Gospel the ἱερόν is an open place, accessible to everyone. Many a time St. Mark uses it in its proper sense and context – especially in Mark 11 – 14:

- * Jesus enters the temple (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ) – Mark 11:15;
- * Jesus walks in the temple (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ περιπατοῦντος) – Mark 11:27;
- * Jesus teaches in the temple (ἔλεγεν διδάσκων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ – Mark 12:35; (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων – Mark 14:49);
- * it is in the temple that the exchange of money and selling and buying of animals for the sacrificial offerings take place (ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ) – Mark 11:15;
- * the temple is a place which could be crossed (σκεῦος διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ – Mark 11:16;
- * the treasury is located in the temple; several people approach it: the widow and other givers, as well as Jesus and his disciples (Mark 12:41–44).

⁶ Cf. G. Schrenk, Ἱερόν, [in:] TWNT, vol. 4, col. 773. The reconstruction of the whole temple area undertaken by Herod in the eighteenth year of his rule lasted that long.

Ἱερόν is the whole temple site: the buildings and the courts of the holy place – the area covering ca. 2.5 acres. Mark devotes chapters 11 – 13 and a separate excerpt from Mark 14:48–49 to the activity of Jesus in the Ἱερόν from his entering the place till the announcement of its demolishing.

The author of the second Gospel mentions the ναός in chapter 15 – the chapter depicting the Passion of Christ. It is not stated there that someone could enter the ναός and do something inside. Thus the conclusion that ναός has a different meaning than Ἱερόν.

We can also base our conclusions concerning St. Mark's usage of the term ναός on his account of the Passion of Christ where he mentions the "the temple curtain" in Mark 15:38: καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω and applies the term to the inner sanctuary. Inside the Jerusalem sanctuary the first curtain separated the court from the holy place. Every day a priest performing his duties in the temple would go behind that curtain. The priest's task was to offer incense (cf. Luke 2:9). The second curtain separated the holy place from the holy of holiest. Only the high priest was allowed to go behind that second curtain on the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur. There he would stand before God JHWH to pray and offer the sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the chosen people.

Both curtains were inside the temple. Thus we can draw a conclusion that it is this part of the temple building inside Ἱερόν that St. Mark calls ναός. He clearly distinguishes between Ἱερόν and ναός⁷.

Ναός IN THE NARRATIVE OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN MARK 14 – 15

The central figure of the passage of Mark 14 – 15 is obviously Jesus and all attention focused on him. Other people appearing in the account of his Passion as well as other facts remain in the shadow and help to highlight the figure of the Messiah who is placed in the very centre of the events in Mark 14 – 15. Only the suffering and death of Jesus remains in the foreground. St Mark reduces to minimum his references to the temple area ναός. In Mark 14 – 15 he uses the term ναός with great respect, esteem and caution.

In order to present a full scope of relationship between Ἱερόν and ναός and explain the use of ναός in the context of the temple theology in the Gospel of Mark one should concentrate on the account of the Passion of Christ in Mark 14 – 15 (and particularly in Mark 14:58; 15:29–30.38).

⁷ Cf. J. R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, Missoula, Montana 1973, p. 205.

The question of the temple is not raised during the Roman judgment in Mark 15:1–15 since it concerns Jewish religious matters. Pilate is more interested in the alleged political claims of the Man, who has been brought to him. He asks him: Art thou the King of the Jews? (Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων – Mark 15:2). Jesus has to explain to the Sanhedrin his relationship with the temple ἱερόν (cf. Mark 14:53–65; especially: Mark 14:58). Subsequently Jesus is condemned to death.

The description of the crucifixion of Jesus contains the second mentioning of ναός. The echo of the Jewish trial reaches the crucified Jesus when the passers-by mock him because of his alleged threats against the temple: καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες, Οὐδὲ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις, σῶσον σεαυτὸν καταβάς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ (Mark 15:29–30).

The evangelist mentions ναός for the third and the last time in Mark 15:38 relating the events following the death of Jesus (see Mark 15:38–41). St. Mark notices and discusses the influence of that event on the future fate of the chosen people. The moment when Jesus gives up his spirit to God the Father is of great importance. Something extraordinary and awesome is happening: τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω (Mark 15:38).

The other evangelists show less interest in ναός in the Passion narrative. Only St. Matthew mentions ναός in the same context. St. Luke uses ναός only the circumstances resembling those of Mark 15:38 (cf. Luke 23:45). In the Gospel of John we do not find any references to the term similar to Mark 14 – 15.

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We can draw a conclusion that the subject of ναός in Mark 14 – 15 has not been presented by St. Mark as the central part of the three episodes.

Nevertheless the temple theme in the second Gospel helps the reader to notice and comprehend the role and importance of the Messiah – the Son of God. Therefore St. Mark did not abandon the temple theme in the Passion narrative altogether but explored it discreetly until he came to the heart of the matter which was also the heart of the whole Gospel – the Cross.

On the basis of the current research of the meaning and sense of the two terms ἱερόν and ναός in the Gospel according to St. Mark,

* one applied to the temple in Mark 11 – 13; 14:48–49 (ἱερόν);

* and the second in the narrative of the Passion of Jesus Christ in Mark 14:58; 15:29–30.38 (ναός).

I have established that there is a clear and evident difference between the two. Each term is used by the evangelist in its proper context conveying the meaning and sense very precisely just as the evangelical medium requires. St. Mark does it extremely consistently and conscientiously and much more so than the other evangelists or other authors of the classical and Hellenic period⁸.

EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ἱερόν AND ναός IN MARK 11–15

Summary

The analysis undertaken by the author of this article aims at the presentation of mutual exegetical – theological implications of the usage of ἱερόν and ναός in Mk 11–15. The objective of the research carried out in this article is to find an answer to the following question: Has the theme of the temple during the Passion of Christ been presented by Marc from a new perspective and if so then to what extent. The problem whether the usage respectively of ἱερόν and ναός is just a reference to the setting has also been taken into consideration.

In his research the author has come to a conclusion that the theme of ἱερόν and ναός in Mk 11–15 has not been presented by Marc as the essential part of the chapters in question. But at the same time the theme of the temple in the second Gospel helps the reader to notice and to understand the role and significance of the Messiah, the Son of God. That is why St. Marc has not abandoned the theme of the temple in his description of the Passion of Christ but continues it discreetly until he comes to the heart of it which is also the heart of the Gospel – the cross.

The author comes to a conclusion that in Mk 11–15 there is a distinct and contrasting difference between ἱερόν and ναός but simultaneously each term used by the evangelist in its proper context renders the meaning and sense in a very precise way, just as the context of the Gospel narrative would require. St. Marc does it in a very coherent and conscientious way – much better than other evangelists or classical Hellenic authors do.

⁸ Cf. G. L. May, *Temple or Shrine?*, “The Expository Times” 62:1950–1951, p. 346–347.