



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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Historical Linguistics

Historical Linguistics:

1. the study of changes in a language or group of languages over a period of time.

Source: Dictionary.com

I enjoy doing word puzzles though I have to admit my skills are probably only average. Even so, they are a relaxing way to keep a person's brain active.

In recent years I learned that the Bible is loaded with these word puzzles, and I use the term word puzzles because I don't know a better way to put it. We tend to read the Bible through the lens of our own culture which causes us to place meanings on different passages in the Bible, however, our meanings aren't what the original writers intended when they wrote the Scriptures. They wrote through the lens of their culture.

When you learn some of these different meanings of words and apply those meanings it makes the Bible come alive in fascinating ways. I'm going to share with you something that I've discovered recently while listening to an audio version of the Revelation. (Available at Biblegateway.com) The version I heard was the ESV so that's what I'll be using when writing this.

In the Book of Revelation (ESV version) there are ten places where the word "temple" is used. They are: Revelation 3:12, 7:15, 11:1, 2 & 19, 14:15 & 17, 16:1 & 17, 21:22.

The first 9 uses of the word "temple" would lead one to think of a physical building, if read through the lens of our culture. Chapter 11 talks about the

measurements of the temple while other verses talk about angels coming out from the temple and there is reference to a voice coming from the temple. I'll share these texts but pay special attention to the very last text because it will define what the temple is.

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. – Revelation 3:12

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. – Revelation 7:15

The Two Witnesses

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, – Revelation 11:1

but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. – Revelation 11:2

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. – Revelation 11:19

And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” – Revelation 14:15

Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. – Revelation 14:17

The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels,
“Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”
– Revelation 16:1

The Seventh Bowl

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice
came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” –
Revelation 16: 1

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the
Almighty and the Lamb. – Revelation 21:22

Do you see that? If read through the lens of our culture those first verses cause us to think of a physical building. If we don't keep reading and find that last verse we'll be incorrect in our belief of what the temple is. But what about the person who doesn't recognize that there is a cultural difference? What does he do when he reads this then comes to that last text? Does he recognize that this is a concept totally new to him and study it out, or does he dismiss it because it doesn't fit within his paradigm? What if that person happens to be a pastor or Bible teacher and the person he presents it to trusts him to have a correct knowledge of the Bible?

That can be deadly. We should never place our trust in the teachings of someone else. God gave us brains and he wants us to use them. So, with that said, don't place blind trust into anything you read here. Use your brains and prayerfully study these meanings out for yourself. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.

And if that unscrupulous teacher/preacher is unwilling to study out what the Bible is really saying (for whatever reason), here's a trick they might pull to avoid teaching the truth: And I saw no temple in the city... Revelation 21:22. By doing that they have completely destroyed the truth that was found in the text; the truth that unlocks the meaning behind all the other texts in Revelation using the word temple.

Let's not be too harsh on these teachers/preachers. They are human and have also been taught not to think for themselves. What we need to do is pray for our Spiritual leaders as well as ourselves. We are all in this together and we need each other's prayers.

Now let's take a look at this text:

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. – Revelation 11:19

In the old testament it's told that the Israelites built a box in which was placed a jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets that contained the ten commandments. This box was called the Ark or the Ark of the Covenant.

Throughout the ages the ten commandments were thought of as a list of rules to follow. By referencing Kohlberg's moral development inventory we learn at what stage the Israelites were operating when they came out of Egypt where they had been slaves. As slaves they had a slaves mentality, or they didn't bother to think and reason things out. They simply did what they were told because if they didn't they would be punished. They needed a list of rules to follow.

In Leviticus and Deuteronomy they were given further rules to follow. Reading those rules can be boring, but if you stop to wonder what the Israelites were doing that caused them to have these rules placed upon them, it makes the reading interesting. (“Huh? What do you mean I can't also have sex with my mother-in-law?” [or daughter-in-law, or niece, or aunt, etc. They had to have a list of forbidden sexual encounters and that list included animals.])

Following the story of the Israelites throughout the ages you can see how they grew in their moral development. Today God still works with those who will allow him access into their hearts, with the goal of bringing them to possess a Christlike character. He wants us to understand that those “commandments” aren't a list of rules to follow, instead they are a list of promises. It's his promise that when the job of character development is completed we will naturally live in the ways listed on those stone tablets.

Another way to think of that list of rules is they are a transcript of God's character. They are only the beginning of Love for God's love is much more than 10 items.

When John was in vision and saw the temple opened and inside this temple was the ark containing God's promise (ark of the covenant = ark of promises), I believe he saw God revealing his love. But John didn't have the language available to him to be able to pass along the magnitude of that glory. And he especially didn't know how to write in words that people who would live in subsequent times would be able to readily understand what he was saying.

May God be with you through this new year. May your blessings be many and your traumas be few.

Lots of love,

Hannah

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