

SERMON SUMMARY
4th of Advent
18th December 2011

- 2 Samuel 7 points to one of the great central figures of Jewish theology.
- David hopes to build a house for God, but is told by Nathan that this is not to be his work.
- Solomon, of course, builds that temple, and the people of Israel have to deal again with its destruction (by the Assyrians in 587 BC), their exile, their return (Ezra and Nehemiah), the rebuilding of the Temple, and its second destruction (by the Romans, in 70 AD)
- The Temple is deeply significant.
- Yet David is also significant as the ancestor and prototype of the Messiah (the heavenly figure expected by both Jews and Samaritans to throw off foreign rule and allow his people to live in freedom and peace).
- In John's Gospel in particular, Jesus is identified both as Messiah and as one who replaces the Temple. If this second idea, that a person replaces a building seems odd, look at the way the gospel constantly puts Jesus in the Temple at the time of feasts proclaiming the need for faith in himself. John repeatedly presents Jesus as the one who does what the worship, calendar and cult of the Temple aim to do: to bridge the gap between humanity and God, to restore the balance of creation.
- Paul also reminds us of the need to think of what Jesus (and the Temple cult he replaces or reforms) aimed to do. Its not just about personal salvation- its also about the restoration of Creation to its proper order (Romans 8) after its corruption by sin.
- The Johannine writings, in the shape of Revelation) repeat this theme. At the end of the disasters and terror, which are not the end, but the precursors to the end, and really signify the age in which we currently live, the Heavenly Jerusalem comes down from heaven: the distinction of earth and heaven is removed, the two realms or aeons are elided together, and to proper order intended by God is restored.
- This is the work begun by God in the OT, taken into a new phase in the NT, and finally resolved in the Second Coming.
- Whilst we may look forward to Christmas, we must also never forget that we are looking forward to God's ultimate healing of his creation and salvation of his people.

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