

# Temple Worship

By George Davis

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. (Jeremiah 7:4)

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Revelation 21:22-23)

But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. ((Matthew 12:6)

What do I mean by temple worship? I am not necessarily referring to worship in a temple. I am however referring to the human bent toward making the means the end---the worship of worship itself. I am referring to man's inherent propensity to worship the mode, rather than the maker--and creed rather than Christ. I am referring to the human tendency to confound Christianity with temples, ceremonies, liturgy, rituals and rites.

The prophet Jeremiah addressed this idolatry. Israel had forgotten God, but they had not forgotten "The Temple". ". . .they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me saith the Lord." Because of there sin God's judgment was coming. It was coming in the form of the armies of Babylon. In spite of Jeremiah's repeated warnings they found comfort in "lying words." "The temple of the lord" "The temple of the lord" "The temple of the lord." Surely God will not allow his temple to be desecrated. We have nothing to fear for there stands the "the temple of the Lord." Likewise, many today put their trust in their temples. They are a "member", and their membership guarantees their place in heaven. Everyone else is going to hell, but they, by virtue of their identification with their temples, are not. If they are all correct, that everyone but them is going to hell, then all are going to hell. Did God dispense with one ceremonious religion, only to found a thousand. Did Christ die for this?

All types and systems were made obsolete by the coming of Christ of whom they were only a foreshadow. The tabernacle of Moses and the law, the temple with all its rituals, were all temporary measures---shadows of the real. The veil being rent signified a change; old things were passing away in order that a greater reality might take their place, the reality of Christ himself. He is "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to

make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:26-27 NIV)

"A greater than the temple is here." A greater than any earthly institution. And yet how often men prefer the clamor and activity of the system to the intimate knowledge of Christ. There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Matthew 24:1-2)

God's divine purpose is to free man from the worship of things, to the worship of himself. Mans propensity toward the worship of things visible is well documented throughout the cannon. Those things that God gave to bring ultimate glory to himself became idols. From the brazen serpent to the temple itself, man has proven his bent, his preference to worship things other than God himself. The brazen serpent, the instrument of God's healing to a nation, later was worshiped as a god, and destroyed as an idol.

He [Hezekiah] removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. (2 Kings 18:4)

In like manner, not one stone will be left upon another of all those idols religious or non-religious which displace the true object of worship, God himself.

In the Old Testament form of worship Christ was hidden in types and shadows. Then all was shrouded in mystery, but now God has chosen to reveal his son, the very image of himself. Mans insistence upon rite and ritual is an unwitting attempt to shroud him once again in the shadowy and illusory realm of religion. Satan could love nothing more. For all that he must do to render the believer powerless is hide Christ from him. He must entice the believer to replace Christ with something visible. Religion is satan's favorite substitute for Christ. The primary work of the Holy Spirit however, is to reveal Christ. The goal of His work in our lives is that Christ may be formed in us. Christ in us is the

hope of glory! There is an ongoing stripping of the scaffolding of earthly religious systems. And of it, not one stone will be left upon another. God no longer dwells in temples made with hands. We are Gods Temple!

"Christ Himself emerges from the framework of things, from all the scaffolding of past ages, from all the figurative and typological and symbolical, and transcends the things by His own Person." (T. Austin Sparks)

## The Tyranny of Religion

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (Matthew 23:35)

Man prefers religion to relationship with God. So much so, that he will violate the very nature of God to preserve it. Killing over matters regarding religion is nothing new. It began with Cain and will not cease until the last trumpet sounds. A greater than the temple is here! And he who will exalt him only will know the lash of those religious zealots who are set to defend their ecclesiastical order, their temples.

"For we [Ananias and the elders] have found this man [Paul] a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law." (Acts 24:5-6)

Note their concern for the temple. There is however no expression of concern for God's interests, only their own. Paul, whom these charges were levied against, posed a threat to their religious interests. And they were attempting to deal with this problem in their usual manner; they "went about to kill. . ." (Acts 26:21).

The natural man will protect his idols by killing all who threaten them. Here they were attempting to do the same thing to Paul that they had done to Christ only a few years prior.

If the last 1700 years of church history has proven anything, it has shown conclusively, that the nature of religion without Christ, is tyranny. Christianity is Christ, nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

## **God's Habitation**

Acts 7:49: Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

1 Corinthians 3:16: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Corinthians 3:17: If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 6:19: What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

2 Corinthians 6:16: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ephesians 2:21-22: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

All that the Old Testament tabernacles and temples foreshadowed was this truth; we individually and corporately are God's "habitation." We are His "temple" --His dwelling place.

He breached the veil. he escaped. He found a new home, a new dwelling place, a new temple. Old things have passed away, not one stone is left upon another, that a greater than the temple might inhabit His temple, built of lively stones, which we are.

It is an affront to heaven to recreate the old forms of temple worship. However watered down and Christianized they may be, they are as pagan as the worship of Baal. They replace the reality of the indwelling Christ with pomp and ceremony, and attempt to make a temple once again the dwelling of God. This is man's stiff arm in the chest of the heavenly father who would draw near to embrace.

It occupies man's time doing something we call "the work of God" while the true goal to know him is forgotten in the frenzied ecclesiastical pace.

"Theologically, the church does not need temples. Church buildings are not essential to the true nature of the church. For the meaning of the tabernacle is God's habitation, and God already dwells within the human community of Christian believers. The people

are the temple and the tabernacle. . . Thus, theologically church buildings are superfluous. They are not needed for priestly functions because all believers are priests and all have direct access, at whatever time and place, to the one great high priest. A church building cannot properly be "the Lord's house" because in the new covenant this title is reserved for the church as people (Eph. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:21). A church building cannot be a "holy place" in any special sense, for holy places no longer exist. Christianity has no holy places, only holy people." (Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins*, Chapter 4)

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Relation 21:22)

It is not without significance that this is the last reference to the word *temple* in the Bible. As not one stone of the former temple would remain upon another. In type with the removal of each there would be greater and greater revelation of our true temple, "God Almighty and the Lamb," of which the earthly one was only symbolic. We are his temple now, but then He shall be ours.

All God's dealings from now until then have to do with this transition from religion to a relationship. A relationship with our creator, our father, and Temple. As Abram came out of Ur, we in like manner are called to leave our idols behind, "counting all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him."

### **"I saw no temple therein"**

"...said John. Nor is there any note of surprise as he marks the omission of what one half of Christendom would have considered the first essential. For beside the type of religion he had learned from Christ, the Church type --the merely Church type--is an elaborate evasion. What have the pomp and circumstance, the fashion and the form, the vestures and the postures, to do with Jesus of Nazareth? At a stage in personal development. and for a certain type of mind, such things may have a place. But when mistaken for Christianity, no matter how they aid it, or in what measure they conserve it, they defraud the souls of men, and rob humanity of its dues. It is because to large masses of people Christianity has become synonymous with a Temple service that other large masses of people decline to touch it. It is a mistake to suppose that the working classes of this country are opposed to Christianity. No man can ever be opposed to Christianity who knows what it really is. The working men would still follow Christ if He came among them. As a matter of fact they do follow anyone, preacher or

layman, in pulpit or on platform, who is the least like Him. But what they cannot follow, and must evermore live outside of, is a worship which ends with the worshipper, a religion expressed only in ceremony, and a faith unrelated to life. Perhaps the most dismal fact of history is the failure of the great organized bodies of ecclesiasticism to understand the simple genius of Christ's religion. Whatever the best in the Churches of all time may have thought of the life and religion of Christ, taken as a whole they have succeeded in leaving upon the mind of a large portion of the world an impression of Christianity which is the direct opposite of the reality. Down to the present hour almost whole nations in Europe live, worship, and die under the belief that Christ is an ecclesiastical Christ, religion the sum of all the Churches' observances, and faith an adherence to the Churches' creeds. I do not apportion blame; I simply record the fact. Everything that the spiritual and temporal authority of man could do has been done--done in ignorance of the true nature of Christianity--to dislodge the religion of Christ from its natural home in the heart of Humanity. In many lands the Churches have literally stolen Christ from the people; they have made the Son of Man the Priest of an Order; they have taken Christianity from the City and imprisoned it behind altar rails; they have withdrawn it from the national life and doled it out to the few who pay to keep the unconscious deception up. Do not do the Church, the true Church at least, the injustice to think that she does not know all this. Nowhere, not even in the fiercest secular press, is there more exposure of this danger, more indignation at its continuance, than in many of the Churches of today. The protest against the confusion of Christianity with the Church is the most threadbare of pulpit themes." (Henry Drummond, First published 1880)

Whew!

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:8-10)

To superimpose the traditions of men upon our relationship to Christ is to be led away captive and befouled. And in vain will we worship him, as in this instance we have acquired a new master, the expectations and commandments of men.

A greater than the temple is here! A greater than our traditions! The one who transcends all else. The mystery revealed Christ Jesus our lord. He has come out of the shadows. He is the very image of the invisible God. "[Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.](#)" (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Oh Father, on our journey to our temple, our final dwelling place, which is yourself and your son Jesus, may we decline all temptations to build again what you have discarded. Amen.

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