

**GOOD NEWS**  
for the unsaved  
WORLD!

(#164)  
Symbols and realities (part 2).

1

**Holiness is a serious matter.**

Even the symbolism that represents holiness is a serious matter.

**From LAST WEEK**

- ⇒ The Old Testament ceremonial rituals and regulations are like "pictures," teaching us about God's holiness, about our need for holiness, how sinners can have access to a holy God, and much more.
- ⇒ These things were *not* to be taken lightly. Distorting them or not taking them seriously reflected one's attitude toward God and holiness. Such an attitude could also lead other people astray.
- ⇒ Under the New Covenant, we have *no obligation* to practice the Old Covenant rituals. But we can still learn much from them.

2

**The Old Covenant realities: They symbolized what Jesus would accomplish for the New Covenant.**

- God planned those realities long before the prophets' mention of the New Covenant – even before the creation of the world.

Jesus, the sacrificial lamb. → ... you were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world ...  
1 Peter 1:18b, 19-20a (NIV)

Result: Genuine holiness for God's people. → For [God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be **holy** and blameless in his sight.  
Ephesians 1:4 (NIV)

3

**The transition from Old to New Covenant.**

- As the nation of Israel went deeper into apostasy and idolatry, the prophets warned of impending judgment. They also started talking about a *future* covenant that would change the hearts of rebellious Israel. It would be unlike the Old Covenant, which did not change hearts.

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **not like the covenant that I made with their fathers** on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **my covenant that they broke**, ... For this is the covenant that I will make ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts."  
Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33a (ESV)

4

**Israel's present condition (as a nation).**

- Since Israel rejected the God who made them, God rejected them. As a nation, they *lost* the special relationship they had with him.
 

"... for you are **not my people**, and I am not your God."  
Hosea 1:9b (ESV)

Get them away from me! Tell them to go away!  
Jeremiah 15:1b (NET)
- It will not be this way forever; but things will not change until Israel returns to God – not just in *ritual*, but in *heart*.
- A future time is coming, when Israel will again become God's people (Hosea 1:10+; Romans 9:25-28; Romans 11).
  - ❖ It will be under the *New Covenant*, not the covenant they rejected (Hebrews 8:8-13).
  - ❖ It won't be because they *deserve* it – since they don't – but because of promises made to their ancestors – Romans 11:28.)

5

**This caused an unexpected opportunity for the Gentiles!**

(God knew it; Scripture mentioned it; but somehow people seemed to overlook it. That's why it was unexpected. (It also happened in an unexpected way.)

- The New Covenant has been made available to the Gentiles. People who were originally "*not* God's people" have become "God's people"! Even Moses prophetically alluded to this:
 

They [= Israel] have made me [= God] jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols.  
So I will make them [= Israel] jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation [= Gentiles].  
Deuteronomy 32:21 (ESV)
- Paul quotes this (and a passage in Isaiah) in Romans 10:19-21, to show that this is a reference to the salvation of Gentiles. He was hoping that his ministry to the Gentiles would make Israel *jealous* (Romans 11:14), fulfilling the last part of the verse.

6

**WHY?**

*Why this focus on Israel as being "not a people"?*

This is the time period when the *second* temple was built by Zerubbabel (and later rebuilt/enlarged by King Herod).

★ *This was the temple at the time of the New Testament.* ★

**The Tabernacle**  
**Temple #1 (built by Solomon)**  
**Temple #3 (described by Ezekiel)**

These were all **designed by God** (based on heavenly realities), and then **inhabited by God** (in the Most Holy Place).

**Temple #2 (Built by Zerubbabel; rebuilt by King Herod)**

This was built during the time that Hosea describes them as "not my [God's] people" was **NOT designed by God** and **NOT inhabited by God**.

**THE TEMPLE OF ZERUBBABEL (ENLARGED BY HEROD), NOT DESIGNED BY GOD... NOT INHABITED BY GOD.**

*God did tell them to build it. And it did have significance.*

**HOWEVER:**

- Not designed by God:** Unlike before, there is no record of God providing instructions on how to build it. *Since God did not reside there, the building's design was not as important.*
- Not inhabited by God:** The Most Holy Place was *empty*; the glory of the Lord was not present there.

This temple was constructed during the time period, when Israel, as a *nation*, is "not God's people" (Hosea 1:9).

**During this time, the glory of the Lord is not present among them.**

The prophet Ezekiel described its departure and its future return (which will be when the third temple is built).

**EZEKIEL'S TESTIMONY: THE GLORY OF GOD DEPARTING, AND RETURNING.**

- DEPARTURE:** The glory of the Lord *departed* from the temple that Solomon built. It did not return when the *second* temple was built.
 

Then the glory of the LORD rose up from above the cherubim and went over to the entrance of the Temple. ... [Then] ... to the east gate of the LORD's Temple. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east.

Ezekiel 10:4a, 19b; 11:23 (NLT)
- FUTURE RETURN:** The glory of the Lord will *return* in the future, when the third temple (described by Ezekiel) is built.
 

Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel appeared from the east. ... And the glory of the LORD came into the Temple through the east gateway. I looked and saw that the glory of the LORD filled the Temple of the LORD, and I fell face down on the ground.

Ezekiel 43:2a, 4; 44:4b (NLT)

**IN SOME WAYS, THIS SECOND TEMPLE WAS INFERIOR.**

- It lacked the glory of God.
- It was insignificant in appearance, compared to Solomon's temple (though Herod would later enlarge it).

**BUT IT WOULD EXCEL IN ANOTHER WAY!**

- Though this temple would not *contain* the glory of God, it would *witness* an even *greater* expression of God's glory, than did Solomon's temple.

"The **glory** of this present house will be greater than the **glory** of the former house," says the Lord Almighty. "And in this place I will grant peace," declares the Lord Almighty."  
Haggai 2:9 (NIV)

**HOW COULD THIS BE?**

**The glory of God came to this temple in a person!**

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his **glory**, the **glory** of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.  
John 1:14 (NIV)

- Jesus is the exact radiance of God. [= Like looking at God in a mirror.]
 

The Son is the radiance of God's **glory** and the exact representation of his being,  
Hebrews 1:3a (NIV)
- When Jesus came to earth, he put aside the *visible* expression of his glory. But those who paid attention to what he said and to *Scripture* (John 5:39, 46) would recognize him.
- When he returns, his glory will be visible to all (Matthew 24:30).

### Jesus' glory – the same as the Old Testament's "glory of God."

- Jesus' glory is the *same* glory that Isaiah saw in Solomon's temple.

Isaiah ... saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.  
John 12:41 (NIV), referring to what happened in Isaiah 6.

- We read about this event in Isaiah 6. "The glory of the Lord" *is* "the glory of Jesus."

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another:

**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD of Armies;  
his **glory** fills the whole earth.

The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6:1-4 (CSB)

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### ISAIAH'S REACTION TO SEEING GOD'S GLORY

- There is only one legitimate response for sinners to have (even *saved* sinners), when confronted with this holiness:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)

- Isaiah was basically saying, "God is holy; I am not. I deserve to die!"
- Isaiah did not die (though he deserved it). Instead, God, through his messenger (one of the heavenly beings), atoned for Isaiah's sin. Then God commissioned Isaiah to speak to the nation for him.
- The first thing Isaiah's was told to proclaim included the passage quoted by John in the New Testament (in John 12:40, from Isaiah 6:10).

14

### Israel was given the opportunity to repent.

- This temple was associated with a *new opportunity* to turn back to God. God sent Jesus, the Messiah, who would make it possible.
- But they threw away the opportunity and killed Jesus on the cross. This ultimately resulted in their judgment and the destruction of this temple (Matthew 24:1-2+).
- On the cross, Jesus accomplished things they didn't expect.
  - ✓ He paid for the sins of all who would follow him – all the *genuine* followers of God.
  - ✓ He opened the door to the salvation of the Gentiles.
  - ✓ He has prepared the way for the *future* repentance of Israel.
  - ✓ He made **direct access to God possible for *all* who are his.**

For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2:18 (CSB)

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### THROUGH JESUS: GOD OFFERED PEACE.

He granted it to those who were willing to accept it.  
(Most of the Jews *weren't* willing.)

"The glory of this present house [= temple] will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. '**And in this place I will grant peace,**' declares the Lord Almighty."

Haggai 2:9 (NIV)

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing **the good news of peace through Jesus Christ,** who is Lord of all.

Acts 10:36 (NIV)

#### See also:

- Ephesians 2:14-17 – Peace and reconciliation between Jews / Gentiles.
- Colossians 1:19-23 – Ultimately, peace and reconciliation of *all* things.
- Isaiah 9:6-7 – Jesus, the "Prince of Peace"... *forever*.
- Ezekiel 37:26-28 – A future "covenant of peace" with Israel.

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### THROUGH JESUS: WE CAN NOW HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO GOD!

- Now, through Jesus, *all of God's people have direct access to God!* (Under the Old Covenant, this was impossible.)

... we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the **curtain**, that is, his body, ...

Hebrews 10:19b-20a (NIV)

- This was made possible when Jesus died. *It was shown symbolically, when the curtain of the temple was torn in two.*

Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last.

Then the **curtain** of the temple was **orn in two from top to bottom.**

Mark 15:37-38 (CSB)

#### Torn "top to bottom," because **God** did it!

This curtain was THICK! Though not mentioned in Scripture, early Jewish writings say it was approximately 4 inches thick. Even if they were exaggerating for emphasis, it shows that the curtain was *not* like the thin curtains we tend to think of today! *It was like a wall!*

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### Jesus' last words to the Jewish nation:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!

How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it!

Look, your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say,

"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" "

Mt 23:37-39 (NET); Jesus quotes Psalm 118:26.

#### TODAY:

- The temple is gone; Jesus is gone (ascended into heaven).
- The Jews (as a nation) are *not yet* willing to welcome Jesus back (though someday they will).
- Individual Jews and Gentiles are being saved.

➡ But where is the glory of God? ⬅

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**GOD'S GLORY – IN HEAVEN AND IN ETERNITY.**

**In heaven?**

- God's glory has *always* been in heaven. After all, the tabernacle and temples were just *copies* of what is in heaven!
  - ... a sanctuary that is a **copy and shadow** of what is in heaven.
  - ... a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a **copy** of the true one...

Hebrews 8:5b; 9:24a (NIV)

The **temple** [in heaven] was filled with smoke from the **glory** of God and his power.  
Revelation 15:8a (GW)
- In the New Jerusalem, the glory of God – God himself – will be present among his people. But there won't be a need for a temple!
  - I did not see a **temple** in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its **temple**. ...the **glory of God** gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Revelation 21:22, 23b (NIV)

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**But what about right now ... On earth?**

**At the present time, God's *visible* glory is NOT on earth.**

- There is no tabernacle/temple in Jerusalem; it's been destroyed.
- Jesus is not physically present, since he ascended to heaven.
- Scripture describes God's *visible* glory as being in heaven or as coming in the future – *but not presently on earth.*

**BUT THERE IS STILL A TEMPLE, and God's Spirit lives in it!**  
And there are responsibilities and obligations associated with it.

**AS A GROUP**

Don't you know that **you** are God's **temple** and that God's Spirit lives in you? ... God's **temple** is **holy**. **You** are that **holy temple**!

**AS INDIVIDUALS**

Don't you know that **your body** is a **temple** that belongs to the **Holy Spirit**? The **Holy Spirit**, whom you received from God, lives in you. You don't belong to yourselves. You were bought for a price. **So bring glory to God in the way you use your body.**

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17b; 6:19-20 (GW)

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**GOD'S "CHURCH" (PEOPLE, NOT BUILDING).**  
**DESIGNED BY GOD... INHABITED BY GOD.**

**We, as a group, are God's temple!**

NOT a building made out of metal, wood, bricks, etc. – which can contain unsaved people (including fake "Christians").

BUT people who have accepted the Good News, have repented and trusted Jesus, and are pursuing holiness.

Together [Jew and Gentile], we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a **holy temple** for the Lord.

Ephesians 2:20-21 (NLT)

**God's Temple?** The primary emphasis is on us as a *group* – though a few passages focus on our responsibilities as *individuals*.

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**We, as a group, are reflecting God's glory!**  
*(To whatever extent we have become Christ-like.)*

- The more we become like Christ – being "transformed" in the process we call "sanctification" – the more his *glory* can be seen in us – recognized by our thinking, values and conduct.
- The Holy Spirit, living in us, makes this possible!

And we all, who with *unveiled faces* contemplate the Lord's **glory**, are being **transformed** into his image with ever-increasing **glory**, which comes from **the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

[The curtain/veil is gone!]

- ❖ This "transforming" parallels the "transformed mind" and its results, mentioned in Romans 12:2. Our "mind" reflects itself in our "character."
- ❖ People who look forward to being *like* Christ in ETERNITY will pursue becoming *like* him NOW – 1 John 3:2-3.

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This fact leaves us with a great responsibility...

# Our Mission!

If we are God's temple and he lives in and among us, and if he intends to reflect his glory through us ...

⇒ WE NEED TO PURSUE HOLINESS!

For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, "I will live in them and will walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

2 Corinthians 6:16b (NET)

[Therefore] let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete **holiness** because we fear God.

2 Corinthians 7:1b (NLT)

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