

John 2:13-22
“The 3rd or Herod’s Temple”
Buildings in the Bible Series
Sunday March 18th, 2018

A friend of mine who is a recovering cocaine and heroin addict told me this quite a few years ago, “I have taken Jesus to places he did not want to go.”

He was a believer years before he got terribly lost in life, and truly took Jesus to places Jesus did not want to go. You and I are the temple of the Holy Spirit and truly do take Jesus with us wherever we go.

I use this story as an introduction to the 3rd temple or Herod’s Temple, because in this story **we transition from a Place to a Person**, the person Jesus in terms of our relationship with God. So today I want to start with a review so that we can clearly see the transition from the Jewish Temple to Jesus the Christ.

Now in this series we have looked at the Tabernacle or the Tent of Meeting.



And the title “Tent of Meeting” is critical in our understanding of what the purpose of the Tabernacle and the Temples were. They were places people went to meet God.

Here is the floor plan of the Tabernacle.



Note again the outer Holy Place that held the Table of the Show Bread and opposite it the Candlestick or Minora and then the Incense Altar. Then there is the Curtain and behind that is the cubic space and in it was only one piece of furniture: The Ark of Covenant.

Here is the cutaway of the 1st Temple or Solomon's Temple and it again follows the same floor plan, but it was much larger and built with stone, wood and gold.



It stood for 387 years from 960BC to 587BC when it was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Here is the 2nd Temple or Zerubbabel's Temple.



The floor plan was identical with the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple with a Holy place that held the sacred objects (the Show Bread Table, the Minora and Incense altar), and then the curtain, and the Holy of Holies space, which held the Ark of The Covenant.

It stood for 496 years from 516BC to 20BC when it was torn down and work began on the 3rd Temple or Herod's Temple. (See the timeline on the back page of the bulletin.) The High Sanctuary of Herod's Temple was completed in only 18 months, but the surrounding courtyards and buildings weren't completed until 64AD about 6 years before they were utterly destroyed as Jesus prophesied.

Herod's Temple was built on the exact spot of the 1st and 2nd Temples. They had to be sure that the Holy of Holies was in the same exact spot for they believed this was the place that God met human beings and human beings met God. This is another view of Herod's Temple.



Herod wasn't a particularly religious man. He, as much as he wanted and pretended to be wasn't in the Davidic line of kings. He got

his position through war and appointment there by the Emperor of Rome. He ruled from 40BC to 4BC. Some believe he rebuilt the Temple not for religious reasons, but for artistic and political and financial reasons. The King who controlled the Temple controlled the religious affections of the people.

It was a magnificent building. The ancient historian Josephus had an extensive description of the building, but what was most striking about it was the exterior was built of white marble. The white marble made the building shine brilliantly in the bright mid-eastern sun and because the Temple was on the highest point in the city it was seen for miles.

Herod, as I have spoken about before, was a cruel, savage, narcissistic, tyrant. He had one of his 10 wives killed along with 2 of his sons who he saw as a threat to his throne. He had all the baby boys around Bethlehem that were 2 and under killed trying to destroy Jesus. It was said of him in his time, "It is safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son."

Today there is nothing left of the Temple itself. The only thing left is the retaining wall around the Temple Mount. The "western wall" part of which is called the "Wailing Wall" we have all seen the Jews gathering at to pray. This retaining wall extends underground at least 60 below the current ground level at the "wailing wall."



I visited it in 2014. I took an underground tour, which is an archaeological dig going north along the Western/Wailing wall.

This wall may be a "retaining wall" but it was magnificently built. The stones that were used to build it were huge. *'On the western wall the "Master Course" consists of four stones, the largest of which weighs 570 tons and is 44 feet long, 10 feet high and 12-16 feet deep. The next largest stone in the wall is a mere 41 feet long!'* Here is one of the huge dressed stones outlined. You can barely see the man in the lower right.



One thing the tour guy pointed out to us is that each course of the stones is set in by about 10 centimeters the effect of which is that when you stand and look up at the wall it appears to be going straight up not falling on top of you. Herod's Temple was amazing engineering, quarrying and moving of the stone, and architecture that started all the way at the bottom with the retaining wall.

In our Luke passage we read about Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness from which we get the 40 day season of Lent, which is a time of introspection and repentance. The third temptation that Jesus resisted had him being placed on the highest part of Herod's temple, which was 15 stories high. The temptation was to jump off so that angels could catch him and he would impress the tens of thousands of worshipers gathered below.

This was the temptation to be the "miracle messiah" rather than the "suffering servant messiah". You can see why Jesus would often tell those he healed to keep quiet about it, but that didn't always work. The basic temptation here was for Jesus to avoid the Cross.

In our John passage we see the transition from a Place to a Person in order to meet God. This is one of our themes that God uses building to build relationship.

Remember the tabernacle furniture and layout? There was the table for the Show Bread and opposite it the Candlestick or Minora. There was the Incense Altar in front of the Curtain that concealed the Holy of Holies. This indicated the approach of human beings to God.

Within the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant on top of which was the Mercy Seat of God! This was the place where God approached and met human beings. Indeed the Tabernacle and the Temples were tents or places of meeting between God and Human beings.

In Jesus Christ, though, we see the transition from Place to Person. As Jesus said, **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”** This was a statement that would be misunderstood and follow Jesus all the way to his trial and crucifixion.

The Temple, of course, that he was referring too was his own body. He contained the very Spirit of the God. In Jesus, one did not have to go to a priest, or temple, or make a sacrifice, or offering to meet God. **Jesus was and is “Emmanuel” which means “God with us.”**

But don't be mistaken, Jesus had a deep respect and love for the Temple of God in Jerusalem. As verse 17 says, **“Zeal for your house will consume me.”** He included the courtyard of the Temple for the courtyard that was referred to here was the Courtyard of the Gentiles.

It was where the nations were to come to pray to God. It was being defiled because it had been turned into a meat market and money changing operation. Only specific coins were accepted in the Temple. Often the sellers took advantage of the people in the exchange rate who were coming into Jerusalem to do their religious duty, but instead they got preyed upon as they came to pray.

And as you think about it, even as a child, Jesus had deep respect for the Temple for when he was left behind in Jerusalem and his parents came after him he told them, **“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?”** Luke 2:49

Jesus example is why we should and do respect Sanctuaries. It is why most men as a sign of respect take off their hats when they enter a sanctuary.

The search of life and history has been for the reconnection of human beings with God that was enjoyed in the Garden of Eden, Paradise. **We are searching for “atonement”, “at-one-ment”, being “at one with” God.**

What Jesus was saying to all who could hear then, and today, is that he is the new sacrifice for people to approach God. His is a once

and for all sacrifice. He is the new temple where human beings approach God and God approaches them with mercy, the mercy seat.

Remember the Mercy Seat of God was thought to be on the top of the Ark of the Covenant between the wings of the cherubim?



We don't need this physical Mercy Seat we only need the mercy we find in Jesus.

We have heard of the Jewish Day of Atonement. It was a yearly event in which a goat was sacrificed for the sins of the High Priest. Then another goat, the "scape goat" was sent into the desert bearing the sins of the people. It was a yearly sacrifice.

Once was never sufficient enough, the priest had to do this year after year to receive forgiveness of sin for himself and the people. In Jesus' sacrifice on the cross payment for sin was made once and for all. The temple, the altar of sacrifice, the bath, none of it was needed anymore for it was all completed in the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ.

The Jews were stuck on the place; all three temples were built on the same place following the pattern of the tabernacle. Many are still stuck there this day. When I did the underground tour of the western wall we came to a place where Jews were weeping and some would go behind a curtained off area and then return.



I asked what was going on. I was told the place where we and they were at was as close as a Jew can come to the place of the old Holy of Holies to pray. They are forbidden to pray on the temple mount or go into the Dome of the Rock that sits on the site of the Temples. That area is controlled by the Muslims and others are forbidden to pray there; so they go underground to get as close as they can get and pray.

Christ has set us free to become one with God wherever we are, wherever two or three of us are. We don't need a temple, or priest, or a sacrifice, or special furniture to come into the presence of God and for God to come into our lives we simply need a personal relationship with Jesus.

The Temple of his body that was sacrificed for our sin is the transition from the temples of stone and wood to flesh.

But what is most frightening and awesome for me is that what Jesus has done, bringing people into the presence of God, he expects you and me to do for we are today the body of Christ. We together are the Body of Christ.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. If you believe you have the Spirit within you. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, *“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”*

“You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

And as 1 Peter 2:4-5 says, *“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—*

you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

So the question we each must ask and answer is, “do people meet and see God when they meet me?” Do people meet love, forgiveness and grace when they meet me? Do I make room on my mercy seat?

We are the new temple of God here on earth and I might be so bold as to say we are the 5th Temple. The 4th is Jesus and we as believers are being built into the 5th.

Wherever we go we take Jesus the Living Stone with us. Does Jesus wind up with us among those in need: the hurting, the mourning, the sick, those in prison, the poor?

Or do you like my friend used to do, take Jesus to places he doesn't want to go, because when we are there we are engaged in things Jesus wouldn't want us to do?

Lent is a time of reflection and self-examination. What is God saying to you and where are you going to go?

In Jesus Name amen.