

TEMPLES, Synagogues, Churches

For centuries, structures have been built for the worship of gods and goddesses and in the case of the Jewish and Christian faith, a place where believers gather to worship the one Creator, God. The first structure of the ancient Israelites was the tabernacle in the desert built from specific directions from God. The first permanent structure was the temple in Jerusalem by the orders of King Solomon. The second temple was built by the Jews after their release from the Babylonians and the third and final physical structure was the temple built in Jerusalem that was destroyed in 70 A.D..

Many structures have been built in ancient times for gods and goddesses, as well. Well known Greek temples include: Temple of Artemis, Temple of Hera, Temple of Apollo, Temple of Zeus, the Parthenon, the Temple of Poseidon, the Temple of Nemesis, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Temple of Apollo, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, Temple of Athena, and the Temple of Dionysus. The structure was a centre for the god or goddess for their worship and the teaching of **their theology**. The Romans adopted many of the Greek gods and goddesses and in many cases, they changed the Greek name into a Roman name. Gods and goddesses were worshiped all over the world in ancient times and continue to be worshiped by some today.

Today, the ancient gods and goddesses are considered mythical characters. Evidence of their presence is not felt or seen, so any existence of them in the past is considered a fantasy.

The Jewish and Christian faith advocate the worship of ONE God, the Creator. The Old Testament often spells out which God they worshiped, by adding “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” This God identified the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and then through Jacob as His people, because the rest of the people were divided, boundaries set and given their inheritance—members of God’s heavenly court.

“When the Most High assigned lands to the nations, when he divided up the human race, he established the boundaries of the peoples **according to the number in his heavenly court**. But the **LORD’s portion is His people, Jacob** His allotted inheritance” (Deuteronomy 32:8-9).

Unfortunately, the members of God’s heavenly court did not remain faithful to Him. All of them joined mankind’s great adversary and together, they have formed a very powerful coalition that has cast a spell-like deception on mankind and they continue to lead them astray.

Ezekiel recorded the fall of this heavenly court using imagery—trees to represent these leaders. “Then **all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, all the trees that were well-watered, were consoled in the earth below.**” God prophesied to the heavenly ruler over Egypt that he too, would fall like all the others. “Yet you, too, **will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below; you will lie among the uncircumcised [wicked]**, with those killed by the sword” (Ezekiel 31:16b, 18b).

The members of God's heavenly court who were given authority from God to rule over the nations to teach them the way of God, turned against their Creator and taught the people to worship them instead. In addition, they taught the nations their own theology subverting the laws of God, His ordinances and His holy days.

The Apostle Paul reminds mankind of **who** their enemies are and **where** they can be found. "For **our struggle is not against flesh and blood**, but **against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world** and against **the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**" (Ephesians 6:12).

Despite the attacks against God, His salvation plan for mankind remains intact. The story barely needs repeating. Jesus Christ died and paid the penalty for the sins of mankind and now, through Jesus Christ, mankind is saved. Jesus Christ is the mechanism through which mankind can communicate to God, our Creator. Jesus Christ is the only teacher of God's word for mankind. The previous teachers failed and a series of ancient battles have taken place both on earth and in heaven. Many of these rogue heavenly rulers have been overthrown and today, they remain **imprisoned in the pit** until judgment.

In the pit:

- **Assyria** is there with her whole army (Ezekiel 32:22).
- **Elam** is there with all her hordes... They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit (Ezekiel 32:24).
- **Meshech and Tubal** are there with all their hordes around their graves (Ezekiel 32:26).
- **Pharaoh** will be broken and lie among the uncircumcised (Ezekiel 32:28).
- **Edom** is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword (Ezekiel 32:29).
- **All the princes of the north** and **all the Sidonians** are there, they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power... they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit (Ezekiel 32:30).

Christ's death on the cross involved a significant battle against these rogue heavenly rulers. "**None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**" (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Christ won this battle against the remaining rogue heavenly rulers over the nations by his death on the cross. "He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that war against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having **DISARMED THE POWERS AND AUTHORITIES**, he made a **PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF THEM, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM BY THE CROSS**" (Colossians 2:13-15).

The public spectacle was not before humans, but before the imprisoned, rogue heavenly leaders in the pit. This victory gave Christ their power and authority, their rulership.

The Apostle Paul fully understood the magnitude of Christ's death on the cross. The multi-layered victory involved winning the rulership from rogue heavenly rulers, paying the penalty for mankind's sins, then, giving that rulership he won to his church—"gave gifts to men"—to teach mankind the way of God and to worship the one true Creator.

Apostle Paul continued, "This is why it says: 'When He ascended on high, **He led captives away, and gave gifts to men.**' What does '**He ascended**' mean, except that **He also descended to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the very one who ascended above all the heavens**, in order to fill all things" (Ephesians 4:8-9).

God's original purpose of giving, as an "inheritance," rulership over the nations to the members of His heavenly court was to share in the workload of teaching mankind the way of God. But, the original leaders failed and only ONE succeeded, that is Jesus Christ—he is the only heir to rule with God Almighty. After Christ paraded the wicked heavenly rulers over the nations before the imprisoned, he gave the authority he won to his church.

"...some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people for works of services, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we ALL reach unity in the father** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

This latest battle that took place around 2,000 years ago, explains the silence of the gods worshiped by ancient peoples. They have been overthrown. Now, only **ONE teacher** remains and that is **Jesus Christ**. He is the "Adam" of I Timothy 2:14 who was formed first and was not deceived. God intentionally created the man first before the woman because He is teaching us that there are **TWO** separate creations; the man first and then the woman. The physical man pictures the first creation and the physical woman pictures the second creation. The first creation is a creation in the heavens and the second creation is a creation on earth. Both creations were made in the image of God.

The Adam who was not deceived and did not sin is Jesus Christ who is part of the first creation in the heavens. Eve was the second creation—the creation on earth and everyone on earth has fallen into deception and sinned. The Apostle Paul needed to remind the Gentiles of the Genesis imagery because they were stuck in pagan theology.

The Apostle Paul during his lifetime was surrounded by pagan temples and their promiscuous practices. He had to help the Gentile people change their ways from worshiping gods and goddesses to worshiping God appropriately. The old rulers were conquered; a new ruler now stands. The Apostle Paul worked hard to lift the converted Gentiles out of earthy thinking into understanding spiritual matters.

- Christ is the mediator for all of mankind.

“For there is **one God** and **one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time” (I Timothy 2:5).

- The female gender—the woman, images the church who should reflect the righteousness of God. This group of people should not be attention-seeking, but rather a group of humble, teachable men and women. I Timothy 2:9-10 is addressing all of mankind. The way of the pagans taught by the example of the gods and goddesses was to exalt themselves, dress elaborately, and lavish in setting themselves over the people. The ancient gods have been overthrown and their decadence is not God’s way.

“Women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (I Timothy 2:9-10).

- The woman who images the church should be learning from “the man,” Jesus Christ. He is the only teacher for all of mankind. The church is not to debate theology with Jesus Christ, for Christ is the Word—he understands God’s word perfectly.

“The woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (I Timothy 2:11-12).

God’s faithful body of people have ONE teacher, Jesus Christ—the head of the body. The body of the church does not comprise of hierarchical compartments of men separated from women but a family of brothers and sisters. “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for **YOU HAVE ONLY ONE TEACHER**, and **ALL OF YOU ARE EQUAL AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS**. And **do not call anyone on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven**. Neither be called instructors, for **you have one instructor, that is, Christ**” (Matthew 23:8, 10).

In the day of Apostle Paul, goddess worship was common. A great statue of Artemis stood boldly in the city of Ephesus. The Gentile converts struggled to break away from the pagan gods and goddesses. She had her own following who met at the Temple of Artemis.

Watchtower provides the history.

“MOTHER-GODDESS worship was still practiced during the days of the early Christians. The apostle Paul met up with it in Ephesus in Asia Minor. As in Athens, another goddess-worshiping city, he had borne witness to ‘the God that made the world,’ the living Creator, who is not ‘like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the art and contrivance of man.’ This was too much for the Ephesians, most of whom worshiped the mother-goddess Artemis. Those who made a living by fashioning silver shrines of the goddess incited a riot. For

about two hours, the crowd shouted: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'—Acts 17:24, 29; 19:26, 34.

The Ephesian Artemis was a fertility goddess. Her huge temple at Ephesus was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. Her statue, thought to have fallen from heaven, represented her as a personification of fertility, her chest being covered with rows of egg-shaped breasts. The peculiar shape of these breasts has given rise to various explanations, such as that they represent garlands of eggs or even bulls' testicles. Whatever the explanation, the symbol of fertility is clear." <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1991481>

The spiritual intent of goddess worship was to usurp God Almighty as supreme teacher of His word and the producer of spiritual children into His family and **move the glory to mankind who is imaged as the woman. It is the arrogance of mankind to believe that they can produce spiritual children of God through their own teachings.** The female gender was created to image mankind—the church (both the faithful and false churches), while the male gender was created to image the God-kind in heaven.

- The church will not have authority over Jesus Christ. Adam was created before Eve to teach mankind that an order in creation exists. The male gender (the man) pictures the first creation—the god-kind and the female gender (the woman) pictures the second creation—mankind.

"A man ought not to cover his head, since **he is the image and glory of God**; but **woman is the glory of man**" (I Corinthians 11:7).

- The "last Adam" did not sin. "The Scriptures tell us, 'The first man, Adam, became a living person.' But the **last Adam**—that is, **Christ—is a life-giving Spirit**" (I Corinthians 15:45).

All of mankind have sinned; they are the second creation—Eve. Mankind was deceived and became a sinner.

"There is no distinction, for **everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard**" (Romans 3:23).

"**...all the nations were deceived** by your [Babylon] sorcery" (Revelation 18:23b).

"**All the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality.** The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown wealthy through the extravagance of her luxury" (Revelation 18:3).

- Eve was intentionally created from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21) because God foreknew mankind's outcome. He knew that they would be deceived and that if salvation is a possibility, a payment must be made. God also knew that Jesus Christ would be a willing and perfect candidate.
- The many heavenly beings were likely created individually, but mortals are reproducing themselves. This reproduction images the church who has the natural responsibility to reproduce a God-fearing, God-serving congregation. **The faithful, loving and holy ministry of the church will be saved by teaching the pure word of God and producing a righteous congregation fitting for God's kingdom.** Unfaithful, unloving and unholy ministries will be destroyed. God made it that point clear in I Timothy 2:15.

"But women will be kept safe through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (I Timothy 2:15).

- The faithful, loving and holy ministry who give birth to a righteous congregation will suffer persecution, difficulties and even death. God told Eve, "I will **greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.** Your desire will be for your husband [Christ], and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

Throughout the Bible, the female gender is used to speak of spiritual matters about the church, both: true and false churches.

- The 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel are characterized as "those who **did not defile themselves with women**, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Revelation 14:4).

The 144,000 of Revelation 14:4 are physical men and women who do not embrace false religion [women]; they follow Christ.

- The great prostitute who rides the beast is a church who supports the wicked heavenly coalition, known as the beast. "There I saw a **woman** sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. **The woman** was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: 'Mystery Babylon the Great the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.' I saw that **the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony of Jesus**" (Revelation 17:3-6).

This woman is not a physical woman; the Apostle John is speaking about a spiritual matter. This woman is a physical church who is in the practice of adorning their leadership elaborating, setting themselves high in a multi-tiered structure and this church supports the theology and practices of the ancient rogue heavenly rulers. Daniel

wrote of the return of the gods, fewer in number than in the past, never-the-less a return that causes great havoc on earth.

“The **king** will do as he pleases. **He will exalt and magnify himself above every god** and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods... he will have no regard for any god, but will **exalt himself above them all**” (Daniel 11:36, 37b).

The use of the male gender and “king” indicates that this ruler will be of the god-kind and he will declare himself ruler over everyone, even God Almighty. As in ancient times, the “gods” were given rulership over the nations, so will the arrival of the future “gods.”

“The ten horns you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour **will receive authority as kings** along with the beast” (Revelation 17:12). It appears that God Almighty had promised these ten heavenly princes, rulership and they will get it for “one hour.”

God uses His coded language to lift limited mortal thinking out of their physical space into the heavenly realm to understand spiritual matters.

When God is talking about mankind on a spiritual level, He will refer to mankind in the female gender, that is, through terms of a true or false church. Mother Eve is the mother of all of mankind and earth is their home and realm. When God is talking about the heavenly-kind (god-kind), He will refer to them in the male gender, through terms of national leadership and authority over mankind. Their home and realm are in heaven. Two separate creations exist, both are in the image of God; two separate realms exist: heaven and earth. A marriage of God’s only Heir and Son—a King from heaven to the Saints—a Queen from earth, will unite these two realms under one rulership. Such is the story told in Genesis. The Savior, Adam will marry Eve, his church and the two will become one. The spiritual story written in the Bible is often read literally, without applying God’s imagery and the spiritual reality of the purpose for the creation of mankind and their place in God’s kingdom remains hidden because the story is read through the eyes of a child.

Fear not, God’s plan cannot be thwarted. God will soon pour out His Holy Spirit in the latter days, then eyes will be opened, ears will hear when **men and women, descendants of ancient Israel—all twelve tribes of Israel, will prophecy.**

"And afterward, **I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy,** your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).

God’s divine plan for all of mankind will become public knowledge. Men and women will prophesy declaring Jesus Christ is the ONE teacher and the God of Israel, is our Creator and Supreme God. Faithful, loving and holy men and women—mankind will submit to Jesus Christ as their head and they will be silent; they will not usurp his authority over them. Jesus Christ is

their Savior who willingly and humbly paid the price to die as a criminal in their stead. Void of a pagan, multi-layered hierarchical structure, Christ's body of faithful men and women teach each other. Jesus said, "**The greatest among you will be your servant.** For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

Living righteously is not about elevating yourself over others, adorning yourself in attention-seeking clothing, lording it over people, or demanding service and recognition. It is all about awakening and moving out of deception into God's glorious light to see the humble, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the loving people of God and becoming like them. Christ's church is not a sky-touching physical building made with bricks and stones and adorned with gold and silver, but a group of faithful, loving and holy people: men and women who serve and teach each other, worship God Almighty and rejoice in their Savior, their Head, their King.

It really is as simple as that.

Compiled by Janette Andrejowich