

Good evening! Welcome to week 4 of our series on "What is Worship?"

Raise hands - who was here? What did you learn?

So last time we began to really hit home on this idea of fulfillment - the Old Testament reveals so much about how we worship, but we can't understand it or apply it to us unless we see how its fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So as we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament to us, we have to look at every passage through the lens of Jesus Christ.

Last week we looked at the sacrifices and the priesthood, and we drew a line from the Old Testament to Jesus to us. And what we learned, I hope, was that the New Testament calls you and I to worship God as living sacrifices because we are united to whom? To Jesus! The true living sacrifice. And God calls his people to worship him as priests because we are united to whom? Jesus, the great high priest.

Well tonight I want to look into the location of true worship. The Location of true worship.

So let's pause and take a moment to pray for our time together, and we'll dive in.

Let's pray

Tonight we want to ask the question - where does worship happen? And again, I want to trace that through the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament..

Last week we talked for a little while about a big question that the entire Bible tries to answer. **Who can remember that big question?: How can sinful man reunite with a Holy God?**

Our sin has driven a wedge between us and God, it separates us from him! **That's the bad news.**

Now here's the good news - **God wants to be with his people.** He does! He wants to be with his people.

And so what we see in scripture is God making a way to be with his people. **Can sinful man make a way to be with God? No. But God makes a way to be with sinful man.**

And he does that throughout the Bible by preparing a place of worship for us.

So let's look to the scriptures. And we're going to see three distinct places of worship in the Old Testament. Three distinct places of worship - and I promise we'll move through them fairly quickly.

OT Place of Worship Revealed

What was the first location of true worship? The Garden of Eden!

God created man, placed him in the garden, and dwelt with him. This was the first location of worship!

We talked this past Sunday about how God walked with Adam and Eve in the midst of the garden - this was pure, true worship, and the location of this worship was the Garden of Eden.

But man sinned, was removed from this place of fellowship with God, and was left without a way to be with God.

But God doesn't stop working to be with his people, does he? So let's move on to Exodus where God calls his people out of slavery in Egypt, commits himself to them to be their God and for them to be his people, and guess what else he gives them? A place to worship!

He gives instructions to Moses that the people should build a sanctuary called the tabernacle. The next location of worship was the tabernacle.

The Tabernacle

Turn with me to Exodus 25:8-9.

"And let them make me a sanctuary, **that I may dwell in their midst.**⁹ Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Ex. 25:8-9)

So, from this passage, what does God say the purpose of the tabernacle is? was the That God would dwell in the midst of his people.

The purpose of the tabernacle: That God could dwell with man

So God told Moses to have the people make him a sanctuary called the tabernacle. The tabernacle was designed to be mobile. It was portable - the people of God were not yet stationary so their place of worship was not yet stationary. It was designed specifically for the needs of God's people.

The tabernacle traveled with the people of God all the way through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. Now, once they got to the Promised Land and settled down a little bit, what do you think happened?

It was time to build something a little more permanent! **So David, a couple hundred years after showing up in the Promised Land, has this desire to build a house for the Lord.** God

tells him that he's not going to be the one to build the temple, though, who is it going to be? Solomon. Solomon builds the temple.

This is the third location of worship in the Old Testament - the temple.

Worship in the temple was pretty much the same as it was in the tabernacle, with the main difference being that it was now stationed in the capitol city of Jerusalem. So pilgrims from all over would come and travel to worship in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was called the City of God.

Look with me to Psalm 48

Psa. 48:1 Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!

His holy mountain,

2 beautiful in elevation,

is the joy of all the earth,

Mount Zion, in the far north,

the city of the great King.

3 Within her citadels God

has made himself known as a fortress.

So at this point the temple is the location of worship, and by extension, Jerusalem is the place of worship.

But guess what? Was the temple a permanent place of worship? NO! It was destroyed. The city of God was invaded. God's people were exiled away from Jerusalem. They longed to return there to worship. But it's clear that having one stationary place of worship is not going to meet the needs of God's people. God wants to be worshiped in all the Earth!

But was the temple the end of God's plan to dwell with his people? No. Was Jerusalem the ultimate location of true worship? No. It pointed forward to something greater, and who might that be?

Fulfilled In Jesus Christ

In Jesus Christ. When Jesus came onto the scene, **he ushered in the age of true worship.** His arrival signified a shift from the shadow to the reality. Now, we're not fully there yet. Right? We're not completely home yet, but when he came onto the scene he inaugurated the age of true worship.

Someone read for us Matthew 12:6 - "Something greater than the temple is here."

Something greater than the temple is here!

Now I want to significance of this to settle in on us for a minute, because when Jesus said this, and it was heard for the first time, this was absolutely revolutionary.

Jesus himself claims that for all the significance of the temple - the very place where God dwelt, where man could come into God's presence and offer sacrifices to him, where God could be worshipped by his people - this great and incredibly significant structure is pointing toward something even greater - and that great reality has come and stepped into the present. Jesus says it is here.

This is huge!

So just like the sacrifices and the priesthood, Jesus is the fulfillment of what the temple was all about. **Someone explain how this is true.**

Where do we go to meet with God? We go to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is literally God and man together. God incarnate. The clearest picture of God making a way to dwell with man isn't the temple, it's Jesus Christ.

Worship is impossible apart from Jesus Christ - he is where all men must go to worship God the Father.

The sacrifices of our lives are offered up through Jesus Christ and all of us are priests who serve IN the true temple, Jesus Christ.

The physical temple wasn't indestructible - it was destroyed. Crumbled to the ground. But Jesus' body was torn down and raised back up never to be destroyed again.

So Jesus saying something "greater than the temple" is here means that whatever the temple meant for the worship of God and God's presence with his people is accomplished in Jesus Christ.

So, in one sense, the location of true worship is IN Jesus Christ, the true temple of God.

Now, remember what we talked about last week - these Old Testament forms of worship are merely shadows. There is a corresponding reality to these shadows.

Y'all thought we were done with Hebrews didn't you? Not yet! Hebrews is showing us how all of these Old Testament shadows have a corresponding true reality in heaven. And All of this is revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

You and exist in the physical world, but there is a spiritual reality that is actually much more real, much more lasting and true than what we can see and touch here. In other words, the temple came and went but the true and lasting temple endures forever in heaven. All of this in the OT was a shadow meant to point us to the reality.

Let's look at Hebrews 12

Heb. 12:18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Now, there is A LOT here, **but look at verse 18** - what is he saying here? Now that we are in the New Covenant, IN Jesus Christ, in this age of true worship, when we come to the presence of God we're not simply coming to something in the physical. We're not coming to what may be touched, we're entering into the spiritual reality of worshipping God.

Verse 22 - you have come to Mount Zion (you could say the TRUE Mount Zion), and to the city of the living God (the true city), the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering

So for those who are IN Christ, the location of true worship: The heavenly Jerusalem

So let me stop here real quick and let's make some application. **How does this impact the way we enter into worship?**

Do we enter into worship casually? Without much thought?

For me, when I consider this text, this is exciting! Let's be honest for a minute, sometimes worship can be dull. Most of the time that's our own fault if it feels that way, but the truth is a lot of times when you come to worship you may not be feeling it.

It's helpful to remember what exactly is going on here.

This ought to raise the bar of what we think we're doing in worship. We're not just coming to a physical place to do physical things, we are joining into the worship that is happening in the true city of God. We're not just joining together with our brothers and sisters here in worship, we're joining in with the angels and the saints in heaven. We're stepping into the reality of who we were made to be and what we were made to do.

So worship ought to be joyful. It ought to be exciting! It ought to increase our longing to BE in that heavenly Jerusalem in worship, and it ought to help sustain us in our exile here in the meantime.

Let me pause here for any questions on this.

Let's look at another passage here, and I think this will help clarify this for us.

John 4:19-24. This is one of the most significant passages in our understanding of the location of true worship.

Just for some context, this is Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well.

"The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Spirit and Truth - what does that mean?

Now, remember what we're talking about here - the location of true worship. And with that as our background I want to ask you, what in the world does Jesus mean by verse 23?

I think he's talking along the same lines as Hebrews here - we worship in the realm of the Spirit, where God is, who is Spirit, and we worship in the truth, not in the shadow. He's saying, true worship doesn't happen on either one of those mountains, it happens in the realm of the Spirit. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. As opposed to flesh and shadow.

Now, we're going to keep going and draw that line to us, but let me pause here for any questions before we move on.

The Location of Worship: Applied to Us

So Jesus is the fulfillment of the temple, but guess what? If you and I are IN Jesus Christ, then the Bible calls you and I the temple. Now I want you to notice this connection - Jesus Christ is the true temple. You and I, by faith, are united to him. Therefore, IN him, we are the temple as well.

Let's take a look - 1 Cor. 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- 1 Cor. 3:16-17

So because God's Spirit dwells within us, we are called the temple. And notice the implication of this - we must be holy!

Let's look at 1 Peter 2:4-5 - notice how he connects this idea to Jesus Christ:

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

-1 Peter 2:4-5

How is it that we are being built up to a spiritual house? As we come to him. On our own, we are nothing, IN Christ, we are the dwelling place of God himself.

Then again, hitting on what we talked about last week, IN HIM we are built up as a holy priesthood, and we offer spiritual sacrifices THROUGH Jesus Christ.

Last one - Ephesians 2:19-22

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**"

So where does the presence of God dwell? In his church. In his people. He made a way to dwell not just with his people but within his people. So the place of worship is no longer external, it's truly within us who are IN Jesus Christ.

On one hand, this is actually more like the tabernacle than the temple isn't it? Why do I say that? **Because its mobile! We take the Spirit of God with us wherever we go. Worship can**

happen at any time in any place so long as the Spirit of God and the people of God are present.

Worship isn't limited or confined to a particular place - Jerusalem used to be the place, now it is any place, any time.

So let's finish our time by thinking through some application:

I think first of all, this gives some further support to our discussion about how ALL of our lives are to be lived in worship. Does the Spirit dwell inside of you just on Sundays and Wednesdays? Then how do you think we're to live every moment of our lives?

- In worship
- In holiness

I think we should use this to help us grow in our awareness of God's presence with us at all times

We should enter regularly into communion with God - what does this look like?

- Paul says pray without ceasing

The presence of the Spirit inside of us should lead us to holiness

- Paul uses this temple idea to urge the Corinthians to sexual morality. He says don't you know that the spirit is within you? How can you indulge in sexual immorality when you carry the spirit of God inside of you! Don't profane the temple!

Now, here's a teaser for next week, OK?

I think we've made it clear that worship is not limited to this place. Haven't we? There is nothing significant about these four walls, other than the fact that this is where we come to worship God.

If we carry God's Spirit within us, and this physical place isn't the mirror image of the temple, then why do we need to gather together for worship? What's the point? Why is it necessary? Can't we just worship God on our own?

Next week we're going to shift gears a little bit and talk about what we do when we gather together in worship.

Here's the short answer to the question - God isn't just dwelling within individual people - he is creating for himself a people. And when we gather together to worship, each of us carrying within us the Spirit of God, we get a taste of what it is like to worship in spirit and truth. In heaven, it's not just you and God it's God and his people. We're made to worship together.

So that's where we're headed next week.

Let's Pray

Rev. 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."³

So here's the question I want to leave you with, and this is a bit of a teaser for next week: If all this is true, then why do we even need to come to church?