

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

God designed the history of Israel and the Law as a set of symbols later to be fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17) and Christians (Galatians 5:14, Romans 8:4, 13:8)

1. The tabernacle and its furnishings were patterned after the originals in heaven (Exodus 25:9, Hebrews 8:5) and were designed as a set of symbols (Hebrews 9:8 – 11)
  - a. Incense: prayer (Psalm 140:2, Revelation 5:8)
  - b. Lampstand: leader (Zechariah 4) or congregation (Revelation 1:12 – 20)
  - c. Light: The Word of God (John 1:1 – 10, *et al*)
  - d. Table of Showbread: The 12 tribes, their desired purity, and need for sacrifice (Leviticus 24:5 – 9)
  - e. Most Holy Place: Access to God through Jesus (Hebrews 10:19)
  - f. The Veil: The body of Jesus (Hebrews 10:20, Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45)
  - g. Priests: Christians (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 1 Peter 2:5, 2:9)
  - h. High Priest: Jesus (Hebrews 2:17, 3:1, 4:14, 4:15, 5:5, 5:10, 6:20, 7:26, 8:1, 9:11, 10:21)
  - i. Pillars: The faithful (Revelation 3:12)
2. The sacrificial system was an intricate set of symbols of both Jesus and Christians
  - a. The words used for the various sacrifices and offerings are generic, defined only by the context
    - 1) The same generic Hebrew word is used for peace offerings, the Passover lamb, burnt offerings, and sin offerings. The same word is used in Hosea 6:6 (quoted by Matthew 9:13, 12:7) and Psalm 40:6 (quoted by Hebrews 10:5, 8). No argument can be made based on which word was used. The context is the only clue concerning which type of sacrifice is referenced.
    - 2) The same Greek word as in Matthew 9:13, 12:7, Hebrews 10:5, 8 is used in the New Testament to describe sin offerings (Hebrews 5:1, 7:27, 8:3, 9:9, 10:1, 10:3, 10:6, 10:11 ), Abel’s sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4). And temple sacrifices (Luke 13:1). Again, no argument can be made based on word choice. The context tells the type.
    - 3) The same Greek word is used of:
      - a) Christians (Romans 12:1, Philippians 2:17)
      - b) Jesus (Ephesians 5:2, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 9:23, 9:26, 10:12, 10:26)
      - c) A gift (Philippians 4:18)
      - d) Praise (Hebrews 13:15)
      - e) Doing good and sharing (Hebrews 13:16)
      - f) General Christian activities (1 Peter 2:5)
    - 4) When an inspired writer is being poetic or wants to include all types of sacrifices, the phrase “sacrifice and offering” may be used (Hebrews 10:5, 8, quoting Psalm 40:6).
    - 5) When Paul brought offerings for himself and four others, the exact type is not given. If this was part of a Nazirite vow, the offerings were both sin and burnt offerings, perhaps including grain, drink, peace, wave, and heave offerings (Number 6:2 – 21). If the offerings were for some other type of uncleanness, the ritual would include sin and burnt offerings. There is not enough detail in Acts to establish a context. Offering is used in a generic sense.

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

- 6) The same Greek word as is used for grain offering (Hebrews 10:6, 8) is used for:
  - a) Paul's offering of the Gentiles (Romans 15:16)
  - b) Jesus (Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 10:14)
  - c) Offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18)
- b. Specific comparisons are not made in the New Testament concerning heave or wave offerings.
  - 1) Wave offerings are called such because they are waved before God, then given to the priest (Numbers 18:8 – 20). Heave offerings and wave offerings seem to be together. Usually the distinction is by weight (hard to wave quarter of a calf), but at least once the heave offering is just a loaf of bread (Leviticus 7:14), but it could be a lot of loaves. In one place, only heave offerings are mentioned (Numbers 15:17 – 21), but I can see no distinction. Perhaps wave offerings are sheaves and heave offerings are products.
    - a) At Aaron's ordination (Exodus 29:24 – 28, Leviticus 8:22 – 29)
    - b) Peace offering (Leviticus 7:11 – 34, 9:21)
    - c) Grain offerings (Leviticus 10:12 – 15)
    - d) Cleansing a leper (Leviticus 14:1 – 32)
    - e) Feast of Unleavened Bread, firstfruits (Leviticus 23: 6 – 15)
    - f) Feast of Pentecost, firstfruits (Leviticus 23:16 – 21)
    - g) Adultery test (Numbers 5:23 – 26)
    - h) Nazirite (Numbers 6:13 – 20)
  - 2) Wave and heave offerings are, in some cases, first fruits. Jesus, Christians, and the indwelling Spirit are all firstfruits.
    - a) Jesus is called a first fruit (1 Corinthians 15:20 – 23)
    - b) Christians who live before Judgment are called first fruits (James 1:18, Revelation 14:4)
    - c) First converts in a region (Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:15)
    - d) We have the first fruits of the Spirit (Romans 8:23)
  - 3) The part of the sacrifice that became the portion of the priest was likened to gifts for those who spread the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:13 – 14)
- c. Applications of sacrifices made concerning Jesus:
  - 1) Yom Kippur (2 Corinthians 5:21)
  - 2) Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7)
  - 3) Peace and sin offering (Ephesians 5:2)
  - 4) Cleansed heaven (Hebrews 9:23)
  - 5) Blood atonement (Hebrews 9:25, 10:12)
  - 6) Participation (1 Corinthians 10:16 – 21)
  - 7) Reminder (1 Corinthians 11:23 – 27)
- d. Applications of sacrifices made concerning Christians:
  - 1) Evangelism (Romans 15:16)
  - 2) Praise (Hebrews 13:15)
  - 3) Doing good and sharing (Hebrews 13:16, Philippians 4:18)
  - 4) General Christian activities (1 Peter 2:5)
  - 5) Faith (Philippians 2:17)
  - 6) Our bodies (Romans 12:1)

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

3. The Temple
  - a. Jesus cautioned against focusing on the symbols and missing the application (Matthew 12:3 – 8, 23:16 – 23)
  - b. Jesus drove the money changers and animal sellers from the Temple twice
    - 1) John 2:13 – 25
      - a) More a reference to distorting the symbols than to dishonesty
      - b) “Zeal for Your house” shows the importance of the symbols
    - 2) Matthew 21:12 – 13, Mark 11:15 – 18, Luke 19:45 – 46
      - a) “Den of thieves” implies dishonesty.
      - b) The contrast to “House of prayer” shifts the point to symbolism
      - c) Carrying wares through the Temple was not dishonest, rather showed a lack of regard for sanctification
  - c. Fulfillments of the Temple image
    - 1) Jesus called His physical body the Temple (John 2:19 – 22)
    - 2) The church is the Temple
      - a) Universal Temple (Ephesians 2:11 – 18)
      - b) Citizens and family of God (Ephesians 2:19)
      - c) Under construction with many materials (Ephesians 2:21 – 22)
      - d) Priesthood with sacrifices (1 Peter 2:4 – 10)
      - e) Worshippers are in the Temple, not the court (Revelation 11:1 – 2)
    - 3) Individual Christians are the Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16)
      - a) Sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26)
      - b) Consistency [perfection] (2 Corinthians 6:14 – 15)
      - c) People or children of God (2 Corinthians 6:16 – 18)
      - d) Overcomers are pillars who never go out (Revelation 3:12)
    - 4) Some references can be read either way (1 Corinthians 3:16 – 17)
      - a) All Christians are builders of the Temple and are the Temple (v9 – 10)
      - b) Building poorly is sad but not rejected (v15)
      - c) Destroying others brings destruction (v17)
    - 5) Faithful spirits are in the heavenly Temple (Revelation 7:15)
4. Symbolism of the Destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. The first century Christians knew from the words of Jesus (Matthew 24:1 – 34, Luke 21:5 – 32) and from Daniel (Daniel 9:24 – 27) that the world could not end before the Temple was destroyed. The devastation that occurred around that event is referenced many times in the New Testament in order to prepare the early Christians for that time. Even though that event is long past, it has importance for subsequent believers. Not only was the end of the Temple a physical accomplishment of a prediction by God, but also a symbol of at least three spiritual truths.
  - a. The End of the Law of Moses
    - 1) The end of the Law did not occur when Jesus was crucified. Many quote Colossians 2:14 out of context to claim that the Law was nailed to the cross. But the context will not support that conclusion. The sentence refers to Gentiles (verse 13), not Jews. Judgments against us were nailed to the cross.
    - 2) The apostles continued to observe the Law all through the book of Acts, and recommended that Jewish Christians do the same (Acts 21:18 – 25).
    - 3) To explain the attitude of the Jewish Christians, perhaps the example of David is appropriate. On more than one occasion, David had opportunity to kill King

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

Saul. David had already been anointed by Samuel as the next king. But, David considered it inappropriate for him to speed the process along (1 Samuel 24:4 – 7, 1 Samuel 26:7 – 12). The Jewish Christians waited patiently for God to accomplish His promise of the end of that era (Daniel 9:27).

- 4) Since the Law applied only to the physical descendants of Israel who lived in a small geographic area, Gentile Christians would consider the end of the Law to be interesting, but not applicable to them. The magnitude of the event implies that something more is being symbolized.
- b. Completion of the Written Word and the Gathering of the Elect
- 1) Ephesians 4:7 – 14 says that Jesus granted miraculous apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the equipping of the saints UNTIL we all come to the unity of the faith. If this does not happen until the end of time, then Jesus' prayer in John 17:20 – 21 failed. Rather, these miraculous people were provided until the objective standard was completed and delivered to the whole world (Colossians 1:6, Romans 1:8, Jude 3). God has the ability to spread the gospel to the whole world in an instant. He chose to cause that dispersal to take about 40 years (perhaps 30). Clearly, a dozen men could not accomplish this task, so the time frame is miraculous. God chose to disperse the message through human deliverymen, so He was obliged to operate within the boundaries of the free will He had previously granted.
  - 2) Revelation 11:3 – 14 describes the miraculous messengers of the gospel, that they stayed alive by their powers despite tremendous opposition. But when their testimony was complete (verse 7), Satan was able to kill them. The litmus test for whether a passage refers to the end of time is whether anyone survives. This scene is followed by another that refers to the physical earth, so this completion of the written Word occurred at a point in history. Otherwise, we should be expecting more books to be added to the Bible.
  - 3) Jesus applied Daniel 7:13 – 14 to Himself (Matthew 24:30, Luke 21:27, Luke 22:69, Matthew 26:64), "The Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." This event is connected with "gathering together the elect from the four winds" (Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27). Jesus was careful to specify that this was not at the end of time, but rather would be accomplished before that generation passed away (Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32). Further, Jesus, Paul, and Peter specified that there would be no signs of the end of heaven and earth (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 – 3, 2 Peter 3:10), yet Jesus gave several signs of His "coming in the clouds."
  - 4) As promised, the gospel went "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," (Acts 13:46, Romans 1:8, 2:9, 2:10). Paul noted in Romans 11 that a significant percentage of Jews did not accept the gospel and were cut off from the family of God, but that this was part of the plan. However, this low response rate was not permanent, as described in the latter part of the chapter (viz., 11:25). The destruction of the Temple was a watershed event for many unbelieving Jews. Although they did not, at the time, believe that Jesus was the Messiah, they had read Daniel and knew that the Temple could not be destroyed until after the Messiah came. When the Temple fell, many unbelieving Jews turned to Jesus because of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. The "fullness of the

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

Gentiles” had come in; many Jews brought up the rear, and the elect had been effectively gathered from the four corners of the earth.

### c. The End of Satan’s Power on Earth

- 1) Jesus described the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem as the worst of all time (Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:19). Further, Jesus said that “unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”
- 2) Satan was lord of this earth during Jesus’ time and that of the apostles (Luke 4:6, John 14:30, Ephesians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8). In addition to tempting Jesus (Matthew 4, Luke 4) and demon possession, Satan could take away the Word to prevent belief (Luke 8:12), had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), deceived (Revelation 12:9), and accused (Revelation 12:10). However, Jesus hinted that this would not always be the case (John 12:31). Revelation 12:10 specifically states that the accuser has been cast down, so Satan can no longer accuse the faithful.
- 3) Jesus is the king of this world now (Revelation 1:5, 2:27, 12:5, 11:15, 19:15, Psalm 2:8 - 9). After Jesus returned to heaven, a war ensued, after which Satan and his angels were exiled to the earth (Revelation 12:8 – 9). Satan knew he had only a short time, so he had great wrath against the faithful, which spilled over onto the unbelievers (Revelation 12:12 – 17). This is the source of the great tribulation described by Jesus, the worst of all time.
- 4) In conjunction with the destruction of the Temple, Satan was bound in the abyss (Revelation 20:3) and can “deceive the nations no longer.” Compare to 2 Corinthians 4:4. The bad angels also are bound in the abyss (Jude 6), as predicted by Zechariah 13:2 and applied by Jesus in Matthew 26:31.
- 5) The Christians of the church at Rome were told to expect to crush Satan under their feet shortly (Romans 16:20)

### 5. Sabbath

#### a. Building the illustration

- 1) Genesis 2:1 – 3 God blessed the seventh day. He identified it as favored over other days. The application (fullness) of the illustration is that heaven is favored over other times. God sanctified the seventh day. He reserved the day for godly purposes. This was applied by the rule of Law to enable its enforcement in a nation populated in the vast majority by unbelievers. The application is that work ceases in heaven. Rather, instead of laboring to live and serve on earth, heaven is reserved for godly purposes.
- 2) Exodus 16:4 – 31 The Sabbath rest is first mentioned before the Law, in connection to the manna.
- 3) Exodus 20:8 – 11, 31:12 – 17, 35:2 – 3 In the Law, the Sabbath is again connected to the seventh day of creation, God’s rest.
- 4) Deuteronomy 5:12 – 15 An additional image of the Sabbath is to remember the rescue.
- 5) Leviticus 24:5 – 10 The Table of Showbread was replenished each Sabbath. Only the priests could eat it.

#### b. Fulfilling the illustration

## Symbolism of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Law

- 1) Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11 The Sabbath was designed as an illustration of the eternal rest of believers. Entry into the promised rest perhaps is better understood as entry into the Kingdom. Our spirits are with God at that time. The only substantive change at physical death is that our consciousness and our character are re-united. The other choice is to delay entry into the promised rest until Judgment.
  - 2) Revelation 14:13 Believers rest from their labors after death. Again, physical death and baptismal death may be understood.
  - 3) Jesus applied the manna image to Himself in John 6:25 – 63. The application of double manna on the sixth day is not given. Using the application of entering the promised rest at baptism, the double manna on Friday would be the special effort God puts forth to bring us to faith.
- c. Why do Christians not observe the Sabbath?
- 1) Saying that we do not observe the Sabbath because it was part of the Law of Moses begs the question. Certainly, we do not observe the Law, but the sanctification of the Sabbath occurred in Genesis 1.
  - 2) Asserting that the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday is without Biblical support.
  - 3) By way of comparison, the sacrificial system is an illustration of both Jesus' sacrifice and our sacrifice. We do not continue with the illustration after the fulfillment has occurred.
  - 4) This lends additional weight to the understanding that believers have already entered the promised rest. If not, we should continue with the illustration until the reality is fulfilled.