



bb-TBC-36

☰ Context	Bible Study Deliverable NLR Preaching
☑ DELIVERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
☑ DONE!	<input type="checkbox"/>
Σ Day	Thu
📅 Due Date	@December 2, 2021
☰ Refs:	
➤ Related to Projects (Column)	
☰ Status	Confirmed On Radar
☰ Working Title	The Irreparable Covenant
Σ days to go	-5

Introduction

before we move on I want to give some attention to the way in which the old covenant was brought to an absolute end. This was not a transition from an Old Covenant to a New Covenant. This was an abrupt change: a genuine paradigm shift.

A True Temple

The king had come, the light shined but, in the main, the messenger of the covenant had not been received. In the way that a country might refuse to receive or recognise an ambassador from another country so, in the main, the covenant people refused to recognise Christ's role and authority.

At the beginning of his public ministry John, the gospel writer, recorded that Christ visited the Temple in Jerusalem during the time of the Passover. He discovered that

the Court of the Gentiles had been wholly given over to a market and the scene was one of bellowing cattle and bleating sheep. The officials who changed foreign currencies into temple currency had set up their stalls and the whole atmosphere was of a bustling Oriental bazaar, and this in the area that have been set aside for Gentiles who were seeking to worship the God of Israel.

Christ plaited a small whip and drove the stallholders from the court of the Gentiles. Some have seen the scene as an outburst of rage and consequently, sin but it was not uncontrollable rage but deliberate action. He took the time to fashion that small whip with which to herd the animals and then went into action. His war-

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, And an alien unto my mother's children.

For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; And the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.

(Psalm 69:8–9 ASV)

cry was "this is **my Father's House**". He drove out those who turned the house into a market and later, when they consider these things, the disciples remembered an ancient Psalm which seemed to explain it all;

He had been aroused to this action out of a sense of the disgrace that was being brought upon his Father's house by the behaviour of the covenant people.???

When the authorities protested at own behaviour demanded some evidence of his right to do such a thing, he replied that the sign of his authority would be his resurrection, but not nearly so plainly is that...

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:19–21 NKJV)

He knew that initially his words would be misunderstood by everyone who heard them but he took the opportunity of sowing a seed in the minds of those who would later witness his resurrection. We are so familiar with these words and John's

explanation of them that we easily missed the significance of the fact that Christ was regarding himself as a temple, and temples in Jewish history were a 'residence for God'.

It is a theme that begins earlier in John's record. A devout Israelite had become convinced of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and expressed his conviction in a remarkable confession;

Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”(John 1:49 NKJV)

These two titles are impressive in themselves. Nathaniel saw clearly who he was and what he'd come to do. To these amazing revelations Jesus added another;

And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and **the angels of God ascending and descending** upon the Son of Man.” (John 1:51 NKJV)

Perhaps that is a little obscure until we realise the story that Jesus had in mind when he said it. In the very beginnings of Gods' dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God revealed himself to these men, spoke to them and then, in turn, entered into personal covenants with them. At one point God revealed himself to Jacob in a dream. The dream terrified Jacob. He saw a connection between Heaven and Earth with free access to and fro. He saw a place where heaven touched earth and where the free intercourse between the two was expressed in a powerful image;

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed; and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, **the angels of God ascending and descending** on it. (Genesis 28:10–12 ASV)

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! **this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.** (Genesis 28:16–17 ASV)

We see here a combining of ideas, the house of God is marked by the presence of angels 'ascending and descending' upon it.

Nathaniel was a devout Israelite and these words of Jesus would have spoken to him much more clearly than they might speak to us today. Christ was saying "I am the house of God" I am the place where God has chosen to take up residence. I'm not only the Messiah of your expectations, I am the access point to heaven itself; I am the heaven-gate.

A House for God

The full Gospel accounts and particularly John's record have many layers of truths running through them. John's account has been called 'Love's remembrance of Love's story'. This account was written after some 60 years of loving meditation and every sentence is pregnant with deeper significance. This is not a biography in the usual sense of that word, but a devotional in which the reader is invited to pause and contemplate the lasting significance of what may have seemed, initially, to be just passing events. Let's look backwards over our shoulder for a moment.

The covenant people of Israel were chosen to be a 'kingdom of priests for God', a set-apart nation with a unique destiny. When the nation had confirmed the willingness to embrace the Sinai Covenant God began to open to them a larger plan, God was going to take up 'residence' among them. In their desert wanderings and for some 300 to 400 years after that God's Residence was a simple shrine. Simple, that is, in its outward appearance. On the inside it was a revelation of gold and silver and glory. The tabernacle or tent that was known as the Holy Place was created by a framework of gold-plated wooden frames. (It is almost certain that these were not solid planks of gold plated wood but much more in the style of window frames.) When this framework was erected the splendid first covering was draped over the frame. This covering was elaborately embroidered with the forms of Cherubim, angelic beings who are God's personal attendants. The result was that for the priests who were allowed into this Holy place, which was the antechamber to the throne room, it was a vision in gold and silver and blue and red and purple of a room

surrounded by angels. Every wall was filled with angels, and if they looked upwards they saw the same serried ranks of angelic hosts. Looking towards the wall and the ceiling would have given the impression of countless angelic hosts. This was God's residence and **the angels of God were ascending and descending** upon it.

During the reign of Solomon this portable Palace was transformed into a magnificent palace for the King, God himself. It was David who had received the revelation and who became the architect for this wonder of the world, and David's feelings about it are very plain;

And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for Jehovah must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.(1 Chronicles 22:5 ASV)

It is interesting to see that David is not only thinking about the covenant people when he designed the temple that Solomon built. There is little cameo of the way this magnificent building might of worked in the story of the Queen of Sheba. She had heard rumours of the greatness of Solomon and his kingdom and she abandoned her kingdom for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Solomon answered the questions about the God of Israel but it what she saw that, literally as the record runs, took a breath away;

And Solomon told her all her questions; and there was not anything hid from Solomon which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the food of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, his cupbearers also, and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of Jehovah; **there was no more spirit in her**. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom. (2 Chronicles 9:2–5 ASV)

That temple was made of wood and stone, but the symbolism of the old Tabernacle was faithfully reproduced;

And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm-trees and open flowers, within and without.

(1 Kings 6:29 ASV)

The priests who entered into the holy place were still surrounded by cherubim, **the angels of God, ascending and descending'**

Almost 1000 years later Herod the Great launched an elaborate and expensive building program. He built magnificent 'mini' Romes like Caesarea on the Mediterranean, and he rebuilt the temple to replace the smaller building that had been constructed during the time of Zerubbabel, Haggai and Zachariah. It was a magnificent building and might even be considered one of the wonders of the world, but it was never occupied... not by God. Zerubbabel's temple had never been occupied by God either. There was an essential missing feature that never returned from the Babylonian exile; the Ark of the covenant, God's throne. When the original Tabernacle was erected God took residence in such splendour and glory that even the priests were not able to minister there. The same thing happened when Solomon's temple was built, God took up residence in such splendour and glory that again the priest will enable to go about their ordinary work. But of Zerubbabel's and Herod's temples there is no such record. They both remained as empty palaces awaiting the arrival of the King. The centuries passed and still the covenant people waited for the fulfilment of the prophecies;

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. (Malachi 3:1 ASV)

Long years they waited and then in private conversation with Nathaniel and then public confrontation with the religious leaders Jesus of Nazareth plainly declared himself to be not only the Christ but also the place where God himself resided. In

him they would see, if they would allow him to open their eyes, the splendour and glory of Immanuel; God himself now 'with them'.

An Abandoned House

The better part of three years of public ministry followed and in the last days of his earthly life Christ returned to the Temple in Jerusalem and found that it had simply slipped back into its old ways. In spite of his 'cleansing', everything had reverted to its original condition and the Court of the Gentiles was once again a bellowing, bleating, market. Earlier that day he had viewed the city of Jerusalem and wept over it, sorrowing most of all because they have not known the day of God's visitation. (Luke 19:44)

When he entered the Temple and found that they had gone back to their old ways, he repeated his action and drove out the market traders. This time his war-cry was different;

saying to them, "It is written, "***My house*** is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a '*den of thieves.*' "(Luke 19:46 NKJV)

It is a quotation that combines the words two prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah...

even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Isaiah 56:7 ASV)

Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah. (Jeremiah 7:11 ASV)

The Jeremiah quotation is particularly ominous, it was first declared some 10 years before Solomon's beautiful temple was sacked and burned to the ground. There is a saying that says that 'history repeats itself because no one listens the first time!'

On the second occasion of cleansing Christ refers to the temple as my house. Later he will go on to predict the destruction of Henry's masterpiece in which not one stone

of the temple itself would be left standing on another. But in the order of Matthews Gospel before he pronounced the death sentence for herons temple he said something much more chilling;

“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! See! **Your house** is left to you desolate; 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!*” (Matthew 23:37–39 NKJV)

'My fathers house', 'my house', but now, 'your house...'
He has disowned it. It fitted the pattern of an earlier parable in which the tenant said;

But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” (Luke 20:14 NKJV)

The inheritance became 'theirs', but it was not 'taken by them' but 'left to them'. God had left it abandoned.

What are we to make of all those promises of an 'everlasting covenant' made with Levi, and the lamps that would burn 'everlastingly'? In AD70 the Roman armies under Titus were engaged in a bloody battle at Jerusalem. The nation had revolted and Rome's iron boot was stamping down firmly. In July 70 A.D. the final sacrifice was offered and it was all over. The writer of Hebrews writing Just five or so years before the event linked it to the promise of Jeremiah's new Cabinet and declared;

In that He says, “*A new covenant,*” *He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*(Hebrews 8:13 NKJV)

For the writer of the Hebrews the 'writing was on the wall' and the end of the Temple was an inevitability.

The Tabernacle/Temple and its sacrifices were an essential part of the Sinai Covenant and not an optional extra. They were, what earlier we called, its 'maintenance element'. The elements of covenant people, covenant law and covenant priesthood are inseparable; they create an integrated entity. If one of these elements fails the whole structure becomes tumbling down. Perhaps we can illustrate with a less well-known passage of scripture; the sacrifice of the red heifer. The sacrifice of the red heifer is mentioned in passing in Hebrews but you will search for it in vain in the list of sacrifices in the book of Leviticus. It appears in the book of Numbers and that is significant. (Num 19:1-13) The book of Numbers takes its name from the census that was taken when the covenant people were about to start their brief march and conquest of Canaan. How is the sacrificial system of the Sinai covenant going to be kept in 'good order' while the nation is on the march and engaged in battle? Each time they move they will have to dismantle and then reassemble the tabernacle before the sacrificial system can be up and running again. And there is another issue, only 'clean' priests can operate the sacrificial system. What happens if a priest is 'defiled' by coming into contact with a dead body; an almost inevitable event in the time of war? Well, a 'clean' priest could perform the necessary sacrifices and the defiled priest could be cleansed, but what if they were all defiled by contact with a dead body, now what? Enter, the sacrifice of the red heifer

The 'cycle' is broken

The sacrifice of the red heifer is a unique kind of sin offering. The writer of the Hebrews puts it in that context. (Heb 9:13) In this sacrifice a red heifer, without blemish, was taken outside the camp, as the main sin offerings was, and there the animal was slaughtered. Some of the blood was kept some of the blood was then sprinkled in front of the tabernacle precincts. The heifer was then burned in its entirety and to its ashes were added various other ingredients. The priest who officiated, a clean priest, was now regarded as ceremonially 'defiled' and he and his clothing had to be thoroughly washed. Next another 'clean' man gathered up the ashes of the mingled sacrifice and other ingredients and preserved them in a safe in a 'clean' place outside the main camp. This created a reserve sacrifice, a kind of 'instant sacrifice' that could be quickly reconstituted in a time of emergency. It seems that the preserved sacrifice could be instantly reconstituted simply by adding fresh or living water, hence an 'instant sin offering', Ke preserves, ready for an emergency.

In a later time is the sacrifice was used for the cleansing of defile priests and the priest once cleansed could recommence his ministry and the cycle was active again.

It works wonderfully... as long as there is a reserve of 'red heifer ashes' kept somewhere safe. It works because the priest cleanse by the instant sacrifice can now create more instant 'red have ashes' and so the supply can be replenished. It is a wonderful system but perhaps you have seen the catch?

What happens if all the priests are ceremonially unclean, having been in contact with dead bodies or something similar and if there is no reserve 'red heifer ashes' is available? We can see that the whole system grinds to a halt. There is no clean priest to create the 'red heifer ashes' and there are no 'red heifer ashes' to cleanse the priest. Once this cycle was broken it is impossible to get it up and running again; no 'red heifer ashes' and the whole system quickly grinds to a halt.

The law and its sacrificial system was a perfectly integrated institution but once any element of it was broken the whole machine falters. The sacrifice of the 'red heifer' may seem obscure to our modern eyes but it is a telling illustration of the way in which once broken 'it could never be put together again' simply by human determination. There would have to be a re-setting of the Sinai Covenant with a new Moses.

The Sinai covenant was originally initiated by Moses. Was attended by miracles of God's presence. A wind that divided between the Egyptians and the Israelites and the fiery presence at Sinai itselfself futsal. It was then maintained by a series of sacrifices and ceremonies. To reconstitute the Sinai covenant it would be necessary to have another mediator and another infusion of wind and fire. The production of the raw materials themselves, red heifer and other Ingredients, could not in themselves be sufficient. It would require a new mediator and a new priest and essentially a complete repeat of the events of Sinai; it would require nothing less than a New Covenant. The Sinai Covenant, once halted, can never be restarted by human agency, it would need to be a new beginning instituted by God and not the mere rekindling an old fire. The Sinai Covenant will never be restarted; there is no need. God has promised and provided a New Covenant, with a new mediator and a new priest and that covenant is 'up and running'.

Judaism regards, quite rightly, the Sinai covenant as the beginning of the nation's unique identity. Judaism also regards the Jewish feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as the anniversary of the giving of the law. It is called the feast of weeks because it takes place after 7×7 days after Passover. Christians know it better as the 50th day or in Greek, Pentecost. Christ died at the time of Passover, And 50 days later 'when the day of Pentecost had fully come...' There was an amazing event which included

fire and wind, those ancient attendants of the exodus, and God arriving in the person of the holy spirit to take up residence in his new temple. The same God had been resident in the person of his son and had come to take up residence in the new covenant people. Initially it would be a remnant of the house of Israel of the house of Judah but soon it will include a unique and secret ingredient...

...by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, (Ephesians 3:4–6 NKJV)

The new temple of the Church was created to fulfil God's desire for his house to be a house of prayer for all nations.

In this chapter we examined the references in which Christ referred to himself as the temple and saw the significance as he claimed to be the place where God was 'in residence.' We saw the dreadful finality with which he disowned the physical temple of his day and that once 'broken', the Sinai covenant could never be restarted. We examined the special emergency measure of the sacrifice of 'the red heifer' and saw that once 'broken' this pattern too could never be restored. And we saw the significance of the day of Pentecost as the anniversary of Sinai and the plain declaration that the New Covenant was now 'up and running' and that God was again 'resident' in his temple.