

REVELATION – SERMON 43

THE TRIBULATION TEMPLE

Revelation 11:1-2

INTRODUCTION

- Many modern-day false prophets have made false predictions about the Lord's return and the end of the age – and have become wealthy in doing so.
- It is foolish and presumptuous to claim to know the day and hour of Christ's return, as the Lord Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36)
- Yet he also rebuked the Jews for their ignorance of the prophetic significance of the times they lived in, saying, "can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:3)
- The Scriptures give many indications as to what we should expect as this age draws to a close:
 - ✓ Increase in travel and knowledge (Daniel 12:4)
 - ✓ False religions (Matthew 24:3-5,11)
 - ✓ International wars (Matthew 24:6-7)
 - ✓ Famines, pestilences and earthquakes (Matthew 24:7)
 - ✓ Persecution against Christians (Matthew 24:9-10)
 - ✓ Moral decline (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 9:21)
 - ✓ Scoffers who deny the Second Coming, creationism and Noah's flood (2 Peter 3:3-4)
 - ✓ Revived Roman Empire (Daniel 2:19-49)

- ✓ Global government and economic system (Revelation 13:16-18)
- But the most indubitable evidence that we are in the last days is the fulfilment of prophecies concerning the nation of Israel
- The Old Testament prophets clearly foretold a regathering of the Jews “from the ends of the earth” to the promised land (Jeremiah 16:14-15; Isaiah 43:5-7; Ezekiel 36:24; 37:12; Amos 9:14-15)
- The apostle Paul showed that God has not permanently cast away his people, but that in time their blindness would be taken away and “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11)
- From the forming of the Zionist Movement in the late 19th Century, Jews have been returning to the land.
- The state of Israel was formed in May, 1948, when its population was 800,000, and has grown to a population of 9 million today
- As Ezekiel 37 foretold, they have returned in a state of unbelief
- While amillennialism and its allegorical interpretation was the prevailing hermeneutic from the 4th to 19th centuries, there were yet some diligent Bible students in those times who believed God’s promises concerning the nation of Israel
- Here in Revelation 11:1-2, God has shown us that during the tribulation, the Jews will be in the land, worshipping in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem
- This could not have been Herod’s temple, seeing John’s vision took place at least twenty years after its destruction
- Daniel (Daniel 9:27), Christ (Matthew 24:15), and Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:4) also prophesy of this future temple, and in each case describe its defiling by the antichrist
- For some years, preparations have been underway for the rebuilding of the temple

- Today we will consider not only the tribulation temple, but the concept of the temple more generally and the vital role it fulfils in God's plan of redemption

I. A REVIEW OF THE SEQUENCE OF TEMPLES

A. The tabernacle

1. Moses oversaw its construction according to the pattern received at Mt Sinai in 1445 BC
2. The tabernacle was to be an earthly copy of the heavenly temple (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23-24)
3. This was not a fixed building, and therefore not properly a "temple", yet it served the same functions of the earthly dwelling place of God; the communion of God and man through blood atonement; and the centre of divine worship
4. During and after the conquest, the tabernacle changed location several times (Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon), before David erected a new tabernacle at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:17)

B. Solomon's temple

1. Completed in 957 BC, it followed the pattern of the tabernacle, though on a larger scale
2. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 587 BC

C. Zerubbabel's temple

1. Built under the direction of Zerubbabel in 520 BC, by the returned Jews from Babylon
2. Desecrated by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in 167 BC (Daniel 8:23-25; 11:21-35)
3. Rededicated after the Hasmonean Revolt by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 BC, which became the Feast of Dedication or "Hanukkah" (John 10:22)

D. Herod's temple

1. Reconstructed by Herod the Great from 20 BC to 64 AD
2. This is not regarded as a "new" temple, and hence is referred to as the "Second Temple"
3. The Lord Jesus worshipped here, called it his "Father's house", zealously purged it of thieves, and in his death effected the rending of the veil in it
4. This temple was destroyed by the Roman General Titus in 70 AD (Matthew 24:2)

E. The "Spiritual Temple" during this dispensation

1. Presently, there is not one specific location on earth where God dwells in and must be worshipped in (John 4:20-23)
2. In this present dispensation, the church is described as a spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 3:6)
3. The visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when he empowered the church served as a type of divine authentication in the same way the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and temple (1 Kings 8:10) at their dedication
4. The Lord's churches are then described as the "house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15), and Christ himself dwells in their midst (Revelation 2:1)
5. Furthermore, the individual believer is a "temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

F. The Tribulation Temple

1. This will have the shortest lifespan of all the temples
2. It will most likely be built at the beginning of the Tribulation, possibly as a result of the peace covenant made by antichrist (Daniel 9:27)

3. The antichrist will desecrate the temple at the midpoint of the tribulation (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4)
4. The close association antichrist has with this temple has led some to call it “Antichrist’s Temple”
5. It may be destroyed by the great earthquake and upheaval that will take place when Christ returns (Zechariah 14:3-5)

G. The Millennial Temple

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will oversee the building of this temple at the establishment of his kingdom (Ezekiel 40-47; Isaiah 24:23; Zechariah 6:12-15)

II. THE ROLE OF THE SANCTUARY IN THE TRIBULATION

A. The measuring of the temple and altar, and worshippers

1. The act of measuring has prophetic significance
 - a. Ezekiel had a vision of the measuring of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40-42)
 - b. Zechariah saw the angel measuring Jerusalem in preparation for the millennial kingdom (Zechariah 2:1-13)
 - c. In Revelation 21:15-17, the New Jerusalem is measured with a golden reed
 - d. Note that John, as a non-Levite, would not formerly have been able to enter the sanctuary of the temple, yet now he is as a member of “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10) through Christ, his High Priest
2. Measuring can indicate coming judgment in Scripture (2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 28:17; Lamentations 2:8; Amos 7:7-9)
3. But it can also denote ownership, protection and preservation (Habakkuk 3:6; Ezekiel 40:3-42:20)

- a. In this act, God is claiming this temple as his own property
- b. Furthermore, he measures the worshippers, staking his claim of ownership of the Jews
- c. This confirms that God has not forgotten his covenant with Israel, and that in these times Israel's blindness will be removed and they will be received by God again (Romans 11)
- d. This also makes antichrist's desecration of the temple and persecution of Israel all the more heinous, they are not just any building and nation, but God's possession and beloved people (Zechariah 2:8)

B. The exclusion of the court

1. This corresponds to the Court of the Gentiles in the second temple where non-Jews were permitted, divided from the inner court by "the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14)
2. Leaving out this court and not measuring it indicates exclusion from God's favour
3. The word for Gentiles is *ethnesin* and is often translated as nations in Revelation
4. These ungodly nations will tread underfoot and dominate Jerusalem for 3½ years – the second half of the tribulation
5. This will begin when antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and a period of violent persecution of Israel begins (Revelation 12:13-17)
6. The "times of the Gentiles" – this long period of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem – began at the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, and will continue unto the Second Coming of Christ (Luke 21:24)
7. The world empires prophesied by Daniel will only cease their rule over Israel when Christ returns to "brake in pieces and consume all these kingdoms", restoring the land and kingdom to Israel (Daniel 2:44-45)

III. THE RECONCILIATING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

A. The problem of sin

1. Before the fall, there was no need of a temple or animal sacrifices
2. Man had perfect communion with God
3. With the fall of man, sin entered the world, and sinful man became alienated from a holy God
4. Adam's hiding from God and his futile attempt to cover his shame illustrate the predicament the human race is in

B. The means of reconciliation

1. From the moment man sinned God has sought for man, asking "Where art thou?" and has always been the initiator of reconciling man to God (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19)
2. God showed man that the sacrificial blood of animals could atone for sin both before and under the law
3. The tabernacle and later the temple became the place where God made it possible for man to find forgiveness and reconciliation with God
4. Yet these sacrifices and ordinances were not sufficient to take away sin and fully restore man to God

C. The Person who fulfils the temple

1. Christ described his own body as the temple (John 2:19,21)
2. At Christ's death, the veil that separated man from the presence of God was torn in two, indicating that he had provided access to God through his blood (Hebrews 10:19-20)
3. The book of Hebrews demonstrates how the temple and its sacrificial system have been abolished through Christ's final sacrifice

4. Now Christ is the “high priest over the house of God” (Hebrews 10:21)

D. The eternal temple

1. In the new heavens and earth, when God’s redemptive work is complete, man will again have perfect communion with God and there will be no need for a temple
2. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3)
3. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Revelation 21:22)

CONCLUSION

1. The evidence is all around us that the end of the age is near
2. Are you “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God”? (2 Peter 3:12)
3. Or do you fear what awaits you when Christ returns?
4. Have you been reconciled to God?
5. This passage shows what the purpose of the temple is – worship
6. God is seeking for true worshippers to worship him in his eternal temple (John 4:23)
7. It is our duty to respond by seeking him (Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6)