



Handouts for Week of September 18 2023- "Reality"

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Research: Gen. 1:31

Seven times in Genesis 1, God observes His creation to be good. In Genesis 1:4, after He had spoken light into existence, He declared it to be good. In Genesis 1:10, after separating the water from the land, He called that good. After creating plant life, in Genesis 1:12 He saw that it was good, also. In Genesis 1:18, after putting in place a system for lighting the earth and for separating night from day, He calls that good. In Genesis 1:21, after creating animals to populate the water and the air, He observes that to be good. In Genesis 1:25, after populating the land with animals and insects, He calls that good, too. Finally, after creating humanity as the capstone of His creation (Genesis 1:26–30), He observed all He had made and declared it to be not just good but *very good*.

The Hebrew word translated as “good” in the English is *tov*. The term rendered “very good” is *hennah tov*, which could be translated as “certainly good” or “surely good.” It is noteworthy that the word *good* is never actually defined in the Bible—the concept is simply assumed. It does seem, though, that the kind of good referenced in Genesis 1 is a good in the qualitative sense of functionality. Because of the success in design and execution of all that was created, it could be that God was calling things good because they were ***effective for fulfilling the function for which He designed them. If so, this would reflect a kind of instrumental good.***

It is also worth noting that in each of these instances it is said that God “saw” that it was good. That God was observing that these things were good implies that He had a design and purpose in mind and that the created products met His approval—He judged

them to be effective for serving His purpose. As the Creator, God has the right to define and judge. He assessed that which He had created and determined it was good. This is a good reminder for us that, because He has the authority that only a sovereign Creator can have, we ought to look to Him to learn of His judgments and assessments. If He judges something to be good (or not good), then it is that.

31 – 'behold/indeed it was very good' – is intended to apply to the whole of the work of creation. Whichever way you look at it, it's all good.

What does Genesis 1 31 teach us?

This world is far more than very good; it is infinitely good and eternally glorious. While Genesis 1:31 is most specifically a verse that speaks of God's fundamental goodness in making the world; it is also a verse that gives Christians hope that what he started as good, he will bring to fruition.

From Von Rad's Commentary on Genesis:

Very good = completely perfect



Synagogue

The word “synagogue” means “congregation” or “assembly.” Some scholars believe that the first synagogues were erected during the Babylonian Captivity (sixth century BCE), when Jews no longer had the Temple in which to pray and to teach. Ten men could form a synagogue. A Pharisee was in charge of the services. By 70 CE, 480 synagogues were in Jerusalem. Each one consisted of a house for reading the Law and a place where school children received their elementary instruction.

All synagogues were destroyed when Rome destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Services on the Sabbath consisted of readings from the Scriptures—the Law and Prophets. Services always began with the *shema*: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4). The text was read in Hebrew, but most Jews during Jesus’ time spoke Aramaic, so an interpreter gave a verse-by-verse explanation (a *targum*).



Synagogue at Nazareth Village

The furnishings in the synagogue consisted of:

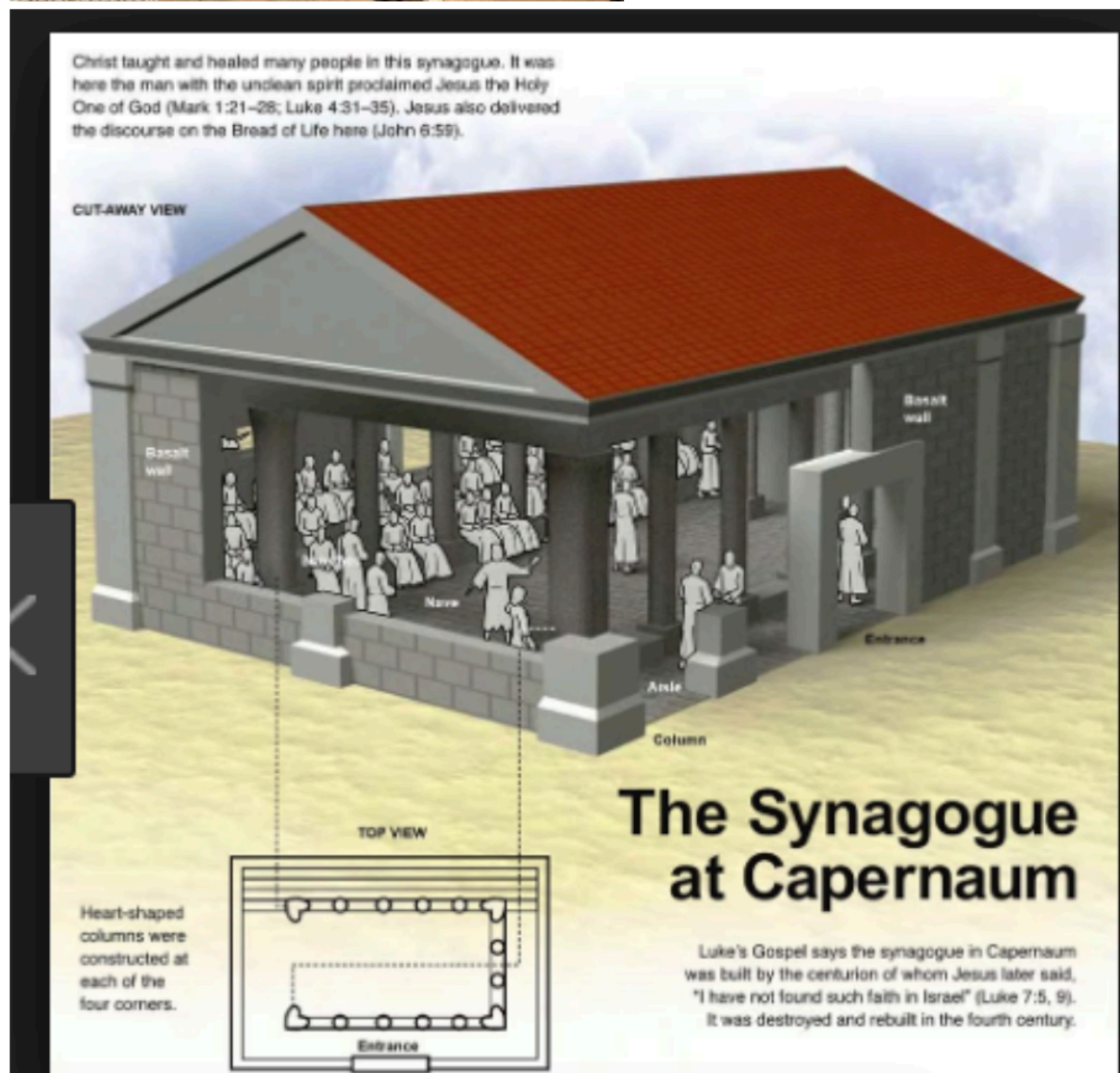
- The Torah shrine, where one or more Torah scrolls and probably some prophets’ scrolls were kept. It was a chest (sometimes called an “ark”) covered and screened from the sight of the congregation by a veil or curtain. In the center was the *bema*, or elevated podium, for reading of the lessons and benedictions.
- The Menorah, the seven-branched candlestick or lampstand located in the large assembly room.
- Stone benches, rather than chairs, lined the walls. Women and children sat upstairs in a gallery separate from the men.

The synagogue was open three times a day for prayer. The Torah was read in its entirety once every three years. It was customary to invite any stranger who happened to attend

“Synagogue . . . continued”

the services to deliver a prophetic lesson. Ten elders chose a head of the synagogue.

How did the synagogue differ from the Temple? There were no animal sacrifices, no altar, no priests.



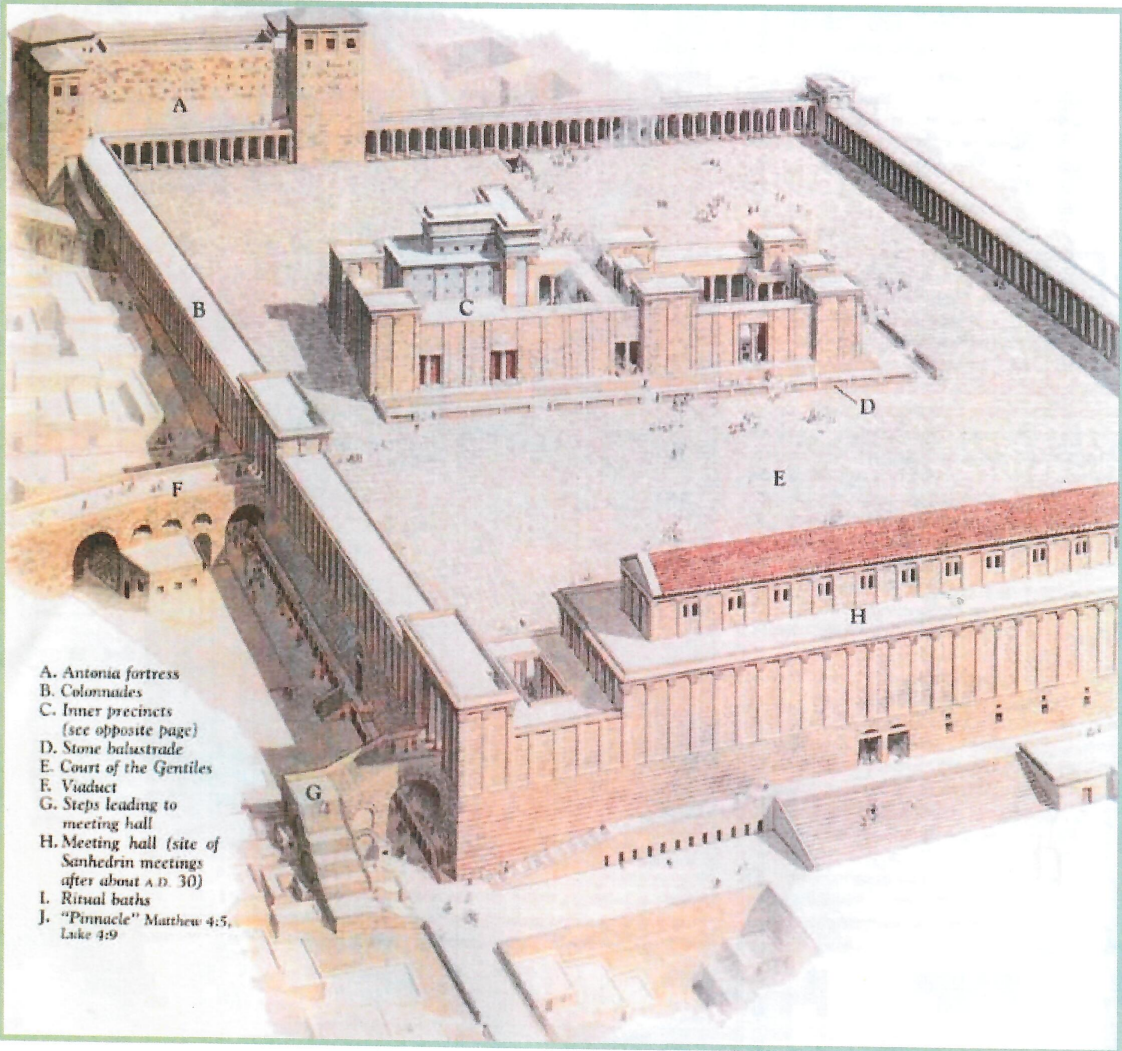
“Synagogue. . . continued”



Reading from the Torah in the Synagogue (photo still from Jesus of Nazareth film) © 1977. Paul Ronald.



Temple Mount Rendering



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