

Advent Midweek 3

Psalm 85; Malachi 3:1-6; Hebrews 8:1-13; Luke 1:30-45

382 *We Praise You, Jesus*; 356 *The Angel Gabriel*; 881 *Christ, Mighty Savior*

Today is the third installment of our Advent series:

The Lord, whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple.

On the first week, we learned that Jesus Himself is the true temple of God.

The flesh of Jesus, born of the Virgin is the place where God manifests Himself.

In fact, we learned that the body of Jesus is finally the full and complete manifestation of God's glory.

And that only in Christ can we look upon God fully without fear.

That until God's glory shines forth through the crucified, it is not yet the full revelation of God's glory.

By this, you are to understand that Jesus is not a lesser version of God's glory.

Rather, He is the fulfillment.

Likewise, you are to learn that to overcome the fear of God's presence is not to shrink from Him but to be so bold as to look upon Christ.

Thus it was that last week, we considered the tabernacle of the children of Israel.

How Moses was given the pattern for it on Mt. Sinai and how God took up residence in the Holy of Holies at its completion.

We also noticed how Solomon was given to build a stone temple in Jerusalem according to the same pattern.

At the dedication of this temple, the cloud overshadowed the Holy of Holies.

In this tent and temple, God deigned to dwell in their midst without harming them.

But this harmless dwelling could only be accomplished by a series of preventative measures: not the least of which was the twice daily sacrifice.

Through the blood of the lamb, God purified His people to be with them.

But the provisions for purity were fragile and easily broken.

When the ministering priests violated the ritual purity, the wrath reigned down.

It was customary to tie a rope to the priest's ankle in case some infraction of God's holiness necessitated his stricken body to be dragged out.

The temple was far from the perfect fulfillment of God's promise to dwell with His people and it was eventually destroyed by the Babylonians.

Seventy years later, while it was being rebuilt by Zerubabel, the prophet Haggai made a remarkable prophecy: *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it [is] a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry [land]; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver [is] mine, and the gold [is] mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts."* vv 6-9

At first blush, it sounds like everything will return to the way it was.

That the temple of Solomon will regain its former significance.

But when Zerubabel's temple was completed and the day for dedication came, nothing happened.

No cloud. No fire. No presence there. It was a building and nothing more.

So was Haggai in error? Did the prophet get it wrong?

Not at all! For he saw and foretold the coming of the true Temple and the true Glory of God. He spoke of Jesus.

But before we get there, we have one more stop to make.

Tonight, our lessons turn our thoughts to the Mary.

Gabriel appeared to her to tell her that she would be the Virgin Mother.

That the child conceived in her womb would be the son of the Most High.

Here, our story takes a new turn and makes Mary a special place on her own right.

This is even underscored by the words of Gabriel: *"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."*

Just as the cloud overshadowed the tabernacle—and later the temple—as an indication of God's presence within, so now Mary is overshadowed.

At the annunciation of the angel, God is now IN Mary.

She has become a temple of God—the place of God's presence.

And so, when she visited her cousin Elizabeth, John leapt at the presence of Jesus.

John, the son of priest Zechariah, was at the temple of God.

And so, yes, Mary is also a temple worth talking about.

But she is a temple with a difference. Let me outline that difference now.

In the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon, God was indeed present.

But in order to access that presence, there was still the need of a mediator.

Only the High Priest could go in and he would represent the people to God.

One delegate from the people would stand in the Holy of Holies.

No one else was permitted.

Then, he would turn and come out and speak to the people on God's behalf.

The words of God. The will of God. The instructions of God to be sure.

But not God Himself. Only a man—the high priest.

Now, with the conception of the Virgin Mary, the God of Israel who inhabits her body is not only God but also a Man.

Man, like the priests of old. Human being like you and like me.

And because He is now fully clothed in flesh and blood, there is no need for a third party go-between.

He does not send out a delegate to speak to you on His behalf.

Rather, He—God Himself—comes out of that most holy place and comes to you.

That is the blessing of that most holy night: That God stepped forth from the Holy of Holies and now inhabits the world Himself.

That in the flesh and blood of Jesus you yourself are in the Most holy Place.

And there is no place Holier—no place safer—no place better to be.

That to be in Christ Jesus is also to have Christ Jesus in you.

And to have Christ in you is to be the temple of the Most High God.

Mary shows us the way: For *"blessed [is] she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."*

And blessed are you who believe these things which were told you from the Lord.

Rev. 21:3-4 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. AMEN.*