**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 14 – A Biblical Theology of Worship

**Garden of Eden**

1. Sacred Person: God created the first human being, Adam, in God’s image and likeness so that Adam could do what God does. Just as God glorifies Himself, Adam was created in the likeness of God to glorify God (Gen. 1:26). In other words, Adam was made to worship God and God created a person/people to worship Him. Man was to worship God by exercising dominion over creation in imitation of God’s dominion over all (Gen. 1:26). Part of this dominion was to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth so that dominion could be exercised over all the earth (Gen. 1:28).
Adam was to serve as prophet-priest-king. The Hebrew words for “work” and “keep” from Genesis 2:15 are later used to describe the work and service of the priests in the tabernacle/Temple. As a prophet, Adam was to teach God’s law to his wife as well as to the offspring they would produce. As king, Adam was to exercise dominion.
2. Sacred Space: The Lord God also carved out a sacred space where man was to worship Him by planting a garden in the land of Eden and placing man in that garden (Gen. 2:8). The garden in Eden was a place of beauty as there were magnificent trees which yielded fruit. There was a river that flowed to water the garden and surrounding areas which were full of good and beautiful stones and precious metals (Gen. 2:10-12). Ezekiel 28:14 links the garden of Eden being on “the holy mountain of God.” So, Eden was a garden-temple on a mountain where God was to be worshipped.
3. Sacred Time: After creating everything and giving man instruction, God rested on the 7th day and made it a holy Sabbath (“rest”), Genesis 2:2-3. As God carved out time to cease from His creative activity, so Adam was to carve out time to rest from His dominion and garden work to worship the Lord. On one hand, all of life was to be worship to glorify God, and on the other hand a special time for worship was to be set aside for communal worship of the triune God.
4. Sacred Community: In addition to Adam, God also created Eve because it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18-23; 3:20). They were to produce godly offspring so that the family as community worshipped God together. Iain Duguid says that Adam and Eve were to use time to show that they belonged to God by observing the Sabbath.
5. Sacred Instruction/Law: God gave Adam instruction (the Hebrew word “Torah” means instruction/law) as to what he could eat (every tree except 1) and what he could not eat (the tree of knowledge of good and evil), Genesis 2:16-17. God made a distinction between clean and unclean, between holy and common, and Adam was to respect this distinction and uphold this distinction in both his obedience and his teaching this to others.

**Old Testament Worship After the Fall**

1. Sacred Person: The role of prophet, priest, and king is now distinguished and dispersed among several people. Moses is the prophet par excellence but there are also other prophets – Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah, etc. - who reveal to the Israelites God’s word. The priests are instructors to the people about the holiness of God as well as the guardians of God’s holiness, who intercede on behalf the people to God through gifts and sacrifices. The High Priest offers the whole burnt offering to atone for the sins of the nation collectively. He offers the grain offering as a tribute for God’s good provision. He offers the fellowship offering as a covenant meal where all partake of the sacrificial animal. He offers the guilt offering and sin offering to atone for specific sins of individuals and have restored fellowship between God and man as well as man and man. Kingship is established first with Saul, but then with David and his house so that God has His appointed person ruling over His people. The king was to write out a copy of the Law to that as he kept the words of God, so too would all the people (Deut. 17:18-20).
2. Sacred Space: In the primeval and patriarchal periods, worshippers of God built altars wherever they encountered the Lord God. In the first worship service after the Fall, Cain kills Abel (Gen. 4:1-8). Noah builds an altar to God at the spot where they come out of the ark (Gen. 8:20). Job built altars to God where he lived in Uz (Job 1:1-5). At Babel, man tries to build his own sacred space to God which God rejects (Gen. 11:1-9). Abraham built an altar to the Lord at the oak of Moreh where the Lord appeared to him (Gen. 12:7), in the hill country east of Bethel (Gen. 12:8), at Hebron (Gen. 13:18), etc. Isaac built an altar to Yahweh in Beersheba (Gen. 26:25). After the Exodus, the sacred space becomes the tabernacle and eventually the Temple. The tabernacle/Temple was elaborately decorated with luxurious colors, cherubim designs are woven into the curtain, gold recalling the gold surrounding the garden of Eden is used in several places, the lampstand resembles trees and flowers recalling a garden paradise. This now represented where God met with His people and all of this was to eventually take place in the Promised Land where God was going to settle His people.
3. Sacred Time: In addition to the weekly Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15), the Israelites had a sacred calendar with the feast of Passover (14th day of 1st month), Weeks (7 weeks from the beginning of the harvest), and Booths (15th day of the 7th month). These 3 feasts represent the 3 times when all the males of Israel where to be corporately gathered at the tabernacle/Temple (Deut. 16:16). These were the special times of worship carved out by God for the people of God to observe.
4. Sacred Community: The people of God expand from Adam and Eve through the godly line of Seth to Noah and then from Noah to Abraham to the nation of Israel.
5. Sacred Instruction/Law: Just as God gave His word to Adam on Mt. Eden, so God gives His word to Moses on Mt. Sinai and instructs His redeemed people how they are to live in the land both in relation to God as well as to their fellow man (Exod 19-24). This happens again in the transition from tabernacle to Temple when Solomon gathers the Israelites on Mt. Zion for the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron 5-7). Jonathan Gibson points out the similarities between the services at Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion:

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| Sinai | Zion |
| Gathering (19:1–3a) | Gathering (5:2–3) |
| Cleansing through sacrifice (19:10–15) | Cleansing through sacrifice (5:4–6) |
| Mediated access (19:16–25) | Mediated access (5:7–10) |
| Divine communication (Ten Commandments and Book of Covenant) (20:1–24:2) | Divine communication (Word of God through Solomon) (6:1–11) |
| Cleansing (blood of burnt offerings and peace offerings sprinkled) (24:6, 8) | Cleansing/consecration (through sacrifice) (7:4–7) |
| Fellowship meal (with God) (24:11) | Meal (feast) (7:8–10) |

**New Testament Worship**

1. Sacred Person: As it was in Adam, in the person of God’s Son – Jesus Christ – we see the roles of prophet-priest-king come back into 1 person who fulfills those roles perfectly. As prophet, Jesus reveals the Father and the whole will of God for all things concerning our salvation and building up in the faith (John 1:18; 15:15; 20:31; Heb 1:1-2). As priest, Jesus offers Himself on our behalf as the spotless lamb to make atonement for sins and restore us to fellowship with God (2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:21-22; Heb 2:17; 9:28; 10:12). Additionally, He continually intercedes for us at the throne of grace (Heb 7:25; 9:24). As king, Jesus rules on the throne of David and subdues us to Himself either through salvation or judgment at the end of time, as well as correcting us when we sin (Gen 49:10; Isa 33:22; John 17:2; Acts 5:31; Rom 14:10-11; Rev 3:19). He defends His people and makes war on His enemies (Ps 2:8-9; 110:1-2; 1 Cor 15:25; 2 Thess 1:8-9).
2. Sacred Space: The sacred space from Eden and Old Testament times becomes re-focused and centered upon Jesus. Iain Duguid says that the Temple is reconfigured from a place to a person (Matt 12:6; John 2:19). There is no longer a sacred space on earth for the worship of God. There is no Holy Land or Christian Jerusalem. Instead, wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in God’s name to worship Him in spirit and truth, there God meets with His people in worship (Matt 18:20; John 4:23-34). So, the main principle and focus in worship is never on the space itself, but in God meeting with His people and they with Him. Yet, we still meet God on a mountain in Jerusalem so to speak, but it is spiritual and through Christ rather than physical and geographic (Heb 12:22).
3. Sacred Time: As part of the Moral Law, the Sabbath continues into the New Testament. And in Christ, we enjoy a sabbath rest now in part that we will enjoy in its fulness in the New Heavens/Earth. It would be strange for the Sabbath to continue from the beginning of time until the time of Christ, but then suddenly reappear in the New Heavens and Earth. So while all of our lives are to be lived to the glory of God (worship in broad sense), sacred time is carved out for us in our weekly schedule to show that we belong to God and time is not our own. Additionally, we also celebrate Christmas and Easter as two major Christian holidays surrounding the life of Jesus and Him as our salvation.
4. Sacred Community: Instead of the community of God being centered on ethnic Israel, the community of God and true Israel / true descendants of Abraham are all those who are converted by faith alone to Jesus Christ (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 3:7-9; 6:16). As Dr. Duguid puts it, “It is not about Abraham’s DNA, but about Abraham’s faith in Christ.”
5. Sacred Instruction/Law: Jesus went up on a mountain to reveal how God’s law was to be properly understood (Matt 5-7) and lived out by His people. As a prophet, He is the lawgiver that is greater than Moses (Heb 3). Indeed, all of the instructions in the New Testament epistles are the words of Christ on how we are to live and treat one another as the people of God.

**Worship in the New Heavens/Earth**

1. Sacred Person: Worship centered on God in Revelation 4 becomes worship centered on Jesus Christ in Revelation 5. The same song sung to God in Revelation 4:11 is sung to Christ in Revelation 5:12. So worship having been centered on Christ on earth in the New Testament is centered on Christ in the New Heavens and Earth. The prophet-priest-king Adam who failed in his mission, is fulfilled in the prophet-priest-king Jesus Christ who succeeded where Adam failed, so that worship is centered upon His person as one of the 3 persons of the triune Godhead.
2. Sacred Space: Revelation 21:22 says, “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” So, from the beginning of time through eternity, there is a sacred space where God was to meet with His people. It started with a garden-temple in Eden and it ends with a garden-temple in the New Jerusalem which descends upon a mountain (Rev 21:10) and has the river of the water of life running through it (Rev 22:1) as well as the tree of life (Rev 22:2).
3. Sacred Time: Though time will be no more in eternity, it is still described with the language of time. Hebrews 4:9,11 says there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God and we are called to strive to enter that rest which is in Christ Jesus for all time. So the Sabbath that has no morning and evening in Genesis 1 becomes the eternal Sabbath of the New Heavens and Earth. All of life will once more be worship to God.
4. Sacred Community: The visible church that worships on earth becomes the invisible church of God’s elect in the New Heavens/Earth. On this earth, the visible church contains true believers mixed with false teachers, hypocrites, and apostates. They will be removed at the Great White Throne Judgment so that the people of God is made pure and they perfectly worship God as He meets with His elect. Revelation 21:3 says, “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.” Revelation 22:3 says of the New Jerusalem, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him.”
5. Sacred Instruction/Law: Scripture calls God’s Word a light (Ps 119:105) and in the New Heavens/Earth, there is no night or darkness because the glory of God gives forth its light (Rev 21:23-34), and nothing unclean, detestable or false work will ever enter the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:27). So, in the New Heavens/Earth, we will walk perfectly in the Law of God because of Christ our perfect law-keeper in our place who clothes us with His righteousness (2 Cor 5:4, 21; Eph 4:24; Rev 3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9-14; 19:14)