



CORE CHRISTIANITY

Easter 2022 Supplemental

HE IS RISEN!

“He is risen”. This was the greeting offered by Christians in the days of the early church. One Christian would say this phrase to another, who would respond: “He is risen, indeed!” By these simple phrases, brothers and sisters in Christ could recognize one another while affirming their faith in the risen savior, Jesus Christ.

Easter is the season when we reflect on the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that it implies for humankind’s hope of redemption and salvation.

You recall in our April 11th lesson that we discussed how God’s revelational Word and Acts in biblical history create changes in our understanding of His purposes and the very structure of worship and theology as we know it. God’s Act in raising Jesus Christ from the dead was perhaps the greatest revelational act in the history of mankind.

The epoch of the Law of Moses, along with its requirements and ritualism, had been fulfilled by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had satisfied all that the Law required on behalf of every man and woman. Let’s look at the way biblical history was forever changed in three short days between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

God, Worship, and the Temples of Redemptive History

The Garden of Eden

- God's "construction site". The garden was intended to fill the earth as a place where God could dwell alongside humankind. God's "blueprint" for history will still end with a "temple" that will fill the earth, a holy place where He can reside alongside man.
- God dwelled alongside Adam and Eve. They could speak to Him directly and live in relationship with Him. Unfortunately, this came to an end with the fall of man as sin entered the picture. Man and nature were both corrupted by sin. God, who is without sin, could not dwell in a creation infected by wickedness. Man could no longer be in His presence or look upon God's face without dying. Sin had made a barrier between God and His creation.

Patristic Altars

- The Law of Moses was yet to come, but God was laying the foundation through His relationships with the patriarchs (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph).
- The common method of worship we find in their stories is the altar. The Hebraic system of priests did not yet exist. There was no centralized place of worship. Man worshipped God one-on-one by placing altars at sites of personal significance or to mark covenants with God (like Noah in Genesis 8 and Abraham in Genesis 12). They made sacrifices to God on their own.

God, Worship, and the Temples of Redemptive History

The Tabernacle Tent in Sinai

- This tent traveled with the Hebrew nation after God rescued them from Egypt. Significant because God now dwelled with His chosen nation. God's glory filled the tent. His presence was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- Three veils separated God from sinful mankind: The first was at the entrance at the eastern gate of the courtyard of the tabernacle compound. The second curtain divided the courtyard from the Holy Place, which only the priests could enter. The third veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, God's dwelling place in the tabernacle. This veil represents the flesh of Jesus' body that would one day be torn. Only the High Priest could enter once a year. The Ark of the Covenant was here at the Mercy Seat, said to be the earthly foot stool for God's heavenly throne.
- The courtyard, with its altar and laver, was the site where priests performed sacrifices for sin on behalf of the Hebrew people. All metal in this area was bronze, including the altar symbolizing sin. The altar symbolized sin and eternal fire, God's judgment against sin. The laver was filled with water, symbolizing cleansing from sin. Water also symbolizes the Holy Spirit at work inside man to change us and the Word of God which simultaneously convicts and instructs us as we are remade. In this way, the laver was a foreshadow (type) of Jesus Christ. The furnishings and the Ark in the Holy of Holies was all made of gold, symbolizing God. The gold lampstand is also a foreshadow of Christ, who brings the light that reveals the Father to us.
- Worship was now conducted by an organized priesthood according to patterns prescribed by God in the Law. Man could pray, of course, but could not approach God on his own. The priests were our intercessors.

God, Worship, and the Temple in Redemptive History

The Temple in Jerusalem

Constructed by King Solomon atop the Temple Mount in the tenth century BCE. King Herod would renovate the second temple and build four restraining walls around the Temple Mount, including the Western Wall (now also known as the Wailing Wall). The first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The second temple would be built in 516 BCE.

The temple would be God's dwelling place among His chosen people. By extension, Jerusalem was considered God's dwelling place because of the presence of the temple and the Ark of the Covenant. After the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, however God allowed it to be rebuilt when the Israelites were released from Babylon---which showed His continued commitment to His chosen nation.

The temple of Jerusalem was similar in layout to the tabernacle, but much larger in scale. It included 13 gates, each with its own name (the kindling gate,

the gate of Nicanor, and the Tadi gate to name a few).

However, worship remained the same system of sacrifice, facilitated by the priestly system established in the Law of Moses.

Our most holy God remained separated from sinful man by curtains (veils). The priests were man's intercessors, performing the sacrifices to cleanse us of our sins.

Among the nations, Israel had been given the status as priests and kings of the Lord. The temple, the worship of God, and God's perfect Law were a beacon to the world beckoning men and women to the one true God. This foreshadows how God's resurrection of Christ would make one final change in man's method of worship.

The second temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 CE.

The Veil (Curtain) is Torn

It's such a simple statement in the Bible, the veil of the temple was torn, yet it marks another biblical epoch where God changes the way man worships.

Under the Law of Moses, the common man did not approach God on his own. The priests who served in the temple were intercessors between God and man. They prayed on man's behalf, performed sacrifices on man's behalf to cleanse people of their sins according to the law. The priests alone were granted access to the inner sanctums of the temple at Jerusalem. Even among the priests, only a select few were ever permitted access to the Holy of Holies, the innermost section of the temple where God's presence dwelled. The High Priest alone could enter once a year to perform the rituals of atonement for man's sins (and then only after completing a rigorous process of purification and preparation).

The curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple (and the world outside the temple) symbolized God's separation from mankind due to our sins.

At Christ's death, the veil of the Holy of Holies was torn just as Christ's body was torn for our sins. The barrier between God and man had been removed. Jesus had paid the price for all mankind. Worship would never be the same. Man had a new intercessor: Jesus Christ would now be the mediator between God and man. God had stepped out of the Holy of Holies into personal relationship with His creation. We can symbolically enter the Holy of Holies ourselves via Jesus Christ.

Jesus had predicted that the Jerusalem temple would become desolate (Luke 13:35). The temple was a symbol of the Old Testament covenant and its religious system. God had departed the temple made with human hands (though He certainly did not require man to build a dwelling place for Him). God was entering the New Covenant with man. He had removed the curtain barrier symbolically so that all of mankind could now approach Him personally, with confidence and boldness.

The Death of Jesus

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:50-54)

GOD WITH US...GOD WITHIN US. THE CHURCH IS HIS TEMPLE.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:22 that the believers in Christ are being built into a new dwelling place for God. That means we became God's temple when Jesus removed the veil of sin that separated man from God.

Corporately, the church is the dwelling place of God on earth. Believers gather together for worship, prayer, empowerment, education, to hear the Word preached and to offer one another mutual support (love of God and love of people, as Christ had commanded). As the church expands to all corners of the earth, so God's image and light fills the earth. We will expand upon this idea in a future lesson. For now, it is important to know that the "church" is not a physical place where God lives that we visit once a week for worship; it is the body of believers who have been redeemed by Christ and empowered by the Spirit to fulfill the work of God on earth. We worship each day regardless of our location.

In short, the individual has also become the dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit. We spoke of man being a triune entity just as the Holy Trinity is a triune being. Man consists of outer flesh (subject to sin), the inner soul where worship begins and where attributes such as our personality, emotions, and attitudes are still visible to others, and our inner spirit. Like the Holy of Holies in the tabernacles and temples, our inner spirit is a private place where God dwells within us. Here is where we connect to Him through personal prayer. Here is where the Holy Spirit descends, casting the light of illumination into the corners of our spirit that were trapped in darkness by sin. We pray boldly and approach God with confidence, knowing we are redeemed, and we do so because **the tomb was empty**. Christ is risen indeed!

He is not here

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

*The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.**" (Matthew 28:1-6)*

Resources for this lesson:

- *"From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology"*, T. Desmond Alexander, Kregel Academic, 2008
- *"The Temple of Jerusalem"*, Jerusalem Insiders Guide, www.Jerusalem-insiders-guide.com, M. Miller, 2008-2019
- *"What do the other parts of the Tabernacle represent?"*, NeverThirsty, www.neverthirsty.org,
- H. W. Soltau. The Holy Vessels and Furniture of the Tabernacle. Kregel Publications.
- Got Questions Ministry, January 4, 2022.