

# The New Temple of Worship ... is Jesus!

What image comes to mind when you hear the word “**Temple**”?

For me, the **image** I have is that of **the Taj Mahal** over in India that is known as one of **the Seven Wonders of the World**. Completed in **1653** it took **21 years** to build.

This beautiful white structure is actually not a **Temple**, but rather a **Mausoleum** that an emperor built to honor his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife who died giving birth to their 14<sup>th</sup> child.

What’s another image of a **Temple**?

We actually have a beautiful white **Temple** right here in **Gardendale**.

Located just north on **Hwy 31** and **Mt. Olive Road**,  
the **Birmingham Alabama Temple** is the **98th** operating temple of  
**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**.

Completed in the year **2000** in **just under a year**, it is a **gathering place ...**  
**but only at special times** and only for special people in the Mormon Church.

By definition, a **temple** is a **structure** reserved for **religious or spiritual activities**,  
such as **prayer** and **sacrifice**.

The **Jewish community** still refer to their **houses of worship** as **Temples ...**  
such as **Temple Emmanu-el** on Birmingham’s **Southside**.

This of course is reverences the **original Jewish Temple** constructed in **Jerusalem**  
**1000 years** before **Jesus** under the reign of **King Solomon**.

I think it’s **important** to consider these images of what a **temple** is ...  
in contemplating the **three readings** that the **Church** presents us today ...  
**as each and every one of them** refers to ... a **temple**.

In our **First Reading**, **Ezekiel** says,

*“I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple ...  
(it) flowed down from the southern side of the temple, south of the altar.”*

In his letter to the **Corinthians**, **St. Paul** asks? *“Do you not know that you are  
the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?”*

And finally **Jesus** says, *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up?”*

**Wow!**      **What is God saying in all this?**      **How does this apply to us?**

Remember this: the Old Testament is the Promise.

The New Testament is the Fulfillment of the Promise.

**That's why we use both Testaments to grasp God's loving plan.**

**St. Augustine put it this way ...**

**in the Old Testament, the New Testament is concealed ...  
and in the New Testament, the Old Testament is revealed!**

**Let's examine them both to see the Promise and its Fulfillment.**

The Temple that King Solomon built in Jerusalem the around 960 BC remained the center of Israelite liturgical, religious and cultural life for 1000 years before it was completely destroyed in the year 70 AD.

**The Temple was the holy place where God met man and where man met God.**

The Israelites believed that all nations would one day be attracted to the right worship of God in the Temple ... through the modeling of the Israelites.

**But over the years, the Israelites themselves fell again and again into worship of false gods ... including the gods of the surrounding nations ...  
and also the gods of wealth, power, nationalism and pleasure.**

**The false worship that Israel demonstrated, came to be symbolized, by the Prophets, in the corruption of the Jerusalem Temple.**

And it was **the prophet Ezekiel ... writing at the midpoint of the Temple's life ... 500 BC, who perceived that God's glory had left His Temple ... how very sad ... but he prophesied that God's glory would return one day ...**  
**when His place was purified ... and the signal of that purification would be ...**  
**water flowing from the side of the Temple for the renewal of the world.**

**When did water flow from the side of the temple?      **On Calvary!****

**Yes, water flowed ... not from the Temple in Jerusalem ...  
but from the Temple of the God-Man, Jesus Christ on the Cross.**

When the **Roman Soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear,**  
**John recorded that immediately blood and water flowed out!**

**And where did it flow?**

**It flowed south ... down to the ground ... south of the altar ... the Cross!**

So you see, the **Prophecy of Ezekiel** was fulfilled by **Jesus** at **the Crucifixion**.

The **water** flowing from His side was **the sign**  
that **God's glory** had returned to His people!

Now we can begin to understand some of **Jesus' sayings** in regard to **the Temple**.

**When Jesus** said, "*You have someone greater than the Temple here.*"

He was designating Himself as the **new place of worship** ...  
that **He** ... was **the new Temple** ... where **divinity** and **humanity** would meet!

**And today, when Jesus** cleansed the Temple ...

He was not just some orthodox Jew ... railing against the Establishment.

**Rather, He** was pronouncing judgment on the old Temple ...

and establishing Himself as the **new place of right worship**.

**When He** proclaims today, "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up?*"

He's referring ... not to the building standing there that took **46 years** to build ...  
**but to Himself** standing there, whose body would be destroyed and then raised on  
**the 3<sup>rd</sup> day**.

It's here that we realize that **Jesus Himself** ... is **the new Temple**.

**So the holy temple of God** is no longer just in Jerusalem ...

**the holy temple of God** is **wherever Jesus is!**

And **where** is **Jesus** today?

He's most fully present in the **Most Blessed Sacrament** of the **Eucharist**.

And it's **our privilege** to be able to receive Him into our bodies in **Holy Communion**.

And **what happens when we** receive Him this way?

We become more and **more** and **more** ... like Him!

You see, **when** we eat **regular bread**, we metabolize it and **the bread** becomes us.

**But when** we eat **the Bread of Life**, we become what we eat!

**Ezekiel** refers to this transformation when he says, "*(the) water flowing out from ...  
the temple ... empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh.*"

In **just the same way**, the **graces** flowing out from the bleeding side of Christ  
are washing all of us and making us fresh.

Another **reference** to **this transition** is when **Paul** says, “*You are God’s building.*”

**Did you** ever look at yourself that way? As a **building** ... under construction!

**Paul** says, “*Each one should be careful how he builds ... for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.*”

In **Baptism**, **Jesus** lays the foundation in us **on which we** are to build our lives.

**Jesus is Holy, which means that** by having Him as our foundation, we are holy.

**Yes, we are buildings under construction** for sure ...  
**but we** are also **holy Temples of God!**

**Do you** realize that?

**Can you** add that to your list of images when you hear the word “**Temple**”?  
**That you yourself** are a Temple!

**God** always keeps His promises.

He said that He would bring His glory back to the temple ...  
for **the restoration** of the world.

And **He** did that most completely through ...  
**the death and Resurrection** of His Son, **Jesus**.

**No longer is God’s temple** located in just one spot in the world ...  
No, it’s located everywhere Jesus is ...  
including every Catholic Church in the world ...  
and **every person** who receives Jesus into their body in **Holy Communion**.

The **great Temple of Jerusalem** is gone forever.  
The **beautiful Taj Mahal** is nothing but a shrine for the dead  
The **White Birmingham Temple** is just for certain people at certain times.

**But the Temple of Jesus Christ** will last forever,  
It is a **home** for the living  
And it is **for all people** of all times.

**Now just as it took time to build the Temples of the world** ...  
it’s going to take a lifetime to build the temple that you are.

**But we’re blessed to have a solid start** ...  
**Jesus** has given us Himself as **the solid foundation** on which to build our lives.

**On this day** where we revere the *Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome*, let's realize that **God** is calling us to reverence all the places where **He dwells**.

**God dwells in this Church and in every Catholic Church around the world!**

**So, our attitude, our dress and our actions in Church**

Should always demonstrate **our awareness** that **God is truly here**.

**God dwells in every baptized person!**

**So, we need to treat ourselves and each other with reverence and respect and care ... acknowledging St. Paul's declaration today,**

*"For the temple of God, which you are ... is holy."*