

Message #20 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

“Temples of God”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk to you about "Temples of God." In the Bible, there were no temples of God from the time of Adam, all the way down to the time that God gave directions to the Children of Israel to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Before the time that God introduced temples, the only temples that man had were the idol temples. The first temple to be used for the worship of God was called the Tabernacle, or dwelling place, and was actually a tent. The first temple that was actually a building was the temple that King Solomon built. That temple was destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem and carried the Jews, those Israelites who were inhabitants of Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judea, into captivity in Babylon.

When these captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem seventy years later, they eventually rebuilt the temple. However, this temple, which was reconstructed from the ruins of Jerusalem was nothing in comparison with the original temple built by Solomon. Yet it was important that it was rebuilt, for the children of Israel needed that place as a focal point of their service to God. Several years prior to the coming of Jesus the Messiah, that temple was reconstructed, or renovated, by King Herod, who was an Idumean, a person who was actually from the country of Edom, descendants of Esau. He was not a Jew, and although he was the ruling authority over the Jews, they did not accept him as one of their own. He built the temple, essentially, to make himself more acceptable to Israel, but it didn't have the desired effect.

But this was the temple that Jesus actually came to. This was the last temple that stood on the temple mount. In 70 A.D., the Roman general, Titus, sacked Jerusalem, and tore down the temple, not leaving one stone upon another, thus fulfilling the prophecies that Jesus had prophesied concerning it. Since that time, there has been no physical temple on earth. The temple that we have now is a spiritual temple, in that we are the temple of God, and God dwells in us. Jesus said, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “ Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Also, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, it says, “What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?” And one more scripture in which we see this concept is in John 14:18, where Jesus tells us that he will not leave us comfortless, but will come to us, and clarifies this in verse 23, which says, “Jesus answered and said to him, If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.”

God still abides in his temple, but that temple is you and I. He indwells us. He resides in us. God does not dwell in a temple made with hands, but as it says in Acts 17:24, “ God, that made the world and all things in it, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.” But initially, a temple was necessary when God established his covenant with Israel, for everything involving Israel was from the viewpoint of physical things. Israel’s law was provided by a physical set of Commandments, written and engraved in stone tablets. Now, as we read in 2 Corinthians 3:3, the new covenant of grace which was established through Jesus Christ, gives us our laws by writing them on the fleshy tablets of our hearts, instead of on tablets of stone. We know that in order to understand what God wants us to hear, we have to listen to the still small voice of God’s Holy Spirit. And this only comes as we allow the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts.

Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit, when he came to us, would guide us into all truth. The Israelites were guided by the tablets of stone, and by Moses, who received further instructions from God and related them to the people. In the time of the Law of Commandments, the Holy Spirit was only given to a select few, who were then identified as prophets. But in the New Testament, Jesus made it clear that the Holy Spirit would be given to all those who accepted him as their Savior and Lord.

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The rules and ordinances which Israel had to follow under the Old Testament were physical applications of what we experience today in a spiritual way. The sacrifices which Israel was required to make to God, were physical sacrifices, which consisted of animals, spices, salt, wine, flour, oil, etc. But the sacrifices which we are required to give today are not offered on a physical altar, but a spiritual one. Instead of giving an animal for a sacrifice, we give ourselves as a daily living sacrifice, just as Jesus gave himself as a living sacrifice for us. The incense that the Israelites burned, symbolized the prayers that we Christians offer up to God.

The Sabbath rest which we enter into today is not a ceasing from physical work, as Israel ceased from their labor, but a ceasing from our own inept human attempt at accomplishing the works of righteousness, and then allowing God to accomplish the works through us by his Holy Spirit, and

not by the works of our own hands. Israel's righteousness could only be established by keeping the Law of Commandments. And because no man could keep the Law of Commandments perfectly, it became evident over the ages that man's attempt at perfection could not be attained by the might and power of man, but only through the saving grace of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us. The ceasing from work that the Sabbath of the Israelites required could not be accomplished except in a physical ceasing from labor. But as we read in Hebrews, chapter 4, Israel did not enter into the rest of God, even though Israel kept the Sabbath days according to the rules and ordinances God had given them. And it also says there that God was still looking for people who would enter into his rest, and it explains that the rest that we can enter into is a ceasing from our own works at attaining righteousness, and instead, by relying on the saving grace of Jesus Christ by his blood. In addition, we read in Zechariah, chapter 4, that the real strength of man isn't in his physical might or power, but by God's Holy Spirit.

God's purpose in establishing the Law of Commandments was to bring understanding of the concept that God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in truth and in spirit. To worship God in spirit is difficult for human beings who are trapped within physical bodies, and only comprehend things through their five physical senses of taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight. Without the Holy Spirit residing in man, man is unable to understand the concepts of God in the deeper spiritual sense. But God is a spirit, and man must eventually come to know him in that way.

The Law of Commandments brought human beings to a general understanding of who and what God is. It established what sin is, and what righteousness is. When the fullness of time had come, Jesus Christ came to earth for the purpose of fulfilling the law. This means that he did not come to do away with the Law of Commandments, but to complete it, and he did so by keeping the law perfectly, which no man had ever been able to do. The purpose of the law had been to bring earthly physical man to an understanding of God's ways in spite of not having the Holy Spirit of God residing in them. Romans 7:8 tells us that without the law, sin had no way to cause our eternal death. Death came from sin, and the strength of sin was the law. But the law was not intended to bring righteousness, but only intended to bring people to an understanding of what God's perspective of good and evil was, and also to show man that righteousness could not be obtained by man's own attempt at being obedient. In essence, the law, written and engraved in stone, was teaching us that our own attempt at righteousness was futile, and therefore we humans needed something that would allow us to attain righteousness in God's eyes in order that we might not be condemned to hell. Thus, Jesus Christ, the Savior, was introduced. He fulfilled the law. The law's purpose was completed, for what God had intended the law to accomplish, had been accomplished. In place of that law which was written in tablets of stone was a new covenant which established righteousness, not by the works of man's own hands, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Some people think that Christians should maintain parts of the rules and ordinances that were in effect under the Law of Commandments, but we must be careful not to revert back to keeping physical rules and ordinances which were established as learning tools to bring man to the

knowledge of spiritual things. If we do, then this will destroy much of the purpose for the new covenant of grace. The sacrifices, Sabbaths, rules for eating meat, etc., which Israel observed were for our learning, and if we revert back to the same physical observance of these things, then we miss the reason that they were given to us in the first place. They were given for our learning, so that under the new covenant of grace we could observe these same Commandments and ordinances with our hearts, and not just in physical obedience. Some Christians still maintain observances of a certain day Sabbath rest, the abstaining from eating certain kinds of meat, Old Testament feast days, etc., thinking that we must still observe the original laws and ordinances and in addition, accompany them with a true heart, and not just as ritual. But that was already attempted by those of Israel who truly did love God. What is missing is the understanding of what the laws and ordinances symbolized, and how Christians have been brought to a greater spiritual understanding of what God requires.

God wants more from us than just the observance of physical sacrifices, the physical keeping of Sabbath's, the ordinances of eating meat, and the feast days, according to Old Testament standards. The sacrifice God wants from you, is you. The Sabbath rest he wants you to enter into, is a ceasing from your own works, that you might let God accomplish righteousness in you, and that you might fulfill the will of God by doing his works, not by relying on the strength of your own hands with your own might and power, but by relying on the power of God through his Holy Spirit, and by the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Temple which God now resides in, is you. It is not a Temple made with hands, it is not a physical house of worship, but it is your heart.

Ever since Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law of Commandments, and brought to men the ability to be born again in spirit, and to be moved of the spirit, Satan has attempted continuously to find a way to destroy the ability of man to worship God in spirit. His attempts are aimed at convincing man to shun the power of the Holy Spirit, and to ignore the still small voice. He wants to reintroduce sabbaths, sacrifices, and a physical temple so that Christians will not listen to the still small voice, nor give a true daily sacrifice of themselves, nor cease from their own works. Satan does not want the clearer understanding of God's ways to be known, but continuously moves men to reintroduce the old, in order to confuse the understanding of the new.

Ever since Jesus ascended into heaven, Satan has worked to destroy all aspects of what Jesus Christ brought to us in the form of understanding of who and what God is. In Revelation 12, the Bible tells us that the accuser of the brethren was cast down. Under the Law of Commandments Satan could go before God and accuse someone of failing to be in obedience to God's word. He could accuse any person, by citing the law which prohibited the actions. Satan knows that man is condemned when he breaks the Law of Commandments, or any rules and requirements that God has laid down in addition to the Commandments. But when the accuser of the brethren was cast down by Jesus' death and resurrection, Satan was no longer able to come before God and accuse God's people of sin. For the Bible says where there is no law, there is no condemnation.

For instance, Satan could still say to God, “This person has lied.” God's response would be, “So, what's your point, Satan? Under what point of the law do you accuse them?” In essence, Satan would have no answer, because Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law of Commandments, and Satan cannot quote a point of the law, if no law exists. In fact, if you look at 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, it will tell you that the ministration of death which was written and engraved in stone has been done away with, and that even though it was glorious, it had no glory compared to the new covenant of grace by faith in Jesus Christ. But Satan knows that his power over men depends on his ability to accuse men of sinning, and in coming short of the glory of God. Satan would love to destroy men, for it is just one more major avenue in his attempt to destroy God. Yet God looks on the heart, and when he finds a heart that is righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, that man has no sin. Sin might be in his flesh, but not in his heart. And God doesn't look on the flesh, but on the heart.

To worship God in spirit is what the New Testament requires. To reestablish a physical observance of rites and rituals, Commandments and rules, will hinder worshiping God in spirit. This does not mean that there is no requirement for a person to strive toward righteousness, but only means that those things which were done as a symbolic physical act, should now be observed from the heart. It is not that the Old Testament sacrifices were useless or wrong, but that our sacrifices must be of the heart. And it does not mean that there remains no Sabbath rest to enter into, but that we must now understand what the initial Sabbath observance was trying to teach us. Many people observe a Saturday Sabbath, and many also observe a Sunday Sabbath, ceasing from physical work in an attempt to rest. But to revert back to a Saturday Sabbath, or even worse, to replace it with a Sunday Sabbath, ignores God's true rest that he intended for Christians, which is to stop trying to obtain righteousness by your own might and power. If you truly want to enter into God's rest, then your initial action is to have faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, knowing that his blood covers your sins. If you want to continue to please God by observing his rest, then you will cease from your own worldly works as well. This means you give up your desire to have what you want in this world, and allow God to direct your life. It means that instead of always wanting something more, always looking to excel in your career opportunities and your retirement options, you set these things aside and allow God to tell you what to eat, what to wear, what to drive, where to live, where to work, who to marry, etc.

This is the rest that God truly requires, because it is not a rest that we need to enter into because we are tired, for if we enter into God's rest it is for the purpose of ceasing to make things happen by our own hand. That's what God did on the seventh day, he ceased from his own works. God was not tired, so therefore the rest which he entered into was not to recuperate strength or to get away from the stresses of his week of work. If you enter into his rest, you must do it, not from the aspect of physical rest, but from the aspect of ceasing to do your own thing, and completely allowing him to direct every nuance of your life. If you can do this, you will finally enter into his rest. No, you do not have to do this perfectly to enter into his rest, all you have to do is purpose in your heart to do it, and you have accomplished it. Your accomplishment is seen by God when he looks at your heart, not at the outside of you. You can observe a physical Sabbath all you want, but God doesn't see it until it comes from your heart. Ceasing from physical stresses or

tiredness is not a heart thing, but a flesh thing. You cannot please God with your flesh. You can only please God with your heart. If you give him a Sabbath observance, the only thing you could give him with your heart is good intentions. But if you cease doing your own thing in this world, then God will see that in your heart, and know that you truly do love him, and not the world.

Satan would like you to revert back to physical temple's, because he knows that as long as that's the way you perceive things, you will never comprehend God's desire, nor will you comprehend the major deception which works in the church. Without recognizing that we are the temple, Christians will never see that the spirit of antichrist is already here, and that he has situated himself in us. How is this true? It's true when Christians are deceived into thinking that they can be obedient to God by outward symbolic actions, and at the same time maintain their own personal goals.

Notice that in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, it refers to that 'mystery of iniquity' which many Bible scholars say is the Antichrist. But verse seven says that this mystery of iniquity already works. Realize that this is telling us that the mystery of iniquity is not a man, for there is no man who existed at the time Paul was speaking, and also will exist at the end time. This would give powers to Satan equal to God, and he does not have that power. The mystery of iniquity is truly a mystery, but it is a concept that already existed in Paul's day, and is nothing more than the evil spirit that works in opposition to anything which represents Jesus Christ. If you believe the antichrist has to rise up and sit in a physical temple, then you will never see the one that is sitting in the temple which is today's church body, until it is too late. If you don't believe that this is possible, just take a close look around you the next time you're in church. If you open up spiritual eyes and ears, you may see something you didn't see before.

When Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow him, he meant that we should become a living sacrifice. We cannot become a living sacrifice if we are not giving our all on the altar. Many Christians attempt to give part of themselves to God as a living sacrifice, but God is not content with part of you, but wants all of you. That's why you must observe 1 Corinthians 11:3, and let your head be removed and replace it with Jesus' head. This is the true meaning of being beheaded, and it happens in your life now, before Jesus comes back, not afterward. If you are living under the law, you will never see this either, and neither will the Bible scholars who teach physical beheading with a guillotine. As long as you think the physical beheading with a guillotine takes place after Jesus comes back for us, you will never understand that Jesus wants us to be beheaded now, so that he is our head, our authority, over what we say, and what we do, instead of us being our own authority.