The Old and New Testament Temple

**Background**
So the temple of God was now erected in Jerusalem. This would now be the permanent house for the Ark of the Covenant and the place where the priests would offer the blood sacrifices in atonement for the sins of the people of Israel. This would be the location where all the male Hebrews would have to appear three times a year (the three major feasts). We even know of Jews in the New Testament that had to go to Jerusalem to worship. “Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast.” (John 12:20). Also, “And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship.” (Acts 8:27). And, “since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.” (Acts 24:11). And this rule was summed up best by the woman at the well. “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” (John 4:20). This is also where the priests would perform the Day of Atonement ceremony as well (Leviticus 16). The tabernacle was no longer going to be used for worship.

There was once a person from our church that happened to be talking to me about one of the latest movies he had seen. I asked him if he would recommend it – and he said besides a little nudity and some vulgar language, he would recommend it. I asked him if it would be an appropriate movie to show on the church premises and he said “No.” Keep this in mind as we keep reading.

What does the New Testament say about the temple? There are two Greek words that are translated into the word temple. The word Hieron means the entire grounds of the temple. This is what the apostles were asking about in the first part of Matthew 24. Most of the times the word temple is used in the New Testament comes from the word Hieron. The other Greek word that is translated into temple is Naos. Naos actually denotes the central sanctuary itself (The Holy of Holies and so forth.). This is the place and the word that was used to signify that sins had been forgiven.

When Jesus came to earth, the temple location started to move. Jesus had the authority on earth to forgive sins. Matthew 9:6 says “‘But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’— then He said to the paralytic—’Rise, take up your bed, and go home.’” This is also reiterated in Mark 2:10 and Luke 5:24. “The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.” (John 2:18-22).
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But after Jesus's death, burial and resurrection, the temple was still around and still being used heavily by the Jews and those who did not believe Jesus was who he said he was. God had officially moved out of the temple at the setting up of the church on the day Jesus ascended into Heaven. It is easy to prove in the Bible that when it speaks of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, it is also talking about the church. This can be done by first looking at Colossians 1:13 “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” We can tell from the above scripture the Christians have been transferred to the kingdom of his beloved son. Then, by comparing Mark 4:11 and Matthew 13:11 and by comparing Mark 9:1 and Matthew 16:28, you will actually prove that the kingdom of heaven is actually called the church. Then by looking at the following scriptures – Matthew 24:30, Mark 9:1, Acts 1:10,11, Daniel 7:13-14 will prove that the first coming of Jesus and the beginning of the kingdom actually began on the day that Jesus ascended into Heaven. So since forgiveness of sins was now granted through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the temple had become a pagan temple, to serve a fleshly God, rather than a spiritual God. So God gave the Jews 40 years to worship in the temple and then it was leveled by the Romans in the destruction of Jerusalem. So where does the temple reside now?

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.” (I Corinthians 3:16-17). “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (I Corinthians 6:18-20). “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ Says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1). So guess which one of the Greek words was used to translate the above temples? Naos – the place where sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit dwells.

So when God moved he did not move to a church building in Dublin or Cincinnati, He, through the Holy Spirit, has moved into the church itself through the heart of every one of its true members. We have been formed in his very image, by his
own very precious hands. “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old	self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to
to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”
(Colossians 3:9-10). So when you go see one of those somewhat vulgar movies,
you have just let the contents of it into the church of the living God. Every
alcoholic beverage, gossip, slander, foul language, and television show enters
into the temple or church of the Living God. Naos is the inner sanctuary. That is
why we are to be pure and holy. That is why the body of sin must be done away
with (Romans 6). The Holy Spirit cannot reside where sin dwells. That is why
baptism is necessary, according to the Bible, to receive the Holy Spirit. That is
the point in which your sins are washed away (Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16). That
makes a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Jesus was able to have the Holy
Spirit because he “knew no sin.”

This temple, built by Solomon replaced the tabernacle that had been used by the
Israelites ever since they came out of the land of Egypt. They had moved the
tent from the wilderness and then placed it permanently at Shiloh after they
entered the promised land under Joshua (Joshua 18:1).

God designed the tabernacle by his own design. Moses was warned three times
in the book of Exodus to build it according to the pattern. This was also
reiterated in the New Testament when it said “Moses was warned by God when
he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘See,’ He says, ‘that you make all
things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.’”
(Hebrews 8:5). This same thing is also stated in Acts 7:44. God would not
accept any deviations in His plan. As we are going to find out, the tabernacle
and temple were a foreshadow of the church. So if God did not accept
deviations from the plan for the tabernacle, will he accept deviations in His New
Testament plan for the church? Most churches today teach and perform what is
socially acceptable for the sake of numbers, rather than what is Godly acceptable
for the sake of the truth and the salvation of souls.

The Tabernacle / Temple Layout
The Layout of the tabernacle that was used in the wilderness looked like the
following:
The temple history went something like this:

- The First Temple was finished 939 BC by Solomon
- Destroyed 400 years later by the Babylonians
- Reconstructed in 516 BC
- Destroyed by Rome’s Pompey in 62 BC.
- Rebuilt by Herod the Great in 20 BC
- Finally finished in 64 AD – outer courts and all
- Destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans
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The inner court of Solomon's Temple had the following layout:

Solomon's Temple

The layout of the temple that was later built by Herod had the following layout:

Herod's Temple

The Court was the area just inside the front door. This was as far as the ordinary Israelite could enter. The Holy Place was the area where the priest would carry out his daily duties in the offering of sacrifices for the sins of the people. The Holy of Holies or the "Most Holy Place" was only entered once a year on the day of atonement by the High Priest. The high priest was first purified and then he could enter again to make atonement for all of Israel.

The tabernacle and temples always had the following items:
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- The altar of burnt offering – Exodus 27:1-8
- The Laver – Exodus 30:17-21
- The table of Shewbread – Exodus 25:23-30
- The altar of Incense – Exodus 30:1-10
- The Veil – Exodus 26:31-33 (Only in the tabernacle and Herod’s temple)
- The Ark of the Covenant – Exodus 25:10-22

These items are very significant to us today as Christians even though it is very much overlooked in most Bible study lessons. For it says in Hebrews 9:21 that “[Moses] in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.” “Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” (Hebrews 9:23). So with this scripture and Hebrews 8:5, we can see that the items in the temple were an exact copy of the things in heaven. We are now going to take a look at the significance of the furniture and the rooms in the tabernacle and temple.

The altar of burnt offering
Just inside the doorway was the altar of burnt offering. This is where the typical Israelite would bring his sacrifice and work with the priest to help carry out the sacrifice. Typically then the Israelite would place his hand on the head of the animal – to signify a transfer of guilt from the man to the animal. Then the animal was slaughtered and the blood was either caught in a basin or spread on the horns of the altar, depending on the type of sacrifice. The sacrifice was made outside of the holy place. The killing of the sacrifice did not constitute the atonement for the sin. Atonement required the sprinkling of the blood on the altar. For Hebrews 9:19-22 says “For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

Jesus came and fulfilled all the requirements of a perfect sacrifice. So when did He, the perfect high priest, make atonement for the sins of the people of the world?

Laver
The Laver was a bronze bowl or tub that was used to hold water. The priests were required to wash before they could perform any services for God. No one could enter the holy areas without first washing part of his body in the Laver. In fact on the day of atonement (Leviticus 16), the high priest was required to wash his whole body with water both before and after entering the holy of Holies.
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(Leviticus 16:4,24). In Revelation 4:6, we see that “and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal,” symbolizing that nothing unclean can come to the throne of God, it must be washed. Just as a priest had to be cleansed before he could perform a service for God, the Christian must do this also. “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:22). God’s requirements must be followed in order to perform His service.

So the laver that was used in the tabernacle and temple was a foreshadow of baptism. The New Testament ties these together pretty well. Titus 3:5 says “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” Ephesians 5:26 says “that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” The greek word used in the above two passages for the word washing is *loutron*, which is also the greek word for laver. Acts 22:16 says “And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” I Corinthians 6:11 says “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.” The greek word used here is *apolluo*, which means to wash ones entire body, just like we learned above the high priest had to do to perform services. But notice that as Christians, once we are washed we are made holy(sanctified) and able to perform the service of a priest.

The Table of Shewbread

Along the north wall was the table of the shewbread. The recipe for shewbread is found in Leviticus 24:5-9. It was an unleavened bread made of fine flour. Twelve very large loaves of bread were used to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. These were placed in two stacks of 6. The shewbread was also called the “bread of the face.” Exodus 25:30 says “And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.” It is also called the bread of the presence and continual bread, Numbers 4:7. The old shewbread was eaten every Sabbath and replaced with new bread. The shewbread was only to be eaten by the priests. Leviticus 24:9 says “And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the Lord's offerings by fire, his portion forever.”

Even though it does not state it specifically, the shewbread seems to draw a lot of similarities to the Lord’s Supper. Both are unleavened bread. Yeast was a symbol of sin. The shewbread was unleavened because sin cannot stand in presence of God. Both are eaten and prepared weekly. The Lord’s Supper is taken to remember Jesus. “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (I Corinthians 11:24). The shewbread was always in the
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presence of the God. Only the priests were allowed to eat the shewbread. The bread of the Lord’s Supper is for the priesthood of believers, Christians.

The Lampstand
In the tabernacle was a lampstand, not a candlestick, as some new translations put it. This was the only source of light in the The Holy Place. It was up to the Levites to make sure the lampstand was filled with oil and stayed lit all the time. Solomon used 10 lampstands in his temple but the original tabernacle and the temple of Herod both used one lampstand. So what was the lampstand’s significance and the foreshadow of? Let’s look at some scripture. “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105). The word for lampstand is the same word used here to describe the Word of God as the lamp that provides light. “And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” (II Peter 1:19).

Christians are the children of light and we are to share that light with the darkened world. Jesus came as the original lamp. “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” (Revelation 21:23). And this was revealed as the word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1-5). The Bible can and will change us. “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (II Corinthians 3:18). For we are to “ prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.” (Philippians 2:15-16).

Here is the other very interesting thing: “And six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its other side.” (Exodus 25:32). So there are six branches coming out the side. “Three cups shall be shaped like almond blossoms in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bulb and a flower-- so for six branches going out from the lampstand.” (Exodus 25:33). So there are 3 almond blossoms, bulbs and flowers (3 * 3 = 9) coming out of each of the 6 branches ( 6 * 9 = 54). “and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers.” (Exodus 25:34). So the center lampstand has 4 sets of 3 also (4 * 3 = 12). Adding 54 + 12 gives you 66, which is the exact count of ornaments on the lampstand and the exact number of books in the Bible.
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The altar of Incense
The altar of Incense stood just in front of the veil that lead to the Holy of Holies. It was much smaller than the altar of burnt offering. It had horns at each corner and was overlaid with pure gold. The altar of burnt offering was overlaid with bronze (bronze altar and golden altar). This altar was used for one purpose – to burn incense. Every morning and evening when the lampstands were trimmed, incense would be burned on this altar. The incense that was prepared had to be done according to specifications – Exodus 30:34-38. Once each year, the priest would make atonement by placing some of the blood of the sin offering on the horns of the altar of incense.

Incense is a representation of our prayers going up to God. “And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” (Revelation 5:8). “May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee” (Psalm 141:2). “And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.” (Revelation 8:3-4). This is something we need to remember, we are standing right before God when are on our knees praying. It is so important that the Holy Spirit even helps in this manner. “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Place
We just finished talking about the Holy Place and the furnishings that are in it. What organization is the only one on the planet that requires immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins to gain entrance? It’s the church. Once a member of the church, you are then able to offer sacrifices, have prayers heard by God (Incense), eat the Lord’s Supper (Shewbread). You cannot have your prayers heard by God until you are a Christian – that is, if you believe John 9:31 and Isaiah 59:1,2. So from now on, we are going to say that the Holy Place was a foreshadow of the church.

The Most Holy Place
This is the place where God dwells – in the ark of the covenant. So we are going to call this the foreshadow of heaven – separated down the middle by a veil.

The Veil
The Most Holy Place was separated from the Holy Place by a veil. It was 7.5 feet tall and over 2 inches thick of single, continuous material that had been woven together. It separated the priests from the ark of the covenant. There was also another veil in the tabernacle. The other veil would not let the sinful man actually
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see inside the Holy Place. God wanted to be totally separated from sinful man. Only one person was allowed to go through the veil and that was only on one day of the year. The High Priest on the day of atonement (Yom Kippur), was allowed to go through the veil to sprinkle blood on the ark of the covenant for the sins of he and his family and then the sins of all of Israel.

The veil was a barrier between man and God or a reference to sin. God cannot be associated with sin. So the only way an Israelite could get right with God, was to take his sacrifice to the priest and then he would perform all of the duties and then the priest would disappear with the blood of the sacrifice into the temple. The Israelite could not see what was going on. He could only use the terms that were setup by God. But while He was on the cross, “the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.” (Luke 23:45). So the presence of God was now opened up to all who wanted to follow. The veil or barrier separating the two was now taken away in Christ.

Hebrews 10:20 says "by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." So the true veil is the flesh of Jesus which took away the sin of the world. That is how we gain entrance into the presence of God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That is the only way to get into the presence of God. The tearing of the veil also opened up the church to be the same as the kingdom of Heaven. The veil separating the two had now been torn down. And as we learned earlier in the study, the Bible calls them the same thing. And how do we get into Christ? “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27). And with that Holy Spirit, you are now the temple of God in the New Covenant. You are the sanctuary. You are the holy the holies. So act accordingly.

So when did Christ make the atonement for the sins of the world?

The Ark of the Covenant

Behind the veil of course was the Ark of the Covenant, which was used to represent God throughout the journeys from Mt. Sinai to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. On top of the ark, were two angels with long wings (Cherubim) and their faces were looking at a seat in the middle, which is called the mercy seat. This is where God would meet with the High Priest and give His commands (Exodus 25:18-22). The Israelites actually believed the God dwelt between the wings of the cherubim, from which came commands and mercy. But Acts 7:44 says “However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands.” Inside the ark “was a golden jar holding the manna[reminder of God’s provision], and Aaron’s rod which budded[symbol of power of the high priest], and the tables of the covenant[represent man’s covenant with God].” (Hebrews 9:4).
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The day of atonement is described in Leviticus 16. Notice when the sins were forgiven: when the high priest took the blood of the bull and goat, entered the tabernacle or temple and sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat. Also notice that the high priest had to put on the holy garments before he could enter into the holy of holies also. Also the high priest could only enter after having his entire body washed in the laver. This goes along with what we have learned all along. We have learned that the Holy of Holies was the foreshadow of the kingdom of heaven. And the priest had to put on his holy garments to go in there to the Holy of Holies. This is just what we have to do today. “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:27).

“The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” (Romans 13:12-14). You cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without being washed of your sins or properly immersed for the forgiveness of your sins. God has never accepted any substitutions in this plan. God is God of honor. You can believe what it says in his Holy Word, the sole source of light.

So, sins were atoned for when blood was sprinkled on the altar or the mercy seat. So when did Christ atone for the sins of the world?

The High Priest
The high priest could perform all of the regular functions of a normal priest but he was the only person that could enter into the Most Holy Place, once a year on the day of atonement. The high priest was the intercessory ministry for the people of Israel. The following section was taken from a study guide called “The Tabernacle and the Christian” by David Fagan.

The Scriptures boldly and repeatedly declare that Jesus is our high priest. See Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 8:1; 9:11. As our intermediary, Jesus is vastly superior to the High priests of the Old Covenant. Jesus performed the function of the high priest on our behalf

The baptism of Jesus began His service as our high priest. But why was Jesus baptized? John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, but Jesus had no need of repentance. Our baptism is for remission of sins, but Jesus had no sins to be forgiven.

Matthew 3:15 tells us that Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. But what righteousness? Jesus was not baptized simply because John’s baptism was in effect at the time! While He was in the water the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Jesus, our high priest, was washed with water because the high priest had to be washed before he began his priestly service. In this way, His baptism fulfilled all
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righteousness. We are not baptized because Jesus was baptized. Our baptism has no relationship to Jesus’ baptism. We are baptized because Jesus commanded us to be immersed for salvation, Mark 16:16.

The significance of the triumphal entry is also often overlooked by Bible students. The road between Jericho and Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover. They anticipated a showdown at “high noon” between Jesus and the Pharisees (and the beginning of an earthly kingdom that would end Roman dominance of the Jews). As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Pharisees cautioned Jesus to rebuke the multitude for their Messianic proclamations, Luke 19:38, 39. Jesus replied that the crowds were to be silent the stones would cry out. What was so significant about this parade that would evoke such a reaction from the stones along the road? The true high priest was coming to Jerusalem to make atonement for the sins of the people!

But Christ could not be a high priest while on earth however - that could only be after he ascended into heaven. Priests had to be from the tribe a Levi and Christ was from the tribe of Judah. “Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law.” (Hebrews 8:4). So Christ could not be a priest while on earth or after His bodily resurrection. He could only have been declared high priest after His ascension to the right hand of God.

“And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:9-10).

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of Him, ‘Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’” (Hebrews 7:14-17). Notice that Jesus was to keep his post forever.

God considers sin so terrible that a life must be sacrificed to make atonement for it. Death occurs as a penalty of sin. Death entered the world through Adam’s sin and before his sin there was no death in the world. This is stated in Romans 6:23 that “The wages of sin is death.” But the animal sacrifices that were instituted had a lot of deficiencies. “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:4). “Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience.” (Hebrews 9:9). “Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship.” (Hebrews 9:6). They were not what God wanted (Psalm 40:6, Isaiah 1:13).
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So, sins were atoned for when blood was sprinkled on the altar or the mercy seat. So when did Christ atone for the sins of the world?

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:11-14).

“Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.” (Hebrews 9:23-28).

So just the same as the Old Testament, the sacrifice was not atoned for until the priest sprinkled the blood on the altar or the mercy seat in the temple or tabernacle. So to with Christ. He atoned for our sins when he took His own spiritual blood into heaven itself and sprinkled his blood in that true tabernacle, heaven. Yet, which day is celebrated by the church? The fleshly church, oblivious to the spiritual significance of the what Christ has done, seeks what we can see and touch. Thus, walking by sight and not by faith, we hang onto the cross and miss the greater significance of Christ’s blood offered in the true tabernacle in atonement for our sins! The day of his ascension is what is referred to above as the “consummation of the ages.”

The New Priests

All the priests from the Old Testament had to come from the tribe of Levi(Number3:1-10). Why did they come from the tribe of Levi? Deuteronomy 10:6-9 tells us that the Levites rejected the idolatrous worship of the golden calf and stood for the truth with Moses. God will honor those who stand for the truth. Besides being a Levite, a priest also had to meet a strict physical set or requirements as well (Leviticus 21). There were 3 different divisions of Levites based on the three sons of Levi and each group performed a different responsibility in the transportation and maintenance of the tabernacle (Numbers
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3:25-37). We need to remember that the priests were not given land in the promised land but were given the 48 cities and the 6 cities of refuge, as well as some surrounding land. Plus the tithes that were collected went to support the Levites (Numbers 18:20-24). So they were set apart to perform the services of God continually (Hebrews 9:6). After being washed, the priests would offer up sacrifices, kept the lampstand burning, ate the shewbread, and they burned incence.

I Peter 2:9 says “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” We are the priesthood of all believers. Even though the church today seems to care less if the people act like it or not. But God cares. Notice there is no separation here between ministers and Christians. Properly immersed believers have just as much Holy Spirit as any minister. The Old Testament priests were to serve God. Hebrews 9:6 says “Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship.” And in the New Testament, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Romans 12:1). These use the same Greek word, latreia, which means to serve. So the Old Testament priests served with dead sacrifices and the New Testament priests serve with living sacrifices.

“And I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.’” (Revelation 7:14-17). Christian, you are to serve God day and night. When you were immersed for the remission of your sins, you were set apart from the common man as a holy vessel of God to do His work. At that point, you were added to His church (Acts 2:47) and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved son (Colossians 1:13). Just like the vessels in the Old Testament, you have been sanctified (made holy) so that you can serve God in the spiritual tabernacle. Are we building on this spiritual trust he gave us or just letting it melt away?

“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (I Peter 2:5). Sacrifices can no longer be served in the tabernacle or temple since both of these things have now been destroyed and the Bible tells us that Christians are the true tabernacle or Temple. The way that New Testament priests serve God is very much parallel to the way Old Testament priests served God.
The Old and New Testament Temple

1. **New Testament priests offer living sacrifices to God, not dead ones** – Hebrews 13:15,16 tells us that living sacrifices are: Praise to God, Giving thanks to His name, Doing Good, Sharing with others.

2. **New Testament priests eat the Lord’s Supper** – “We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.” (Hebrews 13:10). This is our peace offering to Christ in this weekly service.

3. **New Testament priests spread the word of God** – We keep the golden lampstand lit and light new ones in this dark world (I John 1:5,6) by evangelizing.

4. **New Testament priests offer up prayers to God** – Just like the altar of incense, our prayers should continually ascend to God.

5. **New Testament priests come boldly before God** – Through the veil of Jesus’ flesh, we can stand boldly before the throne of God. The veil has been broken.

A true Christian works with all diligence [work with sweat – II Peter 1:5] in continual service to God. Every fiber of our body should be devoted to working for Christ. In the Old Testament, “both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience.” (Hebrews 9:9). So all of those animal sacrifices could not bring about perfection. So how do we get a perfect conscience in the New Testament? “And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (I Peter 3:21). Then you can offer your own body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1) to the Lord because you are purified as a New Testament priest and the Holy Temple of the Lord. And then you continue to be purified (I John 3:3) by setting your hope on Christ to remain a fit vessel for the Holy Spirit. And even though we will be persecuted for doing this work (II Timothy 3:12), Christians are the ones in control. “And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” (Revelation 5:10). We, as priests of God and children of the Most High are reigning with Christ from heaven. For He “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6).