

## Jesus through the eyes of the Temple

February 19, 2023

Hey friends – We are marching through the book of Luke, not chapter by chapter, but character by character. We are trying to see Jesus through the eyes of the people he encountered. Or in some cases, the non-people he encountered. A few weeks ago, it was Jesus through the eyes of the fish. And this week, it is Jesus through the eyes of the TEMPLE. Yup, the building that was where the people went to worship. If it had a brain and eyes, what would it think of Jesus?

Now, in order to get the gravity of this, it is helpful to do a short history of the temple in Israel. Can you roll with me on that/

### Temple History

- Before the temple was a temple, it **was a tabernacle**. For a couple of centuries they worshipped in a mobile venue... the design was revealed to Moses very specifically to facilitate sacrifices, multiple symbols of worship to God and a “Holy of Holies” and area separated by a beautiful curtain with Cherubim woven into the pictorial beauty.
- Originally, King David collected the materials for the temple around 1000 BC. He could not stand the idea that he had a palace, but the LORD was being worshipped in a tent. Note – God did not command this building or need this building, but David felt compelled to build it. But since he was a man of war, God said the building of the temple had to be deferred to his Son Solomon. **Solomon’s Temple was Built (957)**
  - The tabernacle was in Shiloh and Shechem, but David move it to **Mt. Moriah** in Jerusalem – bought by David from Arauna, the place Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac.
  - It was based on the model of the Tabernacle, and it Contained the holiest items, including the **ark of the covenant**
  - **Fire from heaven** fell to consume the first sacrifice, demonstrating the power, pleasure and presence of God. The powerful picture is that the presence of God is thickest at the temple.
- **Lasted until 586 BC** – destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
  - Looted in 604, when the articles were taken from the Tabernacle
  - Key people like Daniel were taken to Babylon at this point
  - A rebellion when on until 586
- **Rebuilt, (515)** but in the book of Ezra chapter 3, the older people who remembered the old Temple wept when they saw the new one... Why?
  - **small,**
  - **no Ark of covenant**
  - **No fire from heaven**
  - Plundered and Desecrated in 167 by Antiochus Ephiaphanes
- **Herod’s Renovation** – 26AD – Renovation
  - Rebuilding began 20 BC, completed 26 AD – Temple Mount doubled. Temple raised, enlarged and faced with white stone. Beautiful!

- YUKKY- But it was built by a slimy puppet king. He also built three palaces for himself, and two temples to roman Gods. He was a builder for his own glory, he was only kinda Jewish, and he worked for Rome.
- Jesus grew up watching this temple and the temple mount forming. Brand new.
- **His ministry began** in 27 or 30 while it still had that new carpet smell

### Herod's Temple – **Picture from the courtyard**

- As temples go, it was pretty impressive, but not like other temples. The building itself was modeled after the tent, so it wasn't huge. It was very functional for large numbers of sacrifices and the priestly duties in the holy place.
- The temple mount was much more impressive. **It was quarried out of massive rocks. Some the size of railroad cars!** Mount Moriah was not the highest mountain in the area, but was chosen because it has valleys on three sides which makes it very difficult to attack. But to the North, it went uphill. This is where they quarried the massive stones and moved them DOWNHILL to the temple mount.
- Look at the courtyards for people to gather. 37 Acres (CCC has 26 for comparison) or 29 football fields. 400,000 people were said to be able to gather there at once if need be. **Dimensions... Map from the air.** The court of priests, court of men, court of women, court of gentiles. You could only go as far as you had privilege. But here is what is obvious. The temple structure was all about people gathering. It was to be a place of prayer, a place of worship. There were no statues in the temple because God is beyond any image that could capture him. Unlike every other religion at the time, the Jewish people were forbidden by the second commandment from making any images of God.
- **view of ancient Jerusalem** The temple dominated the landscape of the city. It was bigger than any mansion or palace or park. It was imposing and beautiful
- Now inside the temple you can see what it might look like... **Cutout side view from NIV Study Bible.** There was a place that only priests could go to perform certain symbolic rituals related to bread and light and incense. But NOTE the curtain in this picture. This curtain was the same concept as the Tabernacle. It was thick – like inches thick. Red, blue and purple with pictures of Cherubim on it – symbolically protecting the presence of God in the HOLY of HOLIES. A place that only the high priest could go only once a year. Now, there was no ark of the covenant at this time, but the tradition was still that this is the place where the presence of God is thickest.

**Temple Meaning – Leave up the **picture of the temple** – view from the courtyard as my standard back screen.**

That is the history, but here is the meaning of it. The temple would be a place of awe and glory!

- **Celebration!** This is THE gathering place. It is where all of Israel came together for worship and sacrifice. When we think of family get togethers at grandmas and have nostalgia around that jello salad with the little pretzels in the bottom... they are thinking Temple. Their holiday associations would all be around powerful moments in this holy place.
- **Sacrifice!** The temple is where Sacrifices were done and people got right with God. Sin was atoned for and they were free.

- **Presence!** This is where Where God’s presence dwells – of course he is everywhere, but especially present at the temple. This awesomeness of the temple is the environment that Jesus grew up in.

## Temple Episodes

- You can watch this thread through Luke. You remember 8 days after Jesus was born... according to the law, Jesus was presented at temple for circumcision– and two prophets were there. Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:34-5) **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”** Little did they know that much of this would happen on the very temple grounds where they were standing. I imagine the temple thinking... the messiah just came to visit. Simeon and Anna have been waiting their whole lives and they knew it was him!
- The temple would have witnessed the Boy Jesus schooling the teachers – people were amazed at his questions and his answers! At 12, he was demonstrating a competence and understanding that far exceeded the learned. (Luke 2:41ff)
- The temple may have metaphorically shouted **“DON’T DO IT!”** As the Devil Tempts Jesus to jump when he is standing on the highest corner of the temple. And Relief when Jesus simply quoted **“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”**
- The temple would have shuddered in delight every time Jesus came for a feast or hung out with his family.
- **Backscreen switch to timeline**
- But from time to time, Jesus would say something that would befuddle his listeners... and the temple.
- Matthew 12:6 **I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.**
  - Greater than the temple? What is greater than the temple? This is the place where we meet God, where sacrifice for sin is made, where we find his presence. Are you now saying that YOU are the place we meet God? YOU are the place sacrifice for sin is made? YOU are the place where people of every background will be able to find unity????
  - (Stop and stare and nod...) – Jesus pic goes up**
- OK, and flip over to John, Jesus engaged in more craziness. And...
- <sup>18</sup> **The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”**
  - <sup>19</sup> **Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”**
  - <sup>20</sup> **They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”** <sup>21</sup> **But the temple he had spoken of was his body.**
- OK, put these things together. Jesus is saying he is bigger than the temple... and he is the replacement for the temple. All the things you Jewish people found in a building, is now found in a PERSON!
- Guys, this is another creative way of Jesus proclaiming the gospel. DO you want forgiveness of sins? It is in MY sacrifice. And on that temple mount he would be accused and condemned and

sent to carry his cross up the road to Golgotha. And there the fulfillment of Abraham's sacrifice and every one of the millions of animals that had been sacrificed on that mount would be fulfilled. Because every sacrifice made in the temple was a foreshadowing of his sacrifice.

- Unity would be bought for all people in humility as we all bow at the foot of the cross of Jesus. It would be celebrated worldwide in the ordinance of communion. The bread and the cup, celebrated just over on the next hill would become the universal language for union with God over the entire world.
- And celebration. There would become no other name that would gather more people. Instead of Passover, you would have good Friday. Instead of the feast of unleavened bread, you would have Easter. In place of the feast of weeks, you would have Pentecost – when Jesus sent his spirit.
- Jesus is in essence saying – on the day that my body, my temple is raised from the dead, the entire paradigm changes. I am the new and better temple!

### Final Week

- And the temple would have been shocked by Jesus' strange turn of behavior that one year that Jesus drives out moneychangers and sales people. "What are you doing?" The temple might have cried "Trying to get yourself killed???"
- But that was exactly the point. Have you ever noticed that Jesus was just clandestine and understated... telling people not to say anything about their healing or freedom from demons... until that moment in John where he says "Now is my hour." All of the sudden, his demeanor, his teaching, his overturning tables starts demanding a response from the religious leaders. Jesus knew the day and hour he would fulfill all prophecy. He was in control. He was driving to that day. So every day that week, he went to the temple and said crazy stuff that could get you killed.

### Key Passage: Luke 21

5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

7 "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled

In this passage, he was not talking about his body. He was talking about that massive building that yonder. For us, it would be like pointing at FNBO building. And saying – that thing is coming down. When? When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies... then it is about to happen (good clue!).

And do you know when that prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled? **AD70**. 40 years later

The Jewish people were rebelling against Rome. Titus came in with a 60,000 person Army. The Jews fought valiantly, but Titus prevailed. And when he did, he was so mad about the thousands of his troops killed in battle that he tore down the temple... and not just a little.... Brick by brick so that one brick was not laid on another. Just like Jesus said.

Now, note what is happening theologically here. God is sending a clear signal. NO. MORE. TEMPLE.

Since AD 70, there is no hope of meeting with God in his Holy Place. No atonement of sins via the sacrifice. No sense of God's palpable presence. IT is as if God is hanging a huge banner "YOU can't get to me this way anymore.

He let one generation unfold so that the gospel could spread to all of Israel... and then he shut the back door. There is one way, one mediator between God and people and his name is JESUS!

#### HISTORY

Now, I don't know how well you know your history since that moment. But the temple was never rebuilt. The Jewish people never regained control of the Temple Mount. The romans never let them rebuild. Then the Byzantines did not let them rebuild. Then, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a violent Islamic movement took over that area and built their own Mosque on that site – the Al Aqsa Mosque. It was a place that Muhammed went in a dream and it was one way of flexing dominance over the Jews and Christians who considered it holy. And they built a Muslim holy site on top of the place they believe was the rock Abraham sacrificed Isaac – and called it the **DOME of the Rock**. Covered with Gold it is now the most recognizable monument in Jerusalem. And that makes this area of territory deeply wanted by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. It is the most valuable and most controversial real estate in the world.

Jewish people are not allowed to pray or preach on the Temple Mount – it is surrounded by Islamic armed guards today. The closest they can get to the temple is the **Western Wall**. Sometimes known as the wailing wall (but they prefer Western wall), there are celebrations and prayer meetings and scripture reading and dancing every day – especially on Friday evening. But they can't get to the temple mount.

God is sending a message: you can't get to me that way.

**Oh, and one more piece about the temple. This one happened on the day Jesus died.**

#### **Luke 23:44-5**

**44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.**

What was the curtain? It was the separator of the priests from the presence of God. It was thick – impenetrable for a curtain. It had cherubim on it – their job is to protect the tree of life and protect the throne of God. This curtain communicated very strongly – God is in there and you can't come in.

But when Jesus died, it was as if the Temple itself mourned. A powerful symbol of grief in the old testament was tearing one's clothes. Just grab at the collar and rip! In the moment that Jesus breathed

his last, the temple grabbed its own collar and ripped. John says the curtain was torn from top to bottom. Like God himself from heaven declared a new day top down.

What was the statement? There is no longer a separation between God and people! God will not be confined to a building. The spirit of God is wild and free and available to all! The center of worship is no longer a building, it is a people... inhabited by his spirit. Which is now free.

This is your freedom. And My freedom. It is the wild and unpredictable Spirit of God that lives in us because he died for us.

If you have not yet said "YES" to Jesus, make today that day. All you have to do is say to him – I trust you – that your death changed everything – including forgiving me. I trust you – that when your temple was bloodied and killed – you rebuilt in three days. I trust you with my life and my future. You are now my king and leader. And he will welcome you into his family.

And if you have said "YES" to Jesus, just spend some time thanking him and reflecting on his goodness to you. He is the new temple and there is no other way. Let's reflect, then I'll lead us in communion.

**Musical Interlude – 2 minutes**- Keep playing through end of message

### **Prayer**

**Communion:** Jesus is our sacrifice. It took his own blood and his own body to pay for your sin and mine. If you have trusted in Jesus – even if today is your first time, you are welcome to join. Open the cup – bread side. Lets remember that his flesh took the nails. His side took the spear. His head took the crown of thorns and he did it for you and for me.

And this cup is the new covenant. A covenant dripping and signed in the blood of Jesus – sacrificed for you and me. Lets join billions around the world in remembering his sacrifice by taking this cup.

**Stand for prayer... but One more jewel before I let you go today.**

You know, Jesus is the replacement of the temple, but he is not last on the list of temples. Because when that holy Spirit broke out of the curtain and landed on you, he had a plan. It was to redeem a whole group of people by forgiveness through his blood and turn YOU into the new temple.

**16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.**

You are God's temple. Just like the spirit came on the first temple with Solomon, so he comes on you and builds you into something beautiful. You are a living sacrifice. You are the embodiment of God's community. You are the presence of God in this world by his spirit living through you.

So walk out strong and tall today. You are beautiful. You are filled with the Spirit. You are the new temple of God in this world.