

## The Bible in One Year Week 31: The Glory of God (Chronicles Pt. 2)

(2 Chronicles 7:1-4, 11-22)

### • The Temple

- So, we're back in the Old Testament for this part of the Bible in One Year and, as you know if you caught last week, we're working through Chronicles *very* quickly! Chronicles was originally meant to be the *end* of the Old Testament: that's how the Hebrew Bible arranges it, because it basically summarizes the Hebrew Scriptures and sets the stage for Jesus and the New Testament. Two of the main themes of Chronicles are the promise of the coming *Messiah* and the promise of a *new Temple* that would really fulfill all that God spoke through the prophets. Last week, we hit that *Messiah* theme as we focused on the Heart of David, and now we're looking more at the *Temple* theme, in this key moment with Solomon's Temple.
- When you stop and *really* think about this story, *its quite amazing*. Today, I want to help you understand a little more of what the Temple tells us about God and about our walk of faith—what it really means and why it matters. To help with that, let's start with a video from the Bible Project, this will give you a lot of insight: <https://youtu.be/wTnq6l3vUbU>

### • What It Means

- Ok, here's the main idea: the wild truth is that the Jerusalem Temple was meant to be the earthly home of the God of the universe, the sacred place where he made his presence known *in a special way*. It wasn't that this building could by any means *contain* God, but that it was the earthly place which *overlapped* with God's heavenly home. It's the unique touchpoint between heaven and earth. And all of it is just a symbol of the greater reality that's implied throughout the story of the Bible: all *creation* is meant to be God's Temple. Heaven and earth were meant to *overlap*, to be united; it's only because of human sin and the fall that they have this "rift." So, God's special people Israel and the Temple are part of God's rescue plan to ultimately redeem all creation and lead us to the day when once again, the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.
- When Jesus talked about the "end times," he once referred to it as "the renewal of all things." That Greek word "renewal" is "paliggenesia" which literally means "genesis again." It's about going back to the garden, renewing the way things were in Genesis 1, *a new beginning*. The Temple was a symbol of that first Eden where humans dwelt in delight with God and a foretaste of the new Eden when God will restore all things, which the Messiah was going to bring. *That's* what the Temple *means*. Pretty cool, huh?
- So, as we look at this story from 2 Chronicles 7 with Solomon's completion of the Temple, here are three things we can learn here about God and his intentions for us.

### • What We Learn There

- **1) God's glory will blow your mind.** I have trouble coming up with any other way to say it. Just look at what happened and how the people respond: *"When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, 'He is good; his love endures forever.' Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord,"* (2 Chron. 7:1-4).
  - What an amazing, amazing picture of *worship*. You know, it just takes a glimpse, *one glimpse* of God's glory to put your entire life into perspective. And this is our problem: we've become blinded, our hearts dulled, our minds darkened to the glory of God.
  - The first humans *lived in the glory of God*, they walked with him through the Garden unashamed. I imagine they were constantly glowing with his glory, like the face of Moses when he came out of the Tent, like Jesus on the mountain of Transfiguration. Adam and Eve didn't fall on their faces before him, because they didn't know anything else! But here, out of Eden, in these shadow lands, when God's glory breaks through *it wrecks us*.

- It doesn't matter who you are—every knee will bow, because we won't be able to help it. The problem with a lot of our worship today is that we take all this for granted: we can just casually come into God's presence like it's no big deal, because we're not really thinking about what we're doing here. Like, do we just come to sing some songs and give ourselves warm fuzzies? Really? That's what God's people are here for? We forget what it cost to allow us to come *freely* into his glorious presence. Back then when God's glory came the priests of Israel couldn't even enter in! And if we thought about it long enough and our minds opened up, *we'd be on our faces too*. We can go through our lives being only *half aware* of God; hearing things *about God*, believing some things *about God*, but in that moment when we really *encounter God*, even just a glimpse, a hint, of his true Glory—the Glory of the infinite, eternal, perfect, holy God of the Universe—we fall on our faces, and we're never the same. *God's glory will blow your mind*.
- **2) God wants to be near you.** That's the crazy thing. When you think about God's glory, then consider the fact that *this God* wants to be near you. That's what the Temple says. He *wants* to dwell among us! But he had to prepare us for it because, like we said, after this rift opened up between us and heaven, we lost sight of his glory and need to be reintroduced, reconciled. But from the Garden, to the Fall, to the Promises of Israel, and the Temple, to Jesus and the Church—the Story of the Bible tells us that *God wants to be near us*. He made us for himself, for communion with him. It's all the more reason to fall on our faces and cry out like they did, "*He is good; his love endures forever!*"
  - Do you believe that God wants to be near *you*? That he formed you, breathed life into you, in order to be in a *relationship with him*? Or do you write yourself off? Do you think you're too far gone, too much shame, not good enough, not religious enough?
  - In the Temple, God is saying something to us. In the incarnation of the Son of God, and his death and resurrection, God is saying something to humanity. He's saying, "*I want to be near you, I want you to be with me, I'm providing a way for you to come to me, so come, and be satisfied, be made whole, be restored, become what you were made to be.*" And he wants us to be *set apart* for him: he wants us to be devoted to him, to obey him and follow him, because that's the place of *life*. He doesn't want us to rebel, to turn away to other idols, to take charge for ourselves, because that's the way of *death*. He wants us to be near him and set apart for him.
- **3) God offers you a path of redemption.** It's really interesting that God doesn't say, "*If the people turn away and I shut up the heavens...*" but he just comes right and says, "*When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people...*" They just had this huge mountaintop moment where all the preparations are complete and God's glory has come to dwell among them in their settled land, their kingdom, but God comes to Solomon and says, "*I know you're going to still turn away from me. You're going to wander, you're going to get lost, and things are going to start falling apart. You're going to sin, and there's going to be dire consequences.*" But God continues to provide a *path of redemption*, because *that's who he is*. He says, "*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*" With the one true God, the living God, there is always a path of redemption. Hallelujah.
  - There are dire consequences to turning away from the author of Life; we live with them every day in this fallen world. But God in his goodness has always made a way to turn back, and he went to the farthest extent to do it. He gave us the Temple as a place to worship, to pray, to sacrifice, to find that forgiveness and reconciliation we would always need—which all pointed towards the ultimate fulfilment of the Temple: the Son of God incarnate, the real bridge between heaven and earth, who laid down his life, descended into the worst of our darkness, conquered death, and offers us the way home. That's why he says, "*Repent and believe in me,*" and that's why we respond, "*He is good; his love endures forever.*"
- **The New Temple & The Table**
  - And now, *we are the Temple*. We are the place where his glory dwells. (Remember Pentecost?)

- The Church is meant to be the touchpoint between earth and heaven, meant to spread the good news of his glory all over the earth, until he comes again and all things are *renewed*.
  - Which brings us to this new place and this new way of worship, this new kind of sacrifice and celebration: the Lord's Table. It's the sign and symbol of his presence and his sacrifice, where his presence comes to meet with us in a special way. It's the most audacious, unexpected revelation of his glory. And as we behold the mystery of his sacrifice for us, in light of this big story of salvation, we ask ourselves again today, "*How should we respond? How should we live?*" If this is all true, what's your response, how will you move forward?
  - It takes us to Romans 12 again: now we can see why Paul says, in view of God's mercy, offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If you come to believe that *all of this is true of us* because of what Christ has done, it demands that we rethink *everything* about our lives and by his grace, learn to live truly for him and with him. And it starts by coming back here, again and again, to celebrate what he's done, and to receive his grace anew, so that we can be his temple. Let's celebrate the Lord today.