



LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

Week 8 - Jewish Origins of Christian Worship (Session 3 of DVD)

Introduction:

The worship of early Christians was not delivered at Pentecost (the birth of the Christian Church) but developed from Jewish worship and the ministry of Jesus... Jesus' critique of Israel's religious life is really a comment on what comprises true worship, for reality must always be seen Christologically and defined by the God we worship... For Jesus, the lens through which we must view reality is Him, as He told the Samaritan woman, "Those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Although Jesus was critical of certain aspects of Israel's religious life, He never spoke against Israel's liturgical life. He submitted Himself to its rhythm as a faithful descendant of Abraham. Jesus was a faithful Jew who worshiped where Jews worshiped and participated fully in Jewish rites [except where there were abuses, ie. cleansing the temple]. Jesus never spoke against the Jewish rituals in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. He never criticized the Jewish liturgies in the synagogue or at the Passover. His disciples and other followers followed their Lord by their uncritical acceptance of Israel's liturgical life, and adapted Israel's worship to form the backbone of Christian worship. Christian liturgy, therefore, grew out of Jewish worship rites. Understanding why we worship as we do requires that we recognize how Jesus and the disciples worshiped. We shall consider the basic ordering not only of worship but of Jewish life in general by means of the Seder that stands at the center of the structure of Jewish life. Then we shall consider the Passover, the places of Jewish worship, and the way Jews prayed as the basic unit of worship. In considering these Jewish origins, we shall reflect on how they influenced the development of Christian worship. -Arthur A. Just, *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service*

What are the three places where Jews worshipped at the time of Jesus?

Jesus did not hesitate to criticize things He felt were not right in Israel. Specifically the mis-teachings of Jewish leaders. What is the significance that Jesus does not criticize the worship life of Israel?

Why was the Temple the supreme place of worship for the Jews?

How did the Jews view holiness in connection with the Temple?

What was the most important part of the Temple?

What was located there (Exodus 25:10-22; Jeremiah 3:16)?

Who entered there? (Leviticus 16:1-34)

When & Why?

What was the second most important part of the Temple?

Where was it located in relation to the most important part?

What happened there (1 Chr. 6:49)

When & By Whom?

What was the purpose of the daily sacrifices?

Sacrifice runs throughout the Old Testament: It began when God sacrificed an animal to make clothes for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21); it continued right after Noah came out of the Ark (Gen 8:20); it took place with Abraham when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son, who was replaced at the last moment with a ram (Gen 22:13); it also took place in the days of Moses in the connection with God's promise to Passover each household who in faith slaughtered a year-old lamb without defect and put its blood on the doorframes of their houses (Ex. 12); it was finally established as a regular practice in the book of Leviticus - always with the intention of pointing people to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, who paid the full penalty for all sins.

What are ways in which our own liturgy expresses our understanding of sacrifice?

Because sacrifice makes us right with God, in what ways does our liturgy express our understanding of being holy & righteous (right with God)?

The order of liturgy that was used in the Synagogue was: Torah / Psalm / Prophets / Psalm / Historical writings / Psalm / Interpretation of the Word / The Shema or O.T. Creed / The Sanctus / Prayer. If you compare our liturgy today:

What are the similarities?

What are the differences?

The Jews understood that God was _____ where His Word was _____.

In the liturgy of the Synagogue, as the reading of the Word progressed from Torah to Prophets to Historical Writings, what was going on in that progression that we continue to practice today in the Lutheran Church, which our liturgy confesses, in connection with Bible interpretation?

Why were Psalms chanted in the Synagogue liturgy? Why do we sing hymns today? Read Psalm 118, noting especially verses 25-26. Then read Isaiah 6:1-4. Why do you think the combination of those passages, called the "Sanctus," has remained so long in the Church's liturgy (since the 2nd century)?