

The World Is A Battleground

Bible Glossary, People & Places

Colosseum

Sermon Reference

The Colosseum is used as a backdrop for the sermon, symbolizing the battleground of life and the struggles faced within it.

Background Context

The Roman Colosseum, an enduring symbol of the ancient city of Rome, is a monumental reminder of the power, ingenuity, and brutality of the Roman Empire. Known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, it was constructed under the emperor Vespasian and completed by his son Titus in 80 A.D. With a capacity to seat about 50,000 spectators, the Colosseum hosted a variety of public spectacles, including gladiatorial contests, animal hunts, and mock sea battles. This grand amphitheater was built in the heart of ancient Rome and served as a stage for the entertainment of the masses and the assertion of imperial might.

Beyond its entertainment purposes, the Colosseum became a poignant Christian symbol due to the belief that early Christians faced martyrdom within its arena, although scholarly evidence is inconclusive on this point. Its construction, partially financed by the spoils of the Jewish Temple after the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., marked it as a spoil of war and a trophy of conquest. Over the centuries, the Colosseum has withstood earthquakes, stone-robbery, and the general test of time, serving today as a haunting vestige of a long-gone empire and as a sobering testament to the human capacity for both architectural greatness and cruel spectacle.

The Colosseum's design was as innovative as it was imposing, featuring a complex system of vaults and arches that allowed it to be both sturdy and aesthetically pleasing. Its elliptical shape enhanced the view of the spectacles from any seat and optimized crowd control. Beneath the arena floor lay a network of chambers and passages known as the hypogeum, where animals and gladiators awaited their fate. The naval battles, or naumachiae, required flooding the arena with water, a testament to the Roman engineering prowess.

In the centuries following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Colosseum underwent numerous transformations, serving at times as a quarry, a fortress, a residence, and even a Christian shrine. Today, it stands partly ruined due to damage caused by catastrophic earthquakes and stone-robbers, yet it remains a popular tourist destination and a powerful link to our cultural heritage. It is frequently used as a symbol of the impermanency of worldly powers and the endurance of faith through trials and tribulations.

Importance in the Bible

While the Colosseum itself is not mentioned in the Bible, its symbolic significance resonates with the Christian narrative of martyrdom and persecution. It stands as an emblem of the trials Christians faced under Roman rule and the spiritual warfare believers engage in, which is underlined in the sermon.

Ephesus

Sermon Reference

The sermon references Ephesians 6:12, highlighting the spiritual warfare believers are engaged in.

Background Context

Ephesus was a major city of antiquity, located on the coast of Ionia, in what is now modern-day Turkey. It was known for its grandeur, cultural significance, and as a center of commerce. The city's prominence in the ancient world was matched by its importance to the early Christian church. It served as a major hub for evangelization and was one of the seven churches addressed in the Book of Revelation.

It is most famously noted for its colossal Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. This temple and the city's affinity for Artemis, or Diana as she was called by the Romans, underscored the widespread influence of pagan worship and idolatry that early Christians contested. Paul's missionary work in Ephesus was significant; he spent three years there, longer than any other city, which testifies to the strategic importance he placed on the city for spreading the Gospel.

The Book of Ephesians, from which the sermon draws, is an epistle written by the Apostle Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. This letter to the Ephesians is an edifying document, designed to strengthen and instruct the believers in the growing Ephesian church. In its six chapters, it outlines the spiritual blessings in Christ, the mystery of the Gospel revealed, unity in the body of Christ, and practical exhortations for Christian living, including the famous 'Armor of God' passage which speaks directly to spiritual warfare.

The historical and spiritual legacy of Ephesus continued to flourish even after Paul's time. It was the site of the Third Ecumenical Council in 431 A.D., which affirmed the Virgin Mary's title as Theotokos, 'God-bearer.' Today, the ruins of Ephesus are a major archaeological site and serve as a testament to the enduring message of Christianity amid a culture steeped in paganism and philosophical thought. Ephesus stands as a witness to the transformative power of the Gospel and the enduring struggle against spiritual darkness.

Importance in the Bible

Ephesus is crucial to the New Testament narrative as a central location for the spread of the Gospel in the early church. Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides Christians with profound insights into the nature of the Church, the plan of God, and the spiritual battles believers face, as noted in the sermon.

Lucifer

Sermon Reference

Lucifer is highlighted as the one who is defeated by Jesus' victory at the cross, enabling believers to overcome spiritual warfare.

Background Context

Lucifer, oftentimes synonymous with Satan in Christian theology, is derived from Latin, meaning 'light-bringer' or 'morning star.' The name appears in the Bible in a prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 14:12-15) concerning the King of Babylon. In Christian tradition, Lucifer is commonly referred to as a fallen angel who was cast out of heaven due to his pride and rebellion against God. Further elucidation of this narrative can be found in Ezekiel 28:12-19, which although directed at the King of Tyre, has been traditionally interpreted in relation to the fall of Satan.

According to Christian theology, Lucifer was a high-ranking angel in heaven who, inflamed by pride, sought to ascend above the throne of God and was consequently cast out into the earthly realm. This act of rebellion is often seen as the origin of evil in the world, with Lucifer, now Satan, positioned as the adversary of God and His creation. He is characterized as the deceiver, accuser, and tempter of humanity, working tirelessly to lead people away from God and the truth of the Gospel.

The fall of Lucifer is integrally tied to the broader cosmic conflict between good and evil, which is reflected in the Christian doctrines of original sin and the ongoing spiritual warfare between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. The New Testament frequently acknowledges this cosmic battle, notably in passages such as Ephesians 6:12, as well as the Book of Revelation, which foretells the ultimate defeat of Satan and his forces by Christ.

Lucifer's role in Christian thought serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pride and the fall from grace. It also underlines the hope and victory that Christ offers to believers. The defeat of Lucifer by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection is central to the Christian message of redemption, signaling the restoration of humanity's relationship with God and the promise of eternal life. Lucifer's defeat is seen not only as a past event but as an ongoing triumph over sin and darkness in the lives of believers who are called to put on the 'Armor of God' to resist the devil's schemes.

Importance in the Bible

Lucifer's significance in the Bible lies in his embodiment of evil and opposition to God, which propels the narrative of redemption and the importance of Christ's victory over sin and death. The concept of Lucifer serves as a backdrop for understanding the reality of spiritual warfare and the Christian's authority through Christ to overcome it.

A.W. Tozer

Sermon Reference

A.W. Tozer is quoted in the sermon to emphasize the reality of spiritual warfare and the Christian perspective of the world as a battleground, not a playground.

Background Context

Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963), commonly known as A.W. Tozer, was an influential American Christian pastor, author, magazine editor, and spiritual mentor. Born into poverty in western Pennsylvania, Tozer's life took a dramatic turn when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior at the age of 17, after listening to a street preacher in Akron, Ohio. His spiritual journey was marked by a deep hunger for God, which became the hallmark of his life and ministry.

Tozer's legacy is most profound in his prolific writings which continue to inspire and challenge Christians to pursue a more intimate relationship with God. His works include classics such as 'The Pursuit of God' and 'The Knowledge of the Holy,' both considered essential readings for those seeking to deepen their spiritual walk with Christ. His devotion to God and his keen insights into the Christian life have led many to regard him as a modern-day prophet. In stark contrast to the increasing materialism and pursuit of personal success in mid-twentieth-century America, Tozer called for a return to a more scriptural simplicity and integrity in the Christian faith. He emphasized the need for a personal knowledge of God, which would manifest in a life of worship, humility, and spiritual warfare against the forces of evil.

A.W. Tozer spent his final years of ministry at the Avenue Road Church in Toronto, Canada. His teachings on the deeper life of the spirit made significant impacts on broader Christian thought and practice. To this day, Tozer's call for a solemn recognition of the spiritual battle that exists along with the pursuit of a genuine relationship with God remains a poignant message for the Church worldwide.

Importance in the Bible

Though not a biblical character, A.W. Tozer's influence in the sermon pertains to his exposition on biblical principles. His teachings emphasize the seriousness of the Christian life as a commitment to spiritual warfare rather than worldly enjoyment – a perspective that aligns with biblical exhortations to live in godliness and spiritual vigilance.

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