



The first time I heard the term thin places was at a worship service where the pastor encouraged us to open the eyes of our hearts to God’s presence to do what only He could do. We saw God move in that moment as He healed hurting hearts, stirred up courage to those suffering trials, and revived those who were weary in well doing. The air in the sanctuary was palpable with the breath of the Holy Spirit; Heaven drew near.

Since that time, I’ve been intrigued with thin places and discovered it’s an ancient term with biblical roots that bear contemporary fruit. The term comes from ancient Celtic Christianity to describe sacred spaces. Simply put, a thin place is where heaven and earth collide—when God is encountered in a fresh way that deeply impacts our lives. It is as though the distance between the temporal and eternal possesses no barrier.

Dr. Mark Roberts describes a thin place as “a place where the boundary between heaven and earth is especially thin. It’s a place where we can sense the divine more readily.”

Reading the Bible, we discover specific places where divine encounters occurred. A partial list includes the garden of Eden, Moses at the burning bush, Jacob awakened by a ladder to heaven where angels ascended and descended, and Gideon encountering the angel of the Lord in a winepress.

It wasn’t uncommon for ancient Israelites to stack stones of remembrance at places where they witnessed God up close and personal so that they’d never forget the encounter. Moses erected twelve stones at the base of Mt. Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments. Joshua commanded the children of Israel to set up stones as a memorial after crossing the Jordan on dry land. He wanted future generations to ask questions from their elders about God’s faithfulness.

In the New Testament, we find similar occurrences: Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration, Paul on the road to Damascus, and many others.

Thin places can also apply to thin spaces—a moment in time when God makes Himself manifest. The early Celtic saints associated the phrase with infusion of the Divine presence. It could be the birth of a baby; the breaking for the dawn; or unexpected sense of the nearness of God. A thin place is where one can walk in two worlds.

Dr. Timothy George writes that these places are special “not because the air is rarified or the land is narrow but because the distance between heaven and earth shrinks, and time and eternity embrace.”

Though unique to a specific person, the greatest thin place was the incarnation of Jesus Christ when God literally conjoined with the body of a baby, a consubstantial act occurred, a child was begotten; heaven and earth met. A star marked the place of His birth. Angels proclaimed His arrival to the shepherds. And wisemen traveled from afar to Bethlehem to behold their King. Jesus is heaven coming down to earth for He is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature (see Hebrews 1:3). Heaven meeting earth at its pinnacle!

Besides Bethlehem, Jerusalem is one of the thinnest places of all because it was there that Jesus Christ died on the cross to wipe away our sins. At the moment of His death “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split” (Matthew 27:51, NLT). Now all had access to God. No more need for a high priest. No more blood sacrifices. No more court of the men and women. No more schism between Jew and Gentile. Jesus brought us all near to the Father.

Finally, God drawing near to His people was not just through the Old Testament prophets, or through New Testament saints, but also through the third person of the trinity—the Holy Spirit. God is drawing near to all who call upon his name (see Romans 10:13). When you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in your heart by faith. Think about it, YOU are a thin place where heaven and earth meet. “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). If you are a Christian, then you embody the space where God draws near to others. Won’t you become a thin space to those around you?