

Jesus Celebrates the Feasts of Tabernacles and Hanukkah



**“I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
James Tissot**

After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.² Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand.³ So his brethren said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing.⁴ For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.”⁵ For even his brethren did not believe in him.⁶ Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.⁸ Go to the feast yourselves; I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.”⁹ So saying, he remained in Galilee.

¹⁰ But after his brethren had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.¹¹ The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is he?”¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.”¹³ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

¹⁴ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. (John 7:14)

* * *

Chapter Seven of the Gospel of John records Jesus going up to Jerusalem and to the Temple where, as it says in the scripture above, He taught. Jesus, a faithful Jew, would have gone to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles every year as prescribed by the *Tanakh* or Hebrew Bible. This would be His final Tabernacles as He waited for His time to “fully come” at the next feast in the Jewish liturgical calendar, the Feast of Passover where He would give His life for the life of the world. The Jewish feasts were integral in the life of a first century Jew, and they were just as important to Jesus who said, that He had not come to abolish the law, but to full fill it (Matt 5:17). This is also true of the Jewish Feast, Jesus did not abolish them, He fulfilled them. Soon, we will be entering Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, where the Pascal Mystery will be re-presented to us, pilgrims. I thought it might be a good idea to take this opportunity to review the significance of the Jewish Feast in the light of Christ’s fulfillment. One of the great joys of Scripture is to be able to perceive the intricate weaving of both Old and New Testaments to create a beautiful tapestry of God’s plan, hidden for ages, but now revealed in His Son through the Church.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a celebration of the God's presence with and protection of the people of Israel during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. God manifested His presence as a Pillar of Cloud by day and a Pillar of Fire by night:



²⁰ *And they [Moses and the camp of Israel] moved on from Succoth [sometimes the Feast of Tabernacles is called the Feast of Succoth], and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.* ²¹ *And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night;* ²² *the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.* (Exo 13:20-22)

Biblical scholars believe that the Pillar of Cloud and Fire were the first manifestation of the *Shekinah Glory* of God to His People, Israel. The Hebrew word, *shekinah*, means “he caused to dwell.” God caused His glory to dwell with His people. When Israel camped they arranged their tents by Tribe in accordance with Moses’ instruction, and all of the tents faced the Pillar of Fire so that its illuminating light would flood the tents reassuring the people that the Lord God dwelt among them. When Israel broke camp it was again the Shekinah Glory which guided Israel through their trek in the wilderness towards the Promised Land.

In Jesus we see the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. No longer led by a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, we are led by Emmanuel, the God-man who dwells with His people.

...behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.” ²¹ *She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* ²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:*²³ *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.”* (Matt 1:20-23, Isa 7:14)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:14)

Now, let’s read a few excerpts from Christ’s own teaching during His last trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles:

³⁷ *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.”* ³⁸ *He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”* ³⁹ *Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* (John 7:37-39)

¹² *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12)

³¹ *Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* ³⁴ *...“Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin*

is a slave to sin.³⁵ *The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever.*³⁶ *So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.* (John 8:31, 34-36)

⁵⁰ *“Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it and he will be the judge.”*⁵¹ *Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death....”*⁵⁴ *...“If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God....”*⁵⁸ *...“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”*⁵⁹ *So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.* (John 8:50-51, 54, 58-59)

We see in the words of Jesus some of the imagery of the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, especially when Jesus says that He is the “light of the world.” We can also see this imagery again the prophetic writings of the Prophets Isaiah and Zechariah.

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.*² *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.*³ *And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*⁴ *Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms.*⁵ *Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*⁶ *A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Mid'ian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.* (Isa 60:1-6)

¹⁶ *Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths [tabernacles].* (Zech 14:16)

The Feast of Tabernacles is the only Feast celebrated in the age to come as described in the Book of Revelations:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*² *And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;*³ *and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them;”*⁴ *he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”*



⁵ *And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”* Also he said, *“Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*⁶ *And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life.”*⁷ *He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.* (Rev 21:1-7)

²² *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*²³ *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*²⁴ *By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it,*²⁵ *and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there;*²⁶ *they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.*²⁷ *But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.* (Rev 21:22-27)

*Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb*² *through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*³ *There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him;*⁴ *they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.*⁵ *And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign forever and ever.* (Rev 22:1-5)

There is another connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Book of Revelations. The Feast of Tabernacles had a number of other titles including *Chag HaAsif*, which is translated as the Festival of Ingathering or Harvest Festival. Is there a connection between the Harvest Festival of Tabernacles and the Book of Revelations? Many biblical scholars believe so as they connect Jesus Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 with Revelations 7:



²⁹ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; ³⁰ then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; ³¹ and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt 24:29-31)

¹⁴ Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud,

“Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” ¹⁶ So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. (Rev 14:14-16)

Just who exactly is being harvested? The elect, the Bride of the Lamb, for the Marriage Feast:



**The Adoration of the Lamb
Jan Van Eyck (1425)**

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Rev 19:6-9)

These are the final weavings of the Feast of Tabernacles beginning in Exodus, passing through to Jesus our Emmanuel, and arriving at its ultimate manifestation in the Kingdom of God as described in the Book of Revelation. How beautifully do we see the *Shekinah* Glory illumine the Scriptures in the center of the Camp of Israel, Jesus declaring Himself, the “light of the world,” and the eternal city of Jerusalem with no need for sun “for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” And then we have come to understand that the Feast of Tabernacles is also the Feast of Ingathering and a Harvest Festival where we are God’s harvest gathered together as a Bride, the New Jerusalem, for her Bridegroom, Jesus, the Emmanuel, and we may dwell with Him forever.

Hanukkah



Jesus Walking in the Portico of Solomon
James Tissot

Hanukkah is not one of the Seven Feasts of Israel described in Leviticus 23, rather its origin is relatively recent in Israel's history. Hanukkah celebrates events that occurred about 150 years before the birth of Jesus. Nevertheless, by Jesus' time the Jews were celebrating this eight-day feast that starts on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev (November to December in the Gregorian calendar). The Apostle John recorded that Jesus celebrated the feast shortly after celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles.

²² It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; ²³ it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; ²⁸ and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

³¹ The Jews took up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" ³³ The Jews answered him, "We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God." ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." ³⁹ Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. (John 10:22-39)

To give some context to the above dialogue between Jesus and the Jews who were questioning Him we need to do a bit of a history lesson. First, the Hebrew word Hanukkah means, "to dedicate," hence the feast is also known as the Feast of Dedication. Hanukkah was celebrating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem after it had been liberated from the Seleucid emperor, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This is truly one of the great stories of the Bible and it can help us understand the scripture passage above, but also has prophetic insights for the future.

In 332 BC Alexander the Great of Macedonia conquered Jerusalem, but he did not sack the city, nor enslave the people. Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian, records an interesting story to explain Alexander's extraordinary act of mercy towards the city and her inhabitants:

“. . . he [Alexander the Great] gave his hand to the high priest and, with the Jews running beside him, entered the city. Then he went up to the temple, where he sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honor to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated; and in his joy he dismissed the multitude for the time being, but on the following day he summoned them again and told them to ask for any gifts which they might desire. . .” (Loeb Classical Library ed. of *Ant.* XI 317, p. 467).

Alexander introduced Hellenistic Culture to Israel, but he did not impose it allowing the Jews to practice their religion freely. Alexander died at the early age of 32. A power struggle ensued between his top commanders as to who would inherit his kingdom. Eventually, Alexander’s kingdom was divided between four commanders. The region of Jerusalem came under the authority of the Ptolemaic dynasty which was over thrown by Seleucids under Antiochus III. When Antiochus died, his son, Antiochus IV, took control of the Seleucid Empire. Antiochus IV began an ambitious and cruel program to eradicate Jewish culture and religion, and establish Hellenistic culture throughout Israel. He believed that a unified empire required that everyone abandon their prior beliefs while adopting the religion and practices of the Greeks. Many of the Jews cooperated with the program of Antiochus IV and abandoned their faith and the traditions of their fathers:



Antiochus IV Epiphanes

In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, “Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us.”¹² This proposal pleased them,¹³ and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles.¹⁴ So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom,¹⁵ and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (1Maccabees 1:11-15)

Seeking to expand his empire, Antiochus IV traveled with his army to Egypt, defeated King Ptolemy in battle, and captured and plundered the cities. A rumor began to be spread throughout Israel that Antiochus had been killed. The faithful Jews saw this as an opportunity to rise up against the Hellenized Jewish faction including the High Priest installed by the King. When Antiochus heard of the uprising in Israel he returned with his army and destroyed Jerusalem and thousands of her inhabitants. To add insult to the injury he had already inflicted upon Israel Antiochus then turned his virulent animus towards the religion of the Jews.



The Plundering and Desecration of the Temple

⁴¹ Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people,⁴² and that each should give up his customs.⁴³ All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath.⁴⁴ And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land,⁴⁵ to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts,⁴⁶ to defile the sanctuary and the priests,⁴⁷ to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals,⁴⁸ and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and

profane,⁴⁹ so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances.⁵⁰ “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” (1Maccabees 1:41-50)

Antiochus plundered the Temple of its rich artifacts not only in punishment for the rebellion, but to help fund his empire:

¹⁵ Not content with this, Anti’ochus dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menela’us, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country.¹⁶ He took the holy vessels with his polluted hands, and

swept away with profane hands the votive offerings which other kings had made to enhance the glory and honor of the place. (2Maccabees 5:15-16)

But Antiochus' contempt for the God of Israel and His Temple did not stop with this pillaging and desecration. In his arrogance Antiochus added to his name *Epiphanes* meaning "the visible god." Antiochus IV Epiphanes believed himself to be the visible manifestation of the Greek god Zeus. To this end he declared himself a god, and that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be dedicated to Zeus, that is, himself.

Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and cease to live by the laws of God,² and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Geri'zim the temple of Zeus the Friend of Strangers, as did the people who dwelt in that place.

³*Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil.⁴ For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit.⁵ The altar was covered with abominable offerings which were forbidden by the laws. (2Maccabees 6:1-5)*

Yet, there were some that remained faithful to the God of Israel and His ordinances, among these was Mattathias and his sons:

¹⁹*But Mattathi'as answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to do his commandments, departing each one from the religion of his fathers,²⁰ yet I and my sons and my brothers will live by the covenant of our fathers.²¹ Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances.²² We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."* (1Maccabees 2:19-22)

Mattathias and his five sons led a rebellion against Antiochus. When Mattathias died in 166 BC his son, Judas, assumed command of the army that had been assembled by his father. Although greatly outnumbered, Judas who became known as Yehuda HaMakabi ("Judah the Hammer"), encouraged his men at arms to have faith in the God of their fathers:

¹⁶*But Maccabe'us gathered his men together, to the number of six thousand, and exhorted them not to be frightened by the enemy and not to fear the great multitude of Gentiles who were wickedly coming against them, but to fight nobly,¹⁷ keeping before their eyes the lawless outrage which the Gentiles had committed against the holy place, and the torture of the derided city, and besides, the overthrow of their ancestral way of life.¹⁸ "For they trust to arms and acts of daring," he said, "but we trust in the Almighty God, who is able with a single nod to strike down those who are coming against us and even the whole world."* (2Maccabees 8:16-18)



**The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus
Peter Paul Reubens, 1635**

The Maccabean rebellion was victorious. One of the first things that Judas Maccabeus did after his victory over the Seleucid army was to cleanse and rededicate the Temple.

Now Maccabe'us and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city;² and they tore down the altars which had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts.³ They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they burned incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence.⁴ And when they had done this, they fell prostrate and besought the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations.⁵ It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Chislev.⁶ And they celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals.⁷ Therefore bearing ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.⁸ They decreed by public ordinance and vote that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.⁹ Such then was the end of Anti'ochus, who was called Epiph'anes. (2Maccabees 10:1-9)



Although not recorded in the Books of Maccabees the Talmud adds further insights into our understanding of the Feast of Hanukkah but explaining the origin of the Hanukkah menorah. The story tells that upon entering the desecrated Temple Judas found that nearly all of the sacred olive oil for the lamps had been used or destroyed, save for one bottle. This one bottle of oil would only be enough to keep the menorah of the Temple lit for one day. Miraculously, the lamp remained lit for eight days allowing enough time for the preparation of more sacred oil.

Recreated Temple Menorah by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem with the intention of it being used when the Third Temple is rebuilt.

Unlike the Temple menorah which had seven branches, the Hanukkah menorah has nine. The center candle, called the *shamash* (Hebrew: servant), is used to light the other candles. One candle is lit each night until on the eighth day all of the candles are lit. Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights referring firstly to the miracle of the menorah in the Temple remaining lit for eight days, but also the yearly lighting of the Hanukkah menorah as Jews around the world celebrate the rededication of the Temple even to this day although the Temple itself no longer exists having been destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

A Hanukka menorah with eight candles and the center *shamash* candle which typically stands higher than the other candles.



In and Around the Old City of Jerusalem

I have included some photographs Jan and I took over several visits to Jerusalem. These photos do not correspond to a particular holy site that we visited; they're just photos taken in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.



A view from our hotel window of sunrise over Jerusalem.



Standing outside the walls of the Old City.



Outside the Wall of the Old City within the Muslim Cemetery overlooking the Mount of Olives, the Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, and the Church of All Nations.



Outside the Zion Gate not far from the Church of the Dormition.



Outside the Southern Wall (near the Zion Gate) overlooking the "new" City of Jerusalem.



Within the compact, narrowed-street of the Old City of Jerusalem.



Statue of King David with his lyre outside the Tomb of King David.



Tomb of King David



**Dome of the Rock
View from the Mount of Olives**



**The Golden Gates
View from the Mount of Olives**

In light of what we have been discussing, Jesus celebrating the Feasts of Tabernacles and Hanukkah, there seems to be something missing in these photographs. Do you know what it is? It's the Temple. It is missing because the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. All that remains are the foundations of the Temple.



Welcome to the Western Wall, a remnant of the Temple:

The Foundation Stone sits at the peak of Mount Moriah above the Western Wall. According to tradition the world was created from this stone, the Binding of Isaac took place on it, and King Solomon built the First Temple around it as “a house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel.” (1Kings 8)

The Temple stood in all its glory for centuries until it was destroyed by the Babylonians. After seventy years of exile, Jews returned to Jerusalem and built the Second Temple which stood on the top of the mountain until it was destroyed by the Romans. The Jewish nation was exiled for a long time but vowed, “If I forget you O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.” Throughout all its years in exile, the Jewish people never stopped mourning for Jerusalem and praying for “Next year in a rebuilt Jerusalem.”

As the years went by the Western Wall- whose entire length measures 488 meters- was covered and all but disappeared from view. Only a small section remained visible, becoming a symbol of yearning for Zion and the place where Jewish pilgrims from all around the world gathered to pray and weep.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Western Wall remained under Jordanian rule and for nineteen years access to Jews was forbidden. On June 7, 1967 (the 28th of Iyar, 5727), soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces risked their lives in heavy battle- soldiers from the Jerusalem Brigade, the Jerusalem Tanks Company, the Harel Brigade, the Air Force and the 55th Paratroopers Brigade- liberating the Old City and the Temple Mount.

Since then, thousands of pilgrims and visitors stream to the Western Wall daily, carrying a prayer in their hearts.

“And it shall be at the end of the days, that the mountain of Lord’s house shall be firmly established at the top of the mountains, and it shall be raised above the hills, and all nations shall stream to it. And many peoples shall go, and they shall say, ‘Come let us go up to the Lord’s mount, to the house of the God of Jacob, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will go in His paths,’ for out of Zion shall the Torah come forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:2-3)



The Western Wall



Babushka Jan having returned from praying at the Western Wall. Head covering for men and women are required.

The Temple of Jerusalem

It should be apparent from the discussions on the Feast of Tabernacles and Hanukkah that the Temple in Jerusalem was central to Jewish religious life, and it was central to life of Jesus. You may even be surprised to know that it is important for Christians. Why was the Temple so important in the life of the Jewish people and for us today?

The simple answer to the question above is that it housed the Ark of the Covenant which held the Tablets of the Law, the flowering staff of Aaron, and a pot containing manna. On the top of the ark where two cherubim facing each other and between them was the Mercy Seat. Here, it was said that the “glory of the Lord” dwelt among His people. The rabbis referred to this manifestation of God’s presence as the *Shekhinah* (Hebrew: to dwell) Glory.



²¹ And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. ²² There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel. (Exo 25:21-22)

¹⁸ Moses said, “I pray thee, show me thy glory.” ¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show

mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.”

²¹ And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; ²³ then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.” (Exo 33:18-23)

For centuries the Ark was housed in a tent and traveled with the Jews both in their wanderings and in their battles. When King David conquered Jerusalem he decided that his new capital of a united Israel should be the permanent home for the Ark. It was in his heart to build a Temple to house the Ark, but he was forbidden to do so by the Lord.

Now when the king dwelt in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies round about, ² the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” ³ And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴ But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, ⁵ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?’ ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. ⁷ In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” ⁸ Now therefore thus you shall say to my

servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel;’⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly,¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be my son. (2Sam 7:1-14)

This prophecy delivered by Nathan to David speaks of two fulfillments in regards to building a “house” for the Lord, (1) David’s son Solomon who would build the first Temple, and (2) Jesus, the “son of David,” who would build an everlasting Temple, not made of human hands, but in the Spirit.

When Solomon’s Temple was completed he had the Ark of the Covenant brought up so that it could be placed within its new house.

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers’ houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.³ And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.⁶ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.⁷ For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles.¹⁰ And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD,¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.



¹² Then Solomon said, “The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.
¹³ I have built thee an exalted house, a place for thee to dwell in for ever.” (1Kings 8:1, 3, 6-7, 10-11, 12-13)

The Babylonians destroyed Solomon’s temple under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 BC. The Jewish people were taken into exile into Babylon, but when King Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated the Babylonians he allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple in 559 BC. The construction of the Second Temple took place under the direction of Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. Nehemiah chose as his first task the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in order to protect the city and her returning inhabitants. When this was concluded rebuilding of the Temple began when the site of the original Holy of Holies was identified and an altar constructed upon it. The Second Temple that was constructed was modest compared to the First Temple. Also, the Ark of the Covenant was lost sometime during the siege and destruction of the First Temple. Rabbinical scholars throughout the centuries have offered numerous theories; some saying that it was destroyed while others claim it was hidden. The books of Jeremiah and 2 Maccabees offer some interesting insight as to the future destiny of the Ark of the Covenant.

¹⁵ “And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.¹⁶ And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; it shall not be made again.

¹⁷ At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.¹⁸ In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage. (Jeremiah 3:15-18)

⁴ It was also in the writing that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God.⁵ And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance.⁶ Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it.⁷ When Jeremiah

learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: "The place shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. ⁸ And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated." (2Maccabees 2; 4-8)



Israel came under control of the Roman Empire before the end of the first century BC. Unlike Antiochus IV who tried to eradicate Jewish religion and tradition the Romans allowed the Jews to continue their religious observances in the Temple. Herod the Great, the Herodian client king of the Romans, undertook a variety of massive building projects throughout Israel; the most significant of which was the expansion of the Second Temple. When completed the Second Temple complex was much larger and grander than even the First Temple. This was the Temple where Jesus attend the Seven Feasts of Israel and the Feast of Hanukkah.

Shortly before His passion, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Second Temple as described in chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew:

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down." (Matt 24:1-2)

Jesus' prophecy came true just thirty-four years later when the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. Will there ever be a Third Temple? Such a thought would have seemed inconceivable until the reestablishment of the State of Israel and then the capturing of Jerusalem by Israel's Defense Forces during the Six Day War in 1967. There are certainly many impediments to such a project given the fact that the Temple Mount is under the control of the Palestinian Authority and Jews are not even allowed to pray on the Mount. That being said, the Jews have overcome greater obstacles than this. When attempting to answer the question regarding a Third Temple we need to consider the resilience of the Jewish people, but also what if anything the Scripture might have to say about the subject.

For a good many Christians the question of the Third Temple would appear to be irrelevant since the New Testament presents a very different understanding of the Temple:

¹⁹ *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* ²⁰ *The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"* ²¹ *But he spoke of the temple of his body.* (John 2:19-21)

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2Cor 6:16)

¹⁹ *So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,* ²⁰ *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* ²¹ *in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;* ²² *in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* (Eph 2:19-22)

⁴ *Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious;* ⁵ *and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1Pet 2:4-5)

However, the fact the New Testament presents a spiritual understanding of the Temple does not negate the necessity of a physical Temple in Jerusalem if it is necessary to satisfy the promises and covenants that God made to the Jewish people. There are Christians who have adopted the view that all the gifts and promises that God made to the Jewish people were transferred to the Church, but such a view, known as Replacement Doctrine, is difficult to square with Saint Paul's teaching to the Romans:

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. (Rom 11:29)

And given this reality it would appear that there is an irrevocable connection between the People of the Old Covenant and those of the New. This is not just my understanding alone, but that of the Catholic Church as well:

To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ", "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable." (CCC 839)

And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God. (CCC 840)

It is in eschatology, the mystery of the "end of the age," where the Third Temple finds its relevance not only in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel, but also in the very words of Christ. When responding to His disciples question, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" (Matt 24:3) Jesus speaks of the "abomination of desolation."

"When you see the desolating abomination spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place...." (Matt 24:15)

Nearly all scholarship agrees that the site of this event takes place "in the holy place," that is, Temple. Some scholars believe Jesus' statement is referring to the "abomination of desolation" that occurred with Antiochus IV while others believe that it was a prophecy fulfilled when the Roman's destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. If either of these perspectives are correct then this would mean that those events have already taken place and there would be no need for a Third Temple to be constructed in order to fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Jesus. However, since Jesus was responding to the question, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" I do not see how this could be a valid interpretation since neither of those historical events are associated with the "end of the age" or of the Lord's return. Furthermore, the Book of Daniel to which Jesus referred, is a set of prophecies given to Daniel by Michael the Archangel specifically referring to the "end of the age."

⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." (Dan 12:4)

Also Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, expands on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 by explaining that the "man of sin" (antichrist) and the "desolation of abomination" occurs in the Temple before the "day of Christ."

Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and concerning our gathering together unto Him, we ask you ² not to let your mind be quickly shaken or be troubled, neither in spirit nor by word, nor by letter coming as though from us, as if the day of Christ is already here. ³ Do not let anyone deceive you in any way. For that Day will not come unless a falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself as God. (1Thes 2:1-4)

A number of Church Fathers, including Saints Irenaeus and Hippolytus, believed that the rebuilding of the Temple had to occur before the coming of the antichrist, a necessary precursor before for Christ's return.

The Catholic Church recognizes that the destiny of the Church, the Jewish people and the return of our Messiah are intimately interwoven, and a Third Temple may very well be woven into all of our futures.

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles", will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all". (CCC 674)

We started off asking if there would be a Third Temple. The disciples asked Jesus what turns out to be a very related question, “*What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?*” All I can say, is that should you ever see a photograph on the television or in a newspaper that looks something like the one depicted below, then you might recall the words of Jesus:



“Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28)

Reflections

Kevin’s Reflections

“How lovely your dwelling, O LORD of hosts!” #1 Temple & Church

The Temple of Solomon and the Second Temple were constructed to be houses worthy of God. They were, in a word, magnificent. The furnishings within the Temple were of the finest quality, the majority either solid gold or covered in gold. If either Temple existed today they would be considered Wonders of the World. When a faithful Jew entered the Temple he stepped out of the mundane world of daily existence into a transcendent environment that directed his mind and heart upward towards contemplation and worship of the divine, for the Divine was present in the Shekinah Glory that rested upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies. The believing Jew knew this, and experienced this in his body, soul, and spirit.

How lovely your dwelling,
O LORD of hosts!
³My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the LORD.
My heart and flesh cry out
for the living God.
⁴As the sparrow finds a home
and the swallow a nest to settle her young,
My home is by your altars,
LORD of hosts, my king and my God!
⁵Blessed are those who dwell in your house!
They never cease to praise you. (Psalm 84:1-4)

All of this, as Catholics and Orthodox, is our inheritance also. Is not the Shekinah Glory present as the heavenly Manna of Eucharist within the tabernacles of our churches? Does He not rest upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the

Covenant within the Holy of Holies? Do we not venerate these spaces by our silence, crossings, profound bowing, prostrations, and genuflections? A beautiful church and liturgy becomes a portal whereby the faithful enter the *kairos* (eternal moment) of the Kingdom of God. Sometimes even a visitor can perceive the presence of the divine in their midst.

In 987 AD Prince Vladimir of Kiev sent emissaries to neighboring countries to studying their religions with the intention of finding the true God and faith so that his countrymen and women might adopt it and his nation, the Kievan Russ, would share the same faith. When the group of emissaries returned, who had visited the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, they reported their experience of attending Divine Liturgy at the Hagia Sophia:

“And we went into the Greek lands, and we were led into a place where they serve their God, and we did not know where we were, on heaven or on earth; and do not know how to tell about this. All we know is that God lives there with people and their service is better than in any other country. We cannot forget that beauty since each person, if he eats something sweet, will not take something bitter afterwards; so we cannot remain any more in paganism.”

I'd like to share an experience I had with my wife and our two daughters while we attended Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Northridge, California. I do not believe this experience is unique to Saint Nicholas or to the Orthodox Church as I am sure that there are many Catholic churches where one could have a similar experience. That being said, Orthodoxy has changed very little in the past fifteen hundred years both in architecture and liturgy. So I believe that it is safe to say that what one experiences in an Orthodox church holds closer to the pattern of our Jewish roots including those related to Temple worship than perhaps any other church in Christendom.



Nave and Sanctuary of Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Northridge CA

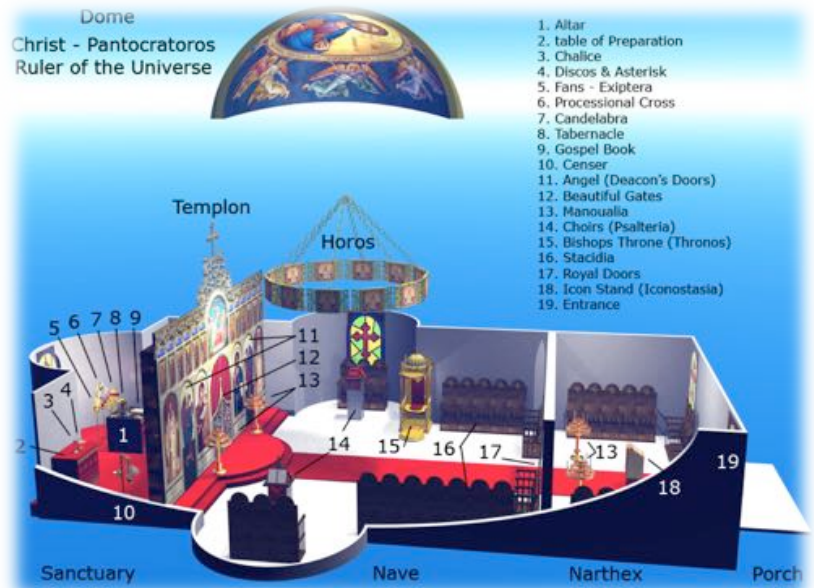
The annual Greek Festival was a highly anticipated event by both the parish and the local community. Many members of the parish volunteered; my job was to provide tours of the church. The majority of the people who accompanied me on these tours probably had no more experience of an Orthodox church than the emissaries of Prince Vladimir. Awe was probably the best adjectives that could be used to describe their initial reaction to the beauty that surrounded them. What a terrific opportunity to introduce these visitors to the wonders and mysteries of our faith! The most memorable tour I gave was to a middle-aged Jewish couple who had never see the inside of Saint Nicholas Church or perhaps any other beautiful Orthodox or Catholic church. When they told me that they were Jewish I immediately knew I wanted to share with them that the architecture and ornamentation of the church was based upon the Temple of Jerusalem. They were intrigued.

As we entered the nave of the church they were immediately struck by its grandeur, but were especially impressed by the front of the church and the beautiful iconostasis with its icons of Jesus and the saints. As we approached the raised platform, known as the *solea*, they noticed that there was another room behind the iconostasis.

“That’s the sanctuary,” I said referring to the room on the other side of the iconostasis. I motioned for the Jewish couple to come up on with me on the *solea* and to approach the Royal Gates so that they could look into the sanctuary. “This is our Holy of Holies.”

“Oh my goodness,” exclaimed the woman looking through the Gates. “I see a menorah.”

“That’s right. In Solomon’s Temple the menorah would have been in the Holy Place separated from the Holy of Holies by a veil. Christians believe that when Christ died on the cross the veil separating us from God’s presence in the Holy of Holies was torn giving all of us access to the Divine presence. Orthodox architecture acknowledges the belief by combining the Holies of Holies and the Holy Place into a single sanctuary.”



“What’s that little house on top of the table?” the husband asked.

“That’s the tabernacle,” I replied. There is a lot of symbolism in the sanctuary. The table is called the altar which symbolizes the “altar of sacrifice” in the Temple. For Christians that altar is the cross where Christ, the Passover sacrifice, died. That is also why we have a cross in the sanctuary with an icon of our Lord’s body on it.” I then proceed to ask the couple a question, “I’m sure you remember that the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant; do you remember what was in the Ark?”

“Wasn’t some manna in the ark?” the woman asked.

“And the Tablets of the Testimony, you know the Ten Commandment written in stone,” added the husband.

“Yes, that’s right. The little house you see on the altar is like a little ark; it too contains manna, Heavenly Manna, that is the consecrated bread, our Lord’s body, the Eucharist. And the book on the altar is the Gospels; instead of the Tablets of Testimony the Gospels are the testimony of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

“I seem to remember that there were two angels on the Ark,” the wife said.

“Yes, and between the angels was the “mercy seat” upon which the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice once a year for the atonement of his sins and the sins of the people. Also, it was upon the mercy seat that the Shekinah Glory appeared.”



“And where is all that, the angels and the mercy seat?” asked the husband.

I took a few steps back so that we could get a better perspective when examining the mosaic above and behind the sanctuary. I motioned for them to follow me and then pointed to the mosaic.

“There they are,” the wife exclaimed.

“I’m assuming that the woman is Mary and the child on her lap is Jesus, right?” the husband asked.

“That’s right,” I replied. “Most Orthodox churches have

this icon above the sanctuary. There are different names for this icon, one of them “Our Lady of the Sign,” referring to the prophecy of Isaiah,

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.”

“The scripture is telling us that Mary is the Ark of the New Testament because she carried the divine in her womb and as a child He sat upon her lap, the Mercy Seat. That’s why some connect this icon with the Mercy Seat of the Ark because this is where we meet God face to face and behold his glory.”

“So you believe that a Jewish mother is the Mercy Seat of the Ark?” asked the woman, smiling while her eyes glistened with tears.

“When we’re in trouble, don’t we always go to our mothers first?” I replied.

“Sounds about right,” the husband said, holding his wife’s hand.

“Thank you,” the woman said. “Thanks for sharing this beautiful place with us.”

“As the Psalm says, ‘How lovely is your dwelling place.’ We hope this has been a blessing to you and your husband. Please come by and visit us any time.”

I wanted to share more with them, but my wife warns me that I go on a bit too much. If I had though I would have mentioned the fans (*exiptera*) which represent the six-winged seraphim, the altar of oblation which is like the Table of the Shewbread in the Holy Place of the Temple. Most importantly I would have shared that we too have a great High Priest, who is called *Yeshua HaMashiach*, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb 9:11-14)

Although there may not be the same level of correlation between the Temple and church architecture and design in the Roman Catholic Church as compared to that of the Orthodox Church the Truth that is fulfilled in both, that the Temple finds its fulfillment in Christ, is present in both of these major branches of Christianity. I wish that all Christian were aware of these connections as they demonstrate how beautifully coherent the New Testament and the Church is with the Old Testament and the Jewish People. I believe that the Jewish woman whom I had the privilege of sharing Saint Nicholas Church with, recognized this truth. She might have only recognized this Truth intuitively, but this is the wonder of Beauty that she can bypass our fears, biases, and misconceptions and reveal the Truth directly to our hearts. Psalmist understood this when he said,

*My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the LORD. (Psalm 84:3)*



Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago celebrates the Mass with area priests during the blessing of the iconic monstrance of Our Lady of the Sign, Ark of Mercy at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Chicago May 31. The nine-foot high, hand carved and decorated, monstrance is believed to be the largest in the world. It will be the focal point of the future Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in the Archdiocese of Chicago. (CNS/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World) (June 10, 2008)

“How lovely your dwelling, O Lord of hosts!” #2: Body of Christ & Bride

To enter a beautiful Catholic or Orthodox church is to be transported from the sphere of the profane and enter the realm of the sacred. One is drawn from the narthex to the nave toward the sanctuary, where the Shekinah Glory resides within the Tabernacle, the Heavenly Manna of the Bread of Life, Jesus our Lord and Savior. This is my home, as the Psalmist said, “*My home is by your altars, LORD of hosts, my king and my God!*” And as wonderful as this is there are greater wonders still for each of us is a spiritual Temple:

¹⁶ *Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?* (1Cor 3:16)

But together, in the Church, the Holy Spirit builds an even greater, more expansive Temple in which God dwells:

⁴ *Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious;* ⁵ *and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1Peter 2:4-5)

This Temple made of living stones is being built into a living being, a Body whose head is Christ.

...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.* (Eph 4:15-16)

Who is this Body of Christ, this living Temple? She is the Bride who through sanctifying grace is growing up into all aspect of Him who is our Head, the Bridegroom.

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶ *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* (Eph 5:25-27)



This is beautifully represented in the Feast of Hanukkah. The Hanukkah menorah has nine candles; a central candle, the *shamash*, and four candles flanking each side. Christ is the central candle, and the eight candles represent the Church. The number 8 in biblical numerology represents a new beginning, it is a declaration that God is doing something new (Isa 43:19). Jesus resurrected on the eighth day, the day after the seventh day, the Sabbath. It is for this reason that Christians began celebrating the Lord’s Day on Sunday, the eighth day. The menorah in the Temple had seven candles representing the Covenant God made with Jewish people. The menorah of Hanukkah has eight candles (as the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for eight days) a foreshadowing of the New Covenant and His Church.

The *shamash* is the “head” of the Hanukkah menorah as Christ is the Head of the Church. *Shamash* means “servant.” Christ is the servant and head of His Church, His Bride.

⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.* (Phil 2:5-8)

The *shamash* candle is lit first and then this candle is used to light the other candles. This is beautiful symbolism of Christ, the light of the world, filling us with His light, the *Shekinah* glory, so that we in turn may be His light to the world.

¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.* ¹⁵ *Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.* ¹⁶ *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* (Matt 5:14-16)

And each day of Hanukkah another candle is lit giving off more radiance as Christ’s glory increasingly manifests Himself in us, and His Church as we are transformed into His Bride.

All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2Cor 3:18)



Those of us who attend churches that are sacred places acknowledge this as we respectfully bow, genuflect, and cross ourselves when we come into the presence of the divine. Should we not also show a similar honoring to one another recognizing the presence of Christ in each member of the Body of Christ?

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph 5:21)

Jesus said, *“I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49)*

We, the Church, are that fire. Christ, the *shamash* candle, has lit our hearts aflame and we are to light one another and the world with the flame of His glory, provoking one another to love and good works (Heb 10:24) while speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15) so that we might grow into all aspects to Him Who is our Bridegroom.

Jan’s Reflection

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles is also known as Sukkot or the Feast of Ingathering. Sukkot points to the Second Coming when God dwells among us in His eternal light and glory.

God led His chosen people with the Pillar of the Cloud and Fire while they wandered in the desert for forty years. They dwelt in tents, temporary dwellings, a reminder that while this life and its wildernesses are only for awhile, God’s presence with us is forever.

The Feast was a time to thank God for all He had given His people. It was a time to offer food from the harvest and a time of rejoicing. It was also a time to reflect on how God had brought them through dry and difficult times; pointing to God’s desire to dwell with His people. Tabernacles is an eternal Feast of our dwelling with Him in the age to come. We are His remnant harvested and gathered as a Bride for her Bridegroom. The Feast of Tabernacles is the only Hebrew Feast that spans the entirety of God’s presence among His people, from Old Testament times, to when Jesus celebrated the Feast, through the Church age, and all the way to the fulfillment of time itself in the Kingdom of God.

The Feast of Tabernacles is an eternal celebration of the joy between the Bride and her Bridegroom. The Church anticipates this union with expectancy and joy when, in the New Jerusalem, He will be our light as when Jesus said at the Feast of Tabernacles, “I am the Light of the world.”