

V. The Ultimacy of Sacred Space in the New Creation

The recovery and consummation of sacred space is God's overarching and all-encompassing goal for His creation. This is the "summing up of all things in the heavens and earth in Christ" in which Father, Son, and Spirit will have reconciled the whole creation and brought it – with man as the focal point – into perfect, everlasting communion with them.

Sacred space is fulfilled and reformed in Jesus Christ, and His central place in this comprehensive work of renewal and recovery highlights the fact that it focuses on the divine/human relationship. The goal of God's work of redemption is the consummation of His relationship with His image-son, and this work – in every respect – is wholly Christocentric. Sacred space – first revealed in the Garden and then portrayed with increasing clarity in God's covenant dealings culminating with the Israelite kingdom – has been *fulfilled* in Christ and is presently being *formed* upon Him as its foundation. But another component is crucial to the equation, and that is the permanence of His work. The renewal and recovery that Jesus effected must be ultimate to be of full and eternal value. More than that, *if they aren't final and ultimate, they haven't fulfilled the promise set out in the Scriptures*; in that case, Jesus isn't the Christ. But the truth is that Jesus is the promised Priest-King and He has ushered in everlasting righteousness by His self-offering as the Lord's Christ and the Last Adam.

A. New Creation in Christ – the Restoration of Zion

In considering the ultimacy of Jesus' work it is appropriate once again to return to the promises of the Old Testament and compare them with the New Testament's presentation of and commentary upon Him and what He has accomplished. *Does it affirm the notion that He has permanently restored the whole creation to God and inaugurated the everlasting kingdom as the prophets declared the Messiah would?* In answering that question it is arguably best to begin most broadly, and that means starting with the concept of **Zion**. The reason is that it embraces virtually every theme and component associated with Old Testament kingdom theology as it predicts and portrays the final and full recovery of sacred space.

1. Development and Significance of the Zion Motif

a. Zion as a Physical Concept

Importantly, the Scripture first introduces the concept of Zion in relation to David's conquest of Jerusalem. Having reconciled and united the twelve tribes of Israel under his kingship, David turned his attention to the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. Since Israel's initial conquest of Canaan under Joshua – and despite numerous assaults upon the city through the intervening centuries, Jerusalem had remained outside of Israelite control. Now David set his sights upon it, not as another point of conquest in expanding his kingdom, but with the conviction that, in Jerusalem, the law of the central sanctuary would finally be fulfilled (Deuteronomy 12:1-14, 14:22-26, 16:1-11, etc.). Jerusalem would become the "city of David," but such that David would establish Yahweh's sanctuary and royal seat there (2 Samuel 5:7-9; cf. 1 Kings 8:1 and 1 Chronicles 29:23).

- 1) From that time forward, Zion was associated with Jerusalem as the capital of the Israelite kingdom (later, the capital of Judah) (Psalm 51:18, 147:12; etc.). In that regard, Zion represented first of all the seat of *David's* kingdom. But, more importantly, it represented the *city of the Great King*; Jerusalem was God's chosen dwelling place and the seat of His dominion (ref. Psalm 48:1-3, 76:1-2, 135:21; cf. also Matthew 5:34-35). There His glory-presence resided between the wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies with the ark serving as the symbolic footstool of His throne (2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Chronicles 28:2; cf. also Psalm 99:1-2, 132:7 and Exodus 25:17-22). Thus men came into Jerusalem to meet with and worship Him, and out from Jerusalem flowed the administration of His rule.
- 2) Jerusalem's elevated topography (2 Samuel 19:34; 1 Kings 12:27-28; cf. also Zechariah 14:16-17) together with its status as Yahweh's sanctuary led to another component of Zion symbolism. As Zion referred to the city of the Great King, so it also denoted *Mount Zion* – the mountain of His sanctuary (cf. Psalm 48:1-3, 74:2; 2 Kings 19:20-31; Isaiah 10:12, 24:23; also Isaiah 2:1-3; Micah 4:1-2). The concept of the Lord's dwelling as a holy mount existed long before the conquest of Jerusalem (ref. Exodus 15:17), and so it was natural – as well as geographically appropriate (Psalm 125:1-2) – that Zion should extend to the notion of Mount Zion.

b. Zion as a Relational Concept

The Scripture associates the motif of Zion first and foremost with the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the Israelite kingdom. But Jerusalem was much more than a capital city because the kingdom of Israel was more than just another earthly empire. The Israelite kingdom was a *covenant* kingdom: Yahweh was the true King in Israel and the citizens of the kingdom were His covenant children.

And so, over time Zion's initial signification was broadened to embrace another crucial point of symbolism. Jerusalem (Zion) was the seat of the covenant kingdom; it was the place of Yahweh's residence from which He exercised His reign and communed with His covenant children. Jerusalem epitomized *sacred space*, and for that reason Zion later came to symbolize the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel (ref. Isaiah 1:21-23), and then, by metaphorical extension, the people of Israel themselves as His covenant children.

It is in this respect that the prophets began to speak of Zion as Yahweh's covenant *wife* whose obligation of faithfulness was to bear faithful children for Him (cf. Isaiah 50:1 with 49:14-23, 54:1-17; also Hosea 1:2 and 2:1-16). Thus they referred to the children of Israel collectively as the *daughter of Zion* (cf. Isaiah 1:1-8, 37:21-22, 52:1-9, 62:1-12; Jeremiah 6:1-2; etc.) and individually as *sons of Zion* (Lamentations 4:1-2; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 9:13). If Zion served as the central symbol for the covenant kingdom, it preeminently symbolized the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Abraham's seed that defined that kingdom.

c. Zion as a Messianic Concept

Inasmuch as the concept of Zion enfolds all of the Bible's kingdom themes, it's not surprising that it is also richly messianic. Zion was the seat of both Yahweh's dominion and that of His regal son-king. All of the glories of the Israelite kingdom were epitomized in Zion and the Lord's sanctuary as its central feature. Jerusalem was the city where the Great King was enthroned; it was, in that sense, the "holy ground" that bridged heaven and earth. And as Zion symbolized the kingdom of Israel, so that kingdom was itself a prefiguration of its eschatological counterpart to be inaugurated by Yahweh's Servant/Messiah. Like its typological predecessor, the messianic kingdom was to have its focal point in Zion.

- 1) Zion's connection with Old Testament messianism derives foundationally from their mutual association with David and the Davidic Covenant. David conquered Jerusalem in order to make it the capital of his kingdom and the site of the central sanctuary. By bringing the ark to Jerusalem David symbolically enthroned Yahweh on Mount Zion, subsequently fulfilling that symbolism by securing the fullness of the physical kingdom covenanted to Abraham (2 Samuel 6-8). In its glory as the political and spiritual capital of God's covenant kingdom, Zion was indeed the city of David. David was responsible for bringing the Israelite expression of the kingdom to its height of power and extension, and it was in connection with his kingship that the Lord promised him a son in whom his dynastic house and kingdom (which were to be, in their fulfillment, synonymous with Yahweh's house and kingdom) would be established forever.

Thus the Scripture's intimate association of messianism with David and the Davidic Covenant necessarily drew in the theme of Zion as well. If Zion was the city of David from which he ruled Yahweh's kingdom, then it followed that the covenanted Son of David would also be enthroned in and reign from Zion (ref. Psalm 2, 110; cf. Micah 4:1-8 with 5:1-4).

- 2) The Son of David was appointed to establish and rule over Yahweh's house and kingdom forever, and this implied the establishment of Zion as the everlasting focal point of that kingdom. More specifically, the Scripture indicated that Messiah would establish the kingdom through His personal triumph over God's enemies. By His victory He would deliver the captive people and restore them to their covenant Lord and Father. Messiah's work was to be one of comprehensive renewal and recovery, and this promise accordingly had a central thread in Zion's future glorification. The Son of David would rule over Yahweh's kingdom from His throne in the midst of glorified Zion. This theme is prominent in Isaiah's prophecy (cf. in context 28:14-16, 40:1-10, 46:12-13, 51:1-11, 52:1-9, 59:1-60:14, 62:1-12, 66:1-13), but weaves throughout the prophetic literature (cf. Psalm 87, 102:11-22, 110:1-10; Jeremiah 3:6-17, 31:1-40; Joel 2:23-32; Micah 4:1-5:5; Zechariah 9:9-17).