

ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE

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A SERMON
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*“But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple.”
Matthew 12:6.*

OUR Lord intended, of course, to assert that He was greater than the temple, but He used the most modest form of putting it. When in the interests of truth He is obliged to speak of Himself, His meekness and lowliness are always apparent in the mode in which He makes the personal allusion. Everyone can see that He does not seek His own glory, or desire the praise of man. In the instance before us He says, “In this place is one,” or, as some read it, “is *something* greater than the temple.” He who is truly meek and lowly is not afraid to speak honestly about himself, for he has no jealousy about his reputation for humility, and is quite willing to be thought proud by the ungenerous, for he knows that he only speaks of himself in order to glorify God. There is a native peculiarity in true lowliness which shows itself in the very form of its utterances, and wards off the imputation of boasting.

We do not find the passage now before us in any other gospel but that of Matthew. It is so important, so energetic, and in addition must have been so startling to those who heard it, that we should not have been astonished if we had found it in all the four evangelists. Only Matthew records it, and he most fittingly, since he is, in some respects, the evangelist of the Hebrews, for as you know, he began his book by saying, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”—he evidently adapted his gospel to the Jews. As the Jews would be the last to receive teaching which in any way lowered the temple, it is all the more remarkable that Matthew inserted our Lord's words in the gospel which he designed to be read by them. Though the words occur but once, we must not therefore regard them as being any the less weighty, for the sentence comes with a preface which shows the force our Lord intends to throw into it. The declaration is prefaced by, “I say unto you.” Here is the authority before which we all bow—*Jesus says it!* He does not merely proclaim the truth of God, but He sets His personal stamp and royal seal upon it: “I say unto you”—I who cannot lie, who speak the things which I have received of My Father, upon whom the Spirit of God rests without measure—I say unto you. He speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes. With a verily, verily of certainty, He teaches, and therefore let us unquestionably accept His declaration, “I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple.”

Let us now meditate upon this truth of God, first observing the fact *that our Lord is greater than the temple*; secondly, remarking *that He ought to be so regarded*, and thirdly, *suggesting and urging home some few reflections which arise out of the subject*.

I. First, then, OUR LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE. *He is so manifestly because He is God*, “God over all, blessed forever.” He who dwells in the house is greater than the house in which he dwells, so that as God, our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple. It needs no arguing that it must be so—the divine must be infinitely greater than anything which is of human workmanship—the self-existent must infinitely excel the noblest of created things. The temple was many years in building; its huge stones were quarried with enormous labor, and its cedar beams were shaped and carved with matchless skill. And though no hammer or tool of iron was used upon the spot, yet by the strength of men were the huge stones laid each one in its place. It stood upon Zion a thing of beauty, and a joy forever, but still a work of men's hands, a creation of human strength, and human wisdom. Not thus is it with the Christ of God. Of Him we may truly say, “From everlasting to everlasting You are God.” “And You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands.” The temple being created, and having a beginning was a thing of *time*, and therefore had an end.

The things which are seen, whether they are temples or taverns, are temporal, and must pass away; in due time the firebrand in the hand of the Roman soldier reduces to ashes a building which seemed as lasting as the rock upon which it stood! Go now to the place where Zion once stood, and mark well how the glory is departed, even as it departed from Shiloh of old. Deep down in the earth, the base of the mighty arch which formed the ascent to the house of the Lord has been uncovered from the mountain of ruins, but scarcely will you find one stone left upon another which has not been thrown down! These masses of marble were so huge that it is an ordinary circumstance to find a stone 24 feet in length, and nine feet in breadth! And sometimes they are even found 40 feet in length, weighing as much as one hundred tons, yet have they been flung from the seats as stones are cast upon the king's highway! Thus has the temple disappeared, and thus shall all Your creation pass away, but You, O Lord, abide! "They shall perish; but You remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a gesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail."

The temple was no rival of Jehovah, but derived all its glory from His deigning to reveal Himself therein! Exceedingly magnificent as it was, it was far below the divine greatness, and only worthy to be called His footstool. If we were to dwell on any one of the attributes of His Godhead, it would be clearer that Christ is greater than the temple; but the point is one which none of us doubt. After all, the temple was but a *symbol*, and Jesus is the *substance*; it was but the *shadow* of which He is the *reality*. Although every Hebrew heart leaped for joy when it thought of the tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts, and even this day every Jewish spirit laments the departed glories of Zion, yet was the holy and beautiful house a figure of good things *to come*, and not the very image of the covenant blessings. It was not essential to the world's well-being, for lo, its disappearance has brought light and life to the Gentiles! It is not necessary to true religion now, for the time is come when they that worship Jehovah adore Him in no consecrated shrines, but worship Him in spirit and in truth! But our Lord Jesus is truth and substance; He is essential to our light and life, and could He be taken from us, earth's hope would be quenched forever! Emmanuel, God with us, You are greater than the temple!

This fact it was necessary for our Lord to mention in order to justify His disciples in having rubbed ears of corn together to eat on the Sabbath. He said, "The priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." They were engaged in the labors of sacrifice and service all through the Sabbath, yet nobody accused them of breaking the law of the Sabbath because the authority of the temple exempted its servants from the letter of the law. "But," said our Lord, "I am greater than the temple; therefore I surely have power to allow My servants who are about My business to refresh themselves with food, now that they are hungry; and since I have given them My sanction to exercise the little labor involved in rubbing out a few grains of corn, they are beyond all censure." If the sanction of the temple allows the greater labor, much more shall the sanction of one who is greater than the temple allow the less! As the Son of God, Christ is under no law; as man He has kept the law, and honored it for our sakes, because He stood as our surety and our substitute. But He, Himself, in the essence of His nature, is the lawmaker, and above all law. Who shall arraign the eternal Son, and call the judge of all the earth to account? "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth."

But now we must pass on to other meanings, and view our Lord in His blessed personality as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He is greater than the temple, for *He is a more glorious enshrinement of Deity*. The temple was great above all buildings because it was the house of God, but it was only so in a measure, for the eternal is not to be contained within walls and curtains! "However," says Stephen, "the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as said the prophet, heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me, said the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?" How remarkably Stephen does, as it were, pass over the temple with a mere word! He merely mentions it in a sentence, "But Solomon built Him a house," as if no stress needed to be laid upon the circumstance. It is remarkable that from the moment the temple was built, true religion in Israel began to decline, and the abominable shrines of heathen idols were set up in the holy land! The glory of even an allowed ritualism is fatal to spiritual religion! From a pompous worship of the true, to the worship of the false, the step is very easy. When God dwelt in the tent, in the days of David, religion nourished far better than in the days when the ark abode in a great house garnished with precious stones for beauty, and overlaid with pure gold! Still, within the holy of holies the Lord pe-

cularly revealed Himself, and at the one temple upon Zion, sacrifices and offerings were presented, for God was there. The presence of God, as you know, in the temple and the tabernacle, was called the *Shekinah*, the bright light shining between the wings of the cherubim 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. Once a year the high priest went within the awful veil, but we do not know if he ever dared to look upon the blaze of splendor. God dwells in light that no man may approach; the smoke of the incense from the priest's censer was needed to partly veil the exceeding glory of the divine presence, lest even those chosen eyes should suffer blindness! No one else went into the hallowed shrine, and only he once a year. That symbolical pavilion of Jehovah is not for a moment to be compared with our Lord Jesus who is the true dwelling place of the Godhead, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What a masterly sentence that is! None but the Holy Spirit could have compacted words into such a sentence—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The manifestation of the Godhead in Christ is not unapproachable, for we may freely come to Jesus—a voice out of the excellent glory bids us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace! We cannot come too often, nor be too long in our approaches unto Jesus, the true mercy seat! The atonement has been offered, and the veil of the temple, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, has been torn, and now we may approach the Godhead in Christ Jesus without trembling. Verily, as I think of God, incarnate God in Jesus Christ, dwelling among the sons of men, I feel how true it is, "In this place is one greater than the temple."

Another sense of the words is this—*Our Lord is a fuller revelation of the truth of God than the temple ever was!* The temple taught a thousand truths of which we cannot now particularly speak; to the instructed Israelite there was a wealth of meaning about each court of the temple, and every one of its golden vessels. Not a ceremony was without its measure of instruction. If the Spirit of God opened up the types of the holy and beautiful house to him, the Israelite must have had a very clear idea of the good things to come. Still, there was nothing in the temple but the *type*—the *substance* was not there. The blood of bulls and goats was there, but not the atonement that takes away sin; the smoke of the holy incense from the golden censor was there, but not the sweet merits of the great law-fulfiller; the seven-branched candlestick was there, but the Spirit of God was not yet given; the showbread stood on the holy table, but food for *souls* could not be found in the finest of the wheat! The temple had but the *types*, and Christ is greater than the temple because in Him we have the realities, or, as Paul calls them, "the very image of the things." "The figure for the time then present" had its uses, but it is by no means comparable to the actual covenant blessing! The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ! There were some truths, however, and these among the most precious, which the temple did not teach at all. I do not know, for instance, where we can read *adoption* in the symbols of the temple, or the great truth of our *union* with Jesus, and other priceless doctrines which cluster around the cross and the resurrection. But in the person of Jesus we have the exceeding riches of divine grace, and see by faith the inexhaustible treasures of the covenant. In Jesus we see at once, "our kinsman and our God." In the person of Christ we read the infinite eternal love of God towards His own redeemed ones, and the intimate union which this love has established between God and man. Glimpses of this, the temple, may perhaps have given, for it did intimate that the Lord would dwell among His people, but only to eyes anointed seven times with the oil of the Spirit would these high mysterious doctrines have been visible! The fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel are all to be seen in Jesus Christ by the wayfaring man—and the more He is studied, the more plainly do these matchless truths of God shine forth! God has fully revealed Himself in His Son; there is, in fact, no wisdom necessary to our soul's welfare but that which shines forth in Him; and nothing is worth learning but that which the Spirit of God teaches us concerning Him, for He is to the full, "The wisdom of God." Know Christ, and you know the Father! Does He not say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"?

Again, the Redeemer is greater than the temple because He is a more abiding evidence of divine favor. God forever dwells in Christ Jesus, and this is the eternal sign of His favor to His people. There were some things in the first temple which were rich tokens of good to Israel, but none of these were in the temple to which our Lord pointed when He uttered the words of our Text. Remember, He looked at Herod's temple, the temple which you may call the *second*, but which in some respects, was more truly

a *third* temple. In Solomon's temple there were four precious things which were absent in Christ's day. First there was the ark of the covenant, which precious chest was above all other things, the token of Israel's high relationship to God, and the assurance of the Lord's grace to His covenanted people. The ark was lost at the Babylonian destruction of the city, and thus the holy of holies lost its most sacred piece of furniture—the throne of the great king was gone! There were no wings of cherubim above the mercy seat of pure gold, no tables of stone engraved by the divine hand were within the golden coffer, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the pot of manna were both gone. Now, in our blessed Lord you find the covenant, itself, and all that it contains, for thus said the Lord, "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." His blood is "the blood of the everlasting covenant" and He, Himself, is given for "a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6). Jesus Christ is the covenant between God and His redeemed! He is its substance, its seal, its surety, its messenger, and its all; in our Lord we see the fullness of covenanted blessing; His are the covering wings beneath which we dwell in safety, and His is the propitiatory, or mercy seat, whereby we draw near to God. In Him we see the tables of the law honored and fulfilled priestly authority exercised with a living and fruit-bearing scepter, and heavenly food laid up for the chosen people! It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. Thus in Jesus we find what the temple had lost.

The second temple also lacked the *Shekinah*; the throne being gone, the symbol of the royal presence also departed. The supernatural light did not shine forth within the holy place in Herod's temple. The glory had departed, or at least that particular form of it, and though the second temple became more glorious than the first because the Messiah Himself appeared within it, it missed that symbolic splendor of which the Israelite was known to say, "You that dwell between the cherubim shine forth." But in our Lord Jesus we may always see the brightness of the Father's glory, the light of Jehovah's smile, for around His brow abides the light of everlasting love. Have you not seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

They had also lost from the second temple, the Urim and the Thummim. Precisely what the Urim and the Thummim may have been, we do not know, but this peculiar mystery of blessing had a connection with the breastplate, and with the high priest who wore it, so that when men went up to the temple to inquire, they received answers as from the sacred oracle, and whatever cases were spread before the Lord, an answer was given by the high priest, through the lights and perfections, or the Urim and Thummim with which the priest was girded. That was lost after the Babylonian captivity. But in Jesus Christ the lights and perfection always abide, and if any man would know anything, let him learn of Him, for He, by the eternal Spirit, still guides His children into all truth, solves their difficulties, removes their doubts, and comforts their hearts, giving to them light and perfection, each one according to their measure as he is able to bear it, and preparing for each one the unclouded light and the spotless perfection of eternal glory!

The second temple had also lost the sacred fire. You remember when the temple was opened, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice—a fire from heaven which was carefully watched both night and day, and always fed with the prescribed fuel, if, indeed, it needed to be fed at all. This the Jews no longer had, and they were compelled to use other fire to burn upon the altar of God, fire which they had probably consecrated by rites and ceremonies, but which was not the same flame which had actually descended from heaven. Behold, beloved, how far our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple, for this day is that word fulfilled in your ears—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." He has now given to His church the privilege to be immersed in the fiery element of His Spirit! She dwells in the everlasting burnings of the divine power; the Lord Himself has exalted her to this. Now are her lamps kindled by flames from heaven, and her sacrifices are consumed by consecrated flames, while around that same Spirit is a wall of fire to preserve the chosen from their enemies! In the perpetual baptism of the Holy Spirit, the saints find power and life, so everything which of old was regarded as a special token of God's love to Israel, though missing from the second temple, is in reality to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord—and so He is greater than the temple!

Furthermore, He is greater than the temple because *He is a surer place of consolation*. Brothers and sisters, when a guilty conscience wished for relief, in the olden times the man went up to the temple and

presented his sin offering. But you and I find a more effectual sin offering in our crucified Lord whenever our soul is burdened, for by it we are in very deed cleansed from sin! The Jew was not really cleansed, but only typically; ours is an *actual* and abiding deliverance from sin, its guilt, and its defilement; we have no more consciousness of it when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our souls! Oh, come evermore, you burdened ones, to Christ's body as to a temple, and see your sins put away by His finished atonement, and go your way comforted! The Israelites were known to go to the temple in time of trouble to make supplication. It is very pleasant to think of heart-broken Hannah standing in the tabernacle before the Lord, pouring out her silent petition. Come, beloved, you too may speak in your heart to the Lord whenever you will, and you will be heard! No Eli is near to judge you harshly, and rebuke you sharply, but a better Priest is at hand to sympathize with you, for He Himself is touched with a feeling of your infirmity! Fear not, you shall obtain an answer of peace, and the blessing given shall bear the sweet name of Samuel because you asked it of the Lord! To Jesus you may come as to the temple, when, like Hezekiah, you are made to smart by a blasphemous letter, or any other oppression—here you may spread the matter before the Lord with a certainty that the Lord, who is greater than the temple, will give you an answer of peace in reference to the trial which you leave in His hands. No doubt some went to the temple without faith in the spiritual part of the matter, and so came away with no comfort, but you, coming to Jesus Christ, with your spirit taught of God, shall find sure consolation in Him!

Only once more, our Lord is greater than the temple because *He is a more glorious center of worship*. Towards the temple all the Israelites prayed. Daniel prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem, and the scattered in every land turned towards that point of the compass where Jerusalem was situated, and so they made supplication. Today not Jews alone, but Gentiles, men of every race, speaking every language under heaven, turn towards Jesus, "You great Redeemer," the true temple of the living God! Myriads redeemed by blood in heaven, and multitudes redeemed by blood on earth—all make the Christ of God the center of their perpetual adoration! The day shall come when all kings shall bow before Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed; to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is God to the glory of God the Father! Brothers and sisters, is not it sweet to think of Jesus as being at this very moment the central point to which all devout believers turn their eyes? Let the Muslim have his Mosque, and the Jew his temple, as for us, we turn our eyes to the risen Savior, and with all the saints we offer prayer to God through Him! Through Him both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father!

II. Now, secondly and briefly, JESUS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE.

We ought to think of Him with greater joy than even the Jew did of the holy and beautiful temple. The eighty fourth Psalm shows us how the king of Israel loved the house of the Lord. He cries, "How amiable are Your tabernacles O Lord of hosts." But oh, my soul, how amiable is Christ! How altogether lovely is your Redeemer and your God! If the devout Israelite could say, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and if at the sight of the temple, he cried, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," how ought our heart to exult at the very *thought* of Jesus, our incarnate God! What intense pleasure, what rapture it ought to cause us to think that God, in very deed, does dwell among men in the person of His well-beloved Son! I wonder we are not carried away into extravagances of delight at this thought, and that we do not become like them that dream! I marvel that we are so cold and chill when we have before us a fact which might make angelic hearts thrill with wonder! God incarnate! God my kinsman! Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh! Surely, if we were to dance, as David did before the ark, we might scarcely need to excuse ourselves to the heartless Michals who would ridicule our enthusiasm! Oh, the bliss of knowing that God is in Christ Jesus!

We ought also to consider our Lord with *greater wonder* than that with which men surveyed the temple. As I have already said, the temple was a great marvel, and would be so even now, if it were still standing. Those huge stones were so well prepared by art, and were so massive, that they did not need to be cemented together, they fit so closely that the thinnest knife could not be inserted between them, so polished and so compact were they. The house itself abounded with gold, silver, and precious stones! It was a treasury as well as a temple! For size it was remarkable if we consider the entire range of the buildings attached to it. The level space within which the actual temple stood is said to have been about

one thousand square feet, and it is asserted that it would have contained twice as many people as the huge coliseum at Rome. The actual temple was but a small building comparatively, but its attachments, and Solomon's porch which surrounded the square, on which it stood, made up a great mass of buildings. And the magnificent bridge which joined the lone hill to the rest of Jerusalem was a marvel of architecture. Solomon's ascent, by which he went up to the house of the Lord was one of the sights which quite overcame the queen of Sheba; the brightness of the white marble, and the abundance of gold must have made it a sight to gaze upon with tears in one's eyes to think that man could erect such a house, and that it should be for the one true God! I do not wonder at all that men were bid to go round about her, view the towers, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces. Neither are we astonished that invaders quailed before the strength of her defenses! "They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away." The likes of this temple was not to be seen on the face of the earth! Neither the pyramids of Egypt, nor the piles of Nineveh, nor the towers of Babylon could rival the temple of the living God at Jerusalem! But, my brethren, think of Jesus and you will wonder more! What are the huge stones? What are the delicate carvings, and the cedar? What are the sheets of gold, and what the veil of fine twisted linen? And what is all the gorgeous pomp of the ceremonies compared with God, the everlasting God, veiled in human flesh? Wonder, my brothers and sisters! Wonder; bow low and adore! "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."

Being greater than the temple, our Lord is to be visited with greater frequency! The males of Israel were to go up to the temple three times each year. "Blessed are they that dwell in Your house," says David, for they would be there always! Oh, my brethren, you may enjoy the happiness of these blessed ones, and dwell in Jesus always! You may come up to the Lord Jesus whenever you will! All days are appointed feasts with Him! You need not wait for the new moons or the Sabbaths—you may resort to Him at all times! We that have believed enter into a perpetual Sabbath in which we may continually worship the Most High in the person of Christ!

Let us also *revere Him with still greater solemnity*. The devout Jews took off their shoes when they entered the temple enclosure. True, in our Lord's time much of this solemnity had been forgotten, and they bought and sold the beasts and birds that were necessary for sacrifice within the great enclosure around the temple. But as a rule, the Jews always treated the temple with profound respect. With what reverence shall we worship our Lord Jesus? Let us never speak lightly nor think lightly of Him, but may our inmost spirits worship Him as the eternal God.

Let us also honor Him with *higher service*. The service of the temple was full of pomp and gorgeous ceremonies; kings brought their treasures there; with what diligence did David store up his gold and silver to build the temple! And with what skill did Solomon carry out the details of that mighty piece of architecture! Come and worship Christ after that fashion! Bring Him your body, soul, and spirit as a living sacrifice! Yes, bring Him your gold and silver, and your substance, for He is greater than the temple, and deserves larger gifts and higher consecration than the temple had from its most ardent lovers! Surely I need not argue the point, for you who love Him know that you can never do enough for Him.

So, too, He ought to be sought after with *more vehement desire* if He is greater than the temple. David said he, "longed, yes, even panted for the courts of the Lord." With what longings and panting ought we to long for Christ! In answer to her Lord's promise to come again, the church cries, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." We ought to long more for the second advent of our Lord—especially ought we, if we mourn His absence from our own souls, never to rest until He reveals Himself to us again! Oh, you redeemed ones, love Him so that you can no more live without His smile than the wife can live without her husband's love! And long for fellowship with Him as the bride for the wedding day! Set your hearts upon Him, and hunger and thirst after Him! The Jew pined to visit Mount Zion, and with such pining I bid you long for Jesus, and for the time when you shall see Him face to face!

III. Now, we have to spend a few minutes in urging home one or two PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS which arise out of this subject.

And the first is this—*how carefully should the laws of Jesus Christ be observed*. I believe that when you entered the temple by passing through the beautiful gate, you saw a notice that worshippers should enter on the right side, and afterwards they were to exit on the left. I am quite sure that if the temple now stood, and any of us could make a journey to Jerusalem, we should be very careful to observe every or-

der of the sanctuary. And if we found the porter at the gate said, "You must take off your shoes," we would with gladness, remove them! Or if he bade us wash, we would gladly enter the bath. Knowing that God dwelt there, had we been Israelites, we would have been very attentive to every observance required of the law. Now, brothers and sisters let us be equally attentive to all the laws of Christ, for He is greater than the temple! Never ignore His commands, nor tamper with them. Remember, if you break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men so, you will be least in the kingdom of God. He is very gracious and forgives, but disobedience brings injury to our own souls. I beseech all Christians to search the Scriptures and see what Christ's mind is upon every moot point—whether it is baptism or church government—and when you know His will, carry it out! Do not say of any precept, "That is non-essential," for everything that Jesus bids you do is essential to the perfection of your *obedience*! If you say it is not essential to salvation, I am compelled to rebuke you! What? Are you so selfish that you only think about your own salvation? And because *you* are saved, will you kick against your Savior, and say, "I do not care to do this because I can be saved even if I neglect it"? This is not the spirit of a child of God! I pray you, dear friends, do what I anxiously wish to do myself—follow the Lord fully, and go step by step where He would have you go—for if you would obey temple rules, much more should you obey the rules of Christ!

The next reflection is *how much more ought we to value Christ than any outward ordinance*. It is not always that all Christians do this. There is a dear brother, who loves Christ, and I can see Christ in him; I am sure I can. If I know anything about Christ at all, in my own soul, I see that he knows Him too. Very well, but then he does not belong to my church! It is a pity—he ought to be as right as I am—and I wish he knew better; but at the same time, his love to Christ is more to be esteemed than his correctness in outward things, for Christ is greater than the temple! I am not going to quarrel with any brother in Christ because he is somewhat in error about external ordinances, for he has the spirit, if not the letter of the matter. I wish he had been baptized with water, but I see he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, and therefore he is my brother in Christ! I wish that he would observe the water baptism because Christ bids him, but still, if he does not, I am glad that his Master has given him the Holy Spirit, and I rejoice to know that he has the vital matter! Perhaps he does not come to the Lord's supper, and does not believe in it. I am very sorry for him, for he loses a great privilege, but if I see that he has communion with Christ, I know that Christ is greater than the temple, and that inward communion is greater than the external sign! Therefore if it happens that if we see Christ in persons with whose theology we do not agree, and whose forms of church government we cannot commend, we must set the Christ *within* above the outward forms, and still receive the brother! The brother is wrong, but if we see the Lord in him, let us love him, for Christ is greater than the temple! We dare not exalt any outward ordinance above Christ as the test of a man's Christianity! We would die for the defense of those outward ordinances which Christ commands, but for all that, the Lord Himself is greater than the ordinance, and we love all the members of His mystical body.

Another reflection is this—*how much more important it is for you that you should go to Christ than that you should go to any place which you suppose to be the "house of God."* How many times from this pulpit have we disclaimed all idea that this particular building has any sanctity about it? We know that God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet there may be some of you who come here very regularly who have great respect for the place. If you did not go to any place of worship, you would think yourselves very bad, and so you would be. If you never went on the Lord's day to the worship of God at all, you would certainly be keeping yourselves out of the place where you may hope that God will bless you. But is it not a strange thing that you would not like to stay away from the temple, but you stay away from Christ? For while you go up to the outward sanctuary, you have never gone to the real Christ! I am sure you would feel ashamed if anybody were able to say of you, "There is a man here who has not been to a place of worship for 12 months." You would even look down upon a man of whom that could be said. Yes, but if there are any reasons for coming to what you think is the temple, how many more reasons are there for coming to Christ? And if you would think it wrong to stay away from the public place of worship for 12 months, how much more wrong must it be to stay away from Jesus all your life? But that is exactly what you have done! Will you please think of that?

Now, had you gone to the temple, you would have felt towards it very great respect and reverence. And when you come to the outward place of worship, you are very attentive and respectful to the *place*—let me ask you, have you been respectful to *Christ*? How is it that you live without faith in Him? No prayer is offered by you to Him. You do not accept the great salvation which He is prepared to give. Practically, you despise Him, and turn your backs upon Him! You would not do so to the temple; why do you do so to Christ? Oh, that you unconverted ones knew the uses of Christ! Do you remember what Joab did when Solomon was provoked to slay him? Joab fled, and though he had no right to go into the temple, he felt it was a case of necessity. Hoping to save his life, he rushed up to the altar and held on the altar's horns. Benaiah came to him with a sword, and said, "Come forth," and what did Joab say? "No," he said, "I will die here." And Benaiah had to go back and ask Solomon, "What is to be done?" and Solomon said, "Do as he has said." And so he slew him right against the altar. Now, if you come to Christ, though the avenger of blood is after you, you will be safe! He may come to you and say, "Come forth," but you will reply, "I will die here." You cannot die there, for He shall hide you in the secret of His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide you! And with your hand upon the blood-stained Jesus, no Benaiah, no devil, and no destroying angel can touch you! Sinner, it is your only hope! You will be lost forever—the sword shall pierce through your soul to your everlasting destruction unless you fly now to Christ, the temple, and lay hold upon the altar's horns and let this be on your mind—

*"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away I know
I must forever die!
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I've this altar tried,
This were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died!"*

By faith this morning, I put my hand upon the altar's horns; all my hope, dread Sovereign, lies in the blood of Your dear Son. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all lay our hands there once again. Poor sinner, if you have never done this before, do it now, and say in your heart—

*"My faith does lay her hand
Upon that altar's horns,
And see my bleeding
Lord at hand
Who all my sin has borne."*

Christ is greater than the temple! May His great benediction rest upon you! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 84 & 87.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84, 820, 427.

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