**JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE   Matthew 12:1-8**

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And his disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But he said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, `I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath”(Hosea 6:6). I direct your thinking to a most remarkable statement of Jesus in Matthew 12:6, “Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.”

Let us first determine what caused the Lord to make the surprising statement that He was greater than the temple Solomon built and the second temple that was beautified by Herod the Great, which was standing in Jerusalem when he made this statement. He revealed the fact that He was greater than the temple to justify his disciples in having rubbed heads of grain together to eat on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees claimed that the apostles were working on the Sabbath by rubbing the husks off the wheat, and that was a violation. But Jesus reminded them that the priests labor continually on the Sabbath and are not guilty. They offer sacrifices and perform other services, yet nobody accuses them of breaking the Sabbath law. Why? Because the authority of the Temple exempted the priests from the Sabbath law. Then Jesus said, “I am greater than the temple, and I am the Lord of the Sabbath. This can only mean He had complete authority over the Sabbath day law, and He was probably the giver of that law. If the authority of the temple allowed priests to perform necessary services, how much more shall the authority of Jesus, who was greater than the temple, allow the hunger of the apostles to be satisfied. His disciples were engaged in the important work of introducing the Messiah of the Jews to the nation and preaching the good news the Messianic Kingdom was near and about to be established. What Jesus allowed the disciples to do on the Sabbath was a divine permission as much as the labors of the priests in the temple on Mount Zion. The labor of the disciples for the Messianic kingdom that was about to begin was far more important than the work of Jewish priests in the temple. As the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus said that necessary work can be done on the Sabbath, and the disciples were doing necessary work. But now we must pass on to consider other meanings and ways in which Jesus was greater the temple.   In addition, Jesus was greater than the temple because he was a far more glorious representation of God on earth than was the temple in Jerusalem. To say that anything or anyone is greater in glory than the Temple in Jerusalem staggers the imagination. About 1,000 B. C. Solomon built the beautiful Temple of God on the Eastern hill of Jerusalem. From that day to this, Jews have considered Jerusalem the city of God because God's temple was located there, and it was His house on earth. The Jews for three thousand years have honored that Temple site as the most holy place on earth, as the earthly dwelling place of Jehovah God. Many Jews will not visit that site today lest they happen unkowingly to stand on the very spot where God rested on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. That temple was destroyed in 70 A. D., and there is absolutely nothing left on that famous hill but a large flat area called the Temple compound. But somewhere on that compound that glorious temple once stood. That site today is the most valuable piece of real estate on the face of the earth. It could not be bought with all the gold and silver in the world. There is perhaps no building of the ancient world which has excited so much attention since the time of its destruction as the temple which Solomon built at Jerusalem and the second temple built by Zerubbabel and rebuilt and beautified by Herod the Great. Peloubet's Bible dictionary says of that temple, “Its spoils were considered worthy of forming the principal illustration of one of the most beautiful triumphal arches in Rome, the Arch of Titus.” Titus is the general who destroyed the temple. The temple was the approach of the Jewish nation to their God. It was the symbol and representation of God's presence among the Jewish people. Surprisingly, Jesus said that a person greater than the Temple was standing among them that day. The temple was honored by the Jews as the most holy place on earth and as the dwelling place of Jehovah God Himself on earth. For Jesus to make such a claim was to claim equality with God. Christ was greater than the temple because he was a more glorious representation of Jehovah than the Temple. As a mater of fact, Jehovah God Himself never dwelled in the Temple in person. The brilliant light which rested on the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies was only a physical, material manifestation of light. Furthermore no one ever saw that bright manifestation but the High Priest, and then only once a year. Even the prophets of Israel said that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. In that great sermon Stephen the first Christian martyr preached to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, he quoted Isaiah the prophet who said, “Thus said the Lord, the heaven is my throne; and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build me, and where is the place of my rest? For all these things my hand has mad and all those things exist”(Isaiah 66:1,2). The place of God's rest is in heaven, and earth at best is His footstool. It is remarkable and strangely interesting that from the day the temple was built, true religion in Israel began to decline, and abominable heathen idols were set up side by side with Jehovah. When God dwelt in a tent in the days of David, the Jewish religion flourished far better than in the days when the ark was in the great temple made with precious stones for beauty, and everything in it was overlaid with gold. Nevertheless, God did dwell and reveal Himself symbolically in the Holy of Holies, and at that Temple on Mount Zion sacrifices, offerings and worship ware presented to God. The presence of God, we know, in the tabernacle and the temple was known by the shining of the bright light, called the Shekinah, This light rest on the Ark of the covenant between the wings of the Cheribim hovering over the ark of the covenant. We often forget that the presence of God in the most Holy Place was a matter of faith to all but the High Priest, for the people of Israel never saw that light. They accepted God's presence there by faith. God had clearly revealed. to them that no man has ever seen God, and that He dwells in light that no man can approach to. As great as the temple was with all of its ordinances of divine worship, praise, morality, ceremonies and sacrifices, our text says that one day during His ministry He announced a new marvelous truth: , “Yet I say to you that in this place there is one greater than the temple.” That One was Himself in the highest sense of the word. Did God dwell in the temple? Yes, in a manner of speaking, but Colossians 2:9 says that in Christ dwelled all the fulness of Godhead bodily.” In Christ God has revealed Himself to Jews and Gentiles in human form. All that makes God Divine and Deity was in the body of Christ when He was on earth and is still in His glorified body, now sitting at the right hand of God. John said of Jesus that He was with God in the beginning and was God, and He became flesh and dwelled among us(John 1:1-14). Jesus was the second person of the Godhead before He came to earth, and He was still the second person of the Godhead during His stay on earth. The only difference was that before He came to earth He was one of the Divine Three. and after He came to earth He was in an earthly body. God told Israel He would do this marvel. Isaiah 9:6,7 says, “For unto us a child is born ; unto us a Son is given. And the government will be on His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end upon he throne of David and over His kingdom. Most of the nation of Israel hade the mistake of refusing to believe that God had the power to do this. David's throne is now in heaven. Jesus Christ was an incarnation of Deity. The prophets gave Him the name Emmanuel which means, “God with us.” I wonder how long Israel will continue to reject the prediction of their prophets? The Bible says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Thousands of Jews were reconciled to God through Jesus Christ in the first century, and millions of Gentiles from all nations have been reconciled to God. through obedience to Christ. Jesus said that He and the Father were one. He further said when He was on earth that one who has seen Him has seen the Father. This is part of the doctrine of the Trinity, clearly revealed in the New Testament and hinted at in the Old Testament. All Jews and Gentiles in the first century who accepted this doctrine and submitted to the teachings of Jesus became Christians and newborn children of God. But all Jews and Gentiles who rejected Christ as God's appointed Savior of the world stand condemned. The Bible now divides the nation of Israel into two groups: the remnant of Jews who became Christians and “the rest” who rejected Christianity(Romans 11:7}. That division continues to this day. Individual Jews can not be saved by obeying the gospel of Christ just like thousands of Jews did in the first century A.D. Those Jews who became Christians continued to enjoy the favor of God Jews that had enjoyed for centuries, but Jews who rejected Christ lost the favor of God that they once had. The incarnation of Jesus Christ made Him an incarnate Deity, and it is the great miracle that Jehovah ever performed.  The incarnation of Christ means that God has visited the earth and shown to all mankind the kind of Being He really is. God has appeared to the human race in a physical body, and that body was Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was far greater than the Temple because God appeared to the world in the body of Jesus so that we all might see Him and even touch Him for 33 years. We all can now see God second-handed through the eyes of the apostles. The apostle John tells what an experience this was to personally see Jesus. I John 1:1 says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which our eyes have seen, which we have looked upon, and our have handled, concening the Word of life, that which we have seen and heard we declare to you.” Christ was greater than the Temple because when God was manifesst in His body, the revelation was far greater than the Shekinah shining in the Holy of Holies. No one saw the Shekinah, but the High Priest, and that but once a year. Moreover, Jesus was greater than the Temple that existed during His earthly ministry, for God had long before departed from the temple. Really, there were three temples in Jewish history. The temple Solomon built was the first one, and it lasted a little more than 400 years from about 1000 B.C. to 586 B. .C., when Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel built the second Temple about 535 B.C. after the Exile. The people were so poor at that time the second temple did not compare in structure and beauty to the first Temple. Some who saw both temples wept when. they saw the second temple. The second temple that existed in the day of Jesus is often called Herod's temple. Herod the Great, a descendant of Esau, , was one of the greatest builders in ancient times. In 20 B.C. he began to rebuild his temple, or more correctly, beautify and restore the old temple into a new temple of architectural beauty It was a magnificent structure that so impressed Titus, the Roman General, that he did not want to destroy the temple in 70 A.D. Herod's Temple last only about 90 years from 20 B.C. to the time of its destruction by Titus in 70 A.D. However, many things that were in Solomon`s Temple were lacking in Herod's Temple. The second temple, as it was referred to in Jesus' day, lacked the Shekinah. The throne of David ended at the time of the Babylonian captivity and the symbol of God's divine presence disappeared too. No king sat again on David's throne after the Babylonian captivity until Christ ascended to heaven and sat down on David's throne. David's throne has been moved to heaven where Christ sits as King of King and Lord of Lords. There is no evidence that the Shekinah shined forth in Herod's temple. They had lost also from the second temple the Urim and Thummim. These seem to be small objects worn on the breastplate of the High Priest by which special communications from God on matters of the law. When the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 B.C., they probably took away the ark of the covenant and other items in the Temple they saw fit to keep. No one knows what happened to the ark and tablets with the ten commandments. Christ was greater than Herod's temple, for God had long departed from it.. The manna and Aaron's rod that budded that were laid in the ark had been removed in the days of the Judges. Yes, Jesus was greater than Herod's Temple that was lacking in many of the things in Solomon's Temple. Finally, Christ was greater than the Temple because the Temple and its entire worship had an unreality about it. The Temple and its worship was a kind of parable, an allegory, and was full of similes and metaphors. After all the Temple was only a symbol, a shadow that fore-shadowed God's universal Temple is made of living stones, living people redeemed by the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. Jesus Christ built the third temple for all people, Jews and Gentiles in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. All the sacrifices were mysterious, and the people did not understand why they should offer them. Why did animals have to die to put away their sins? All those sacrifices symbolized the death of Christ, the Messiah, who would die for the sins of Israel and the sins of the whole world. Apart from Christ and His death, those sacrificial animals had no meaning whatever. The blood of Christ shed on the cross was used by God to forgive Israel's sins for 1500 years. before that blood was shed. The blood of bulls, goats and heifers never could take away the sins of human beings. However, it was their obedience in sacrificing animals. The only forgiveness of sin for Jews was through animal sacrifices. Since they no longer offer animal sacrifices, I do not know how they expect to be forgiven of their sins. God has not revealed any other way of forgiveness except by the blood of Jesus. There have been only two ways God forgave sin: by the death of animals and by the death of Christ. When Jews sacrificed animals, which symbolized the death of their Messiah, that made His blood available to them. Every time a person sacrificed an animal, he was exercising faith in Christ unknowingly because God used animals as a substitute until Jesus would appear and taste death for every man. He was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Understood or not, the blood of Christ was used to forgive sins from Adam to Christ, and His blood will be used to forgive sins from Christ till the end of the world. Since Christ died for the sins of humanity, there is no forgiveness of sin, except by and through His precious blood. Suffice it to say that the entire Jewish religion was all about Jesus, the One who is called the Messiah. The Jewish religion was a part of the promise made to Abraham, but it was only a substitute until the Messiah would come and establish the Christian religion for both Jews and Gentiles. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding.

 5  or a better temple to come, a better religion to be established on better promies by the coming of the Divine Son of God. Everything in the Temple worship was but the shadow or symbol of which Jesus and His religion was the reality. Everything in that religion typified and symbolized the blessings Christ would bring to the Jewish nation and the whole world. The Temple of Solomon was only a figure, a metaphor, a similarity of good things to come. God's Old Testament Temple was not essential to the world's well being, for when Jesus caused it to disappear and took it out of he way by nailing it to the cross, it brought light and salvation to the Gentiles.. The old temple is not needful to true religion now, for the time has come when they that worship Jehovah do not worship in man-made earthly temples or shrines, but worship in spirit and in tuth. God's new Temple is a spiritual edifice, consisting of living stones. God has but one Temple, on the church, all over he world, and it is being built up up by living stone s on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself the cornerstone of His Temple. .The law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me. Jesus Christ was what the old Temple was all about, by way of figure and picture, shadow and prophecy. He is essential to our light and life and could He be taken away from us, earth's hope would disappear forever. Emmanuel, God with us, was and is greater than Solomon's Temple.