

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter from Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Destroying the Temple

Art Nelson

Introduction

We are all resistant to change, to transitions, to moving from the old to the new. We don't like anything that upsets the status quo. We even have hymns that say "Give me that Old Time Religion". However, one thing is sure—the Lord is unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. As we walk with the Lord we move from that which is temporary to that which is permanent, from the temporal to the Eternal. That certainly requires change on our part.

God's will is determined, fixed and completed in the heavenlies; but, it unfolds sequentially here in time. If we are walking with the Lord, as He unfolds more of His purpose and intention, we must change in order to move into it. Our walk and growth in the Lord is a series of transitions from the old to the new.

We have a perfect picture of our walk given as an example by the Children of Israel. God delivered them from Egypt, then led them through a series of camps to the Promised Land. Each camp was a transition point. The people could have decided to stay at that camp and not move to the next one. Of course, they would miss what God had for them, but, they would still be free, no longer slaves to the Egyptians.

The point of the wilderness journey was to change their perception of reality and to change their way of thinking. They learned to think like slaves in their long stay in Egypt. Even though they marched in ranks and looked like an army when they left Egypt, they still thought and acted like slaves. God even moved them from the caravan route to Canaan so that they wouldn't have to fight at the beginning of their journey so that they would not lose heart. However, by the time that they were to reach the Promised Land, their thinking processes had to be different. They had to think like fighters, warriors, because they would have to fight to occupy the land even though God had given it to them. Each transition point taught them more about the Lord and changed their way of thinking. It moved them from the old slave mentality to a new warrior mentality.

There is also a key element of our thinking processes that must change as the Lord delivers us from the world and moves us through our transition camps to our Land of Promises, the Kingdom of God. To fail to change is to stay in the old camp and not move to the new.

Jesus and the Temple

Early in Jesus' ministry we have the story recorded in the Scriptures of His encounter with the money changers in the Temple.

John 2:13-17 NKJV Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (14) And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. (15) When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. (16) And He said to those who sold doves, **"Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"** (17) Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE HAS EATEN ME UP."

The disciples were impressed with Jesus' actions, even remembering the Old Testament scripture about His zeal for His Father's house. However, although we tend to act like it today, that is not the end of the story.

John 2:18-22 NKJV So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" (19) Jesus answered and said to them, **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** (20) Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" (21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (22) Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Like Paul Harvey says, "now for the rest of the story..." Jesus told them a transition was coming. The Temple is not what they thought it was. They saw Herod's Temple, which took 46 years to be built. It was magnificent. One of the wonders of its day. But, Jesus saw His Father's House—the Temple of His Body, which was coming with His resurrection.

When we are in transition situations, revelation from the Holy Spirit has to come for us to see. Why do you think John tells us here in verse 22 that when Jesus had risen from the dead that the disciples remembered that He had said this? Jesus had told them multiple times that He had to die and be resurrected, yet it is this saying that John tells us that they remembered.

I think that they remembered this because the Holy Spirit was bringing revelation about the transition from an earthly Temple, a shadow, to the Heavenly Temple, a reality. The real Temple is the Body of Christ, many membered with Him as the Head.

When revelation comes, the Holy Spirit will enlighten our understanding by bringing various Scriptures together in a way that facilitates understanding and the application of the revelation. Jesus gave other discourses to further prepare the disciples for the transition that was coming. The revelation of the spiritual Temple is central to us if we are to understand the plans and purposes of the Lord. Otherwise, we will not be in a place to cooperate with Him in the events that close out this age.

To the Jews, God's chosen people, Jerusalem and the Temple were central to their relationship to

God. It was inconceivable to them that they would not remain forever. Their anticipation of a Messiah was that He would restore the Kingdom of Israel and destroy its enemies. However, they clung to the past and didn't understand the future when He stood in front of them.

Matthew 23:37-39 NKJV "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! (38) See! Your house is left to you desolate; (39) for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' "

This came at the end of Jesus' list of woes to the Pharisees. Jesus pronounced judgment on the house of Israel and on the Temple when He said, "Your house is left to you desolate." And, "you shall see Me not more till...". The next verse (there are no chapter breaks in the original) says that Jesus departed from the Temple.

Matthew 24:1-2 NKJV Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. (2) And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Jesus was the manifestation of the glory of God. When He left the Temple, the glory of God left. It is an explanation to us that when He pronounced judgment and left the Temple that the old was out and that the transition to the new was beginning.

The disciples didn't see it. All they saw was the beauty of the Temple and were quick to point that out to Jesus when they left the Temple. However, Jesus shocked them by telling them that the beautiful edifice would be totally destroyed even to the point that not a single stone would be left stacked on another. This struck at the heart of what it was to be a Hebrew—the Temple signified God in their midst. Who could even conceive that it would not last? Although they could not know it then, even though it took 46 years to build it, it would not be that long before it was gone.

The issue of the Temple was such that Jesus' statements about it and His resurrection were twisted by His accusers and used as a false witness against Him (Matthew 27:63).

And when Jesus was raised from the dead, they remembered what He had said. A new Temple, His Body, would be raised in three days.

Stephen and the Temple

We all remember the story of the stoning of Stephen in Acts, but we usually concentrate on Saul who was holding the coats of them that did the stoning. However, it was the issue of the Temple that got Stephen into trouble with the Jews to begin with. Revelation came with the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit and Stephen was apparently one of those that understood quickly that a transition was being made to a spiritual Temple not made with human hands.

Acts 6:8-9 NKJV And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. (9) Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from

Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.

Acts 6:11 NKJV Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

Acts 6:13-14 NKJV They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; (14) for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

Those of the synagogue were upset about the things that Stephen was saying (by the Holy Spirit) about the destruction of the Temple and the transition to new customs. When confronted by them, Stephen gave a long historical discourse that ended with the Temple issue and its consequences. Stephen quotes from Isaiah:

Acts 7:48-50 NKJV "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: (49) 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL. WHAT HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME? SAYS THE LORD, OR WHAT IS THE PLACE OF MY REST? (50) HAS MY HAND NOT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?'

Now, those listening to this were very familiar with the Old Testament scriptures and this one in particular was well known. Stephen did not complete the quote but stopped part way. But, I am sure that those hearing the words completed the scripture in their minds. It would be like us saying "For God so love the world..." and then stopping without completing it. Most of us would immediately supply the rest of the quote from our memory, "that He gave His only begotten Son...". So it would have been with them. These are the verses from Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:1-2 NKJV Thus says the LORD: "Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? (2) For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist," Says the LORD. "But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word."

Isaiah, by the word of the Lord, moves from "a house" to "on this one will I look". This is what incensed them so as their memory supplied the rest of quote that Stephen made. From a house to the One; from a Temple made with hands to One made without hands, by the Spirit. So, they stoned him to death.

Peter and the Temple

Saul heard the words of Stephen as he held the coats of those stoning him and I believe that they caused him to seek understanding about this after his conversion and he became Paul. It is obvious from his writing that he had much revelation concerning the Body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

However, it is Peter that gives us a succinct summing up, using the Temple and the stones picture as a way of architecturally understanding the spiritual Temple as a dwelling place for the Spirit of God.

1 Peter 2:4-8 NKJV Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by

men, but chosen by God *and* precious, (5) you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNERSTONE, ELECT, PRECIOUS, AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME." (7) Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE," (8) and "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

Jesus is the living cornerstone, the foundation of the Temple upon which all else rests and we are living stones being built up as a spiritual house. We are completing the Temple in time that is already complete in Eternity.

Contrast the spiritual temple with the temple of Jesus' day. Herod's temple was beautiful, a wonder to the world. The cornerstone of the spiritual temple is rejected by the builders but chosen by God. To those who are obedient, He is elect, precious, the chief stone. To those who are not obedient, He is a stone of offense, a stone over which the disobedient stumble.

Us and the Temple

We have the same problem today that the disciples had during the first century. Under the name of Christianity temples have been built. Only we don't call them temples, we call them 'churches'. Same difference. The word 'church' comes from a word that means "house of God", which is another way of saying 'temple'.

Those who have received revelation concerning the Lord and His people as the spiritual temple—the living Body of Christ—are rejected and/or persecuted by those that hold on to the earthly temples. The whole 'temple system' has been judged by Jesus and pronounced "desolate". We are fooling ourselves, walking in deception, if we believe that God finds our denominational/synagogue/temple system pleasing.

To ignore Jesus as the real temple is an affront to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have boldness to come to God through the temple veil of the flesh of Jesus. The earthly veil was ripped open and the holiest place was shown to be empty. The new and living way is open to the very presence of the Glory of God.

It is vain worship that occurs in earthly temples. It is empty, without value. The spiritual temple requires spiritual worship. This is worship in Spirit and in Truth. The place of worship is in the midst of those who, as living stones, are being built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. This is worship that is of value to God.

We are in transition—spiritual transition—that is absolutely necessary to the completing of the purpose of God at the close of this age. We don't like it. We have to leave the old and move on to the new. We have to put off the old wineskins and receive the new. We have to leave the temples of idolatry and learn to live in the spiritual temple of the reality of the Body of Christ.

Like Herod's temple, we want our temple to be a wonder to the world. We keep building bigger and bigger buildings; implementing more expensive programs; reducing the requirements to the lowest common denominator; offering worldly comforts to entice as many as possible; providing entertainment and social club interaction. We want to be able to point this beauty out to Jesus just as the disciples did and say isn't it wonderful. Jesus says to us, "I say to you, not one stick will be left standing. It will all burn at My judgment seat. I said to you previously that the house made with hands is left desolate. Only the House that I build with living stones will stand."

Let those with ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying.

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For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com

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