

# Rediscovering God's Church

Message No:7 and Picture #5

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The Church of Jesus Christ *is People*-His people, of every race and nation who love Christ and are committed to serving Him. The "Church age" began at Pentecost (Acts 2). Born in Jerusalem, the Church spread rapidly through the ministry of the Apostles and the early believers. Fanned by persecution, the gospel flame then spread to other cities and nations. In many of his letters, Apostle Paul reminds us that the Church is in a constant battle with the forces of darkness and they (believers) should use every spiritual weapon at their disposal (Eph 6:10-16).

**We now come to the fifth picture, that of the temple.** This picture is also taken from Paul's letter to the church of Ephesians. In Chapter 2:20-22, Paul wrote"

*"...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*

The Christians—the true believers—are the people in whom God dwells and moves. Because of this relationship, He is their God and they are His people. {read again}

*...in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom (Jesus) you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (V21-22).*

Notice that all three persons of the Godhead are involved here. The Father indwells those who are in Son by the Spirit. The end-purpose of the Church here is to be a habitation, a dwelling place of God. In Hebrew, the word for a house is **beit**, which includes the concept of a home or family and is directly connected with the word "to build". So there is a close connection, in Hebrew thought, between a family and a building. In fact, the word *house* was used in Hebrew not to describe a physical dwelling, but rather a family of people. Those two thoughts always go together. Notice the emphasis on building in the passages we read: "*built*", "*building*", "*temple*", "*build*", "*dwelling place*". Five times the thought is brought out in those verses.

The principle is this: God has always required His people to provide Him with a dwelling place. When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, brought them to Mount Sinai and gave them His first covenant, one of the 1<sup>st</sup> things He required of them was that they build Him a tabernacle. This tent was the dwelling place of His manifested presence—His Shekinah Glory—and it traveled with Israel all the way through wilderness.

After God brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, He gave them instructions to build a temple for Him in a certain city of His choice—Jerusalem. King Solomom constructed the most glorious, costly and elaborate edifice that has ever been built by humanity. Through Israel's idolatry and disobedience, however, this temple was eventually destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. But again, after God in His mercy granted Israel a restoration from Babylon, one of their first assignments was to build Him another temple.

It is very interesting to note that God did not leave the decision about the dwelling place to His people; He determined it Himself—the location, types of materials and the shape of the structure. **However**, the Bible also makes it very clear that these

buildings (the Tabernacle and the two Temples) were only patterns of something infinitely more valuable and important. This idea is brought out very clearly by the words of Stephen to the Jewish Council. He said

However, the Most High {the true god} does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? Says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?” (Acts 7: 48-50).

### **The Material of the Temple.**

Any material building constructed by men, no matter how beautiful it may be, can not be the final dwelling place of God. It may just be a temporary place that He honors with His presence as long as His people meet His conditions.

The final, eternal temple of God is made up of people. People are the most valuable creatures in the universe. The temple of God obviously has to be made of most valuable material—not gold or silver or marble, **but people**. This truth is clearly brought in various passages of the New Testament: {Reading from 1-Cor 3:10-15}

There are two kinds of buildings we can erect: Those that will stand the test and those that will not. We can build with great quantity of worldly precious material of Gold, Silver, Wood etc {reflecting immaturity, insensitivity to one another, selfishness jealousies and wrong doctrine}. There is no difficulty in obtaining these materials in large quantity but they will not stand the test. On the other hand, we can also build with smaller quantities of Spiritual material and that will stand the test. {reflecting love, joy, kindness, gentleness, self-control, spiritual maturity and sound doctrine} The Scripture is talking about our contribution in the service of God’s house. It must stand the test of fire.

In 2-Corinthians 5:10 we read “ ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***”

Every Christian is going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged for all the service that he or she has offered God in His house. This is not a judgment of salvation or condemnation—for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). It will not be concerning the destiny of our souls, but it will be about the works that we done in our Christian life and in the house of God. Every believer’s work will be tried by fire. If it stands the test, he/she will receive the reward; if it is burned up, he/she will lose the reward but his/her soul will still be saved {This prize-giving has not yet come; it lies ahead. It will happen after the rapture in heaven.} We see Apostle Paul rebuking the believers in Corinthians church in 1-Cor 3:16-17 in these words “***Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.***”

It seems that the Corinthian believers were somewhat ignorant of what they really were intended to be. This again highlights the importance for looking into the mirror of God’s Word :to see what we really are and how we live!

So far we looked at the collective temple which is all believers united together. Now let’s look at the individual temple:

1-Cor 6:19-20 tells us that “***Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit which are God’s.***” (NKJV)

Each believer has the privilege of providing his physical body to the Holy Spirit as a temple to dwell in. God through His Son Jesus Christ, redeemed our body so that it might be a temple for His Spirit. Whether it is a collective temple or individual temple, we are required to take care of it and to reserve it in purity, in health and in holiness because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are obligated to provide Him the with a temple that honors Him and serves His purpose.

### **The Essential Feature of the Temple and God's Requirement.**

The essential feature of this picture of the church is that the temple is God's dwelling place. It is where God is going to reside forever. We always tend to think about getting to heaven, but the ultimate purpose of God is to get heaven to earth!

The last picture in the Bible of God's people, found in Revelation 21:1-4, is of a beautiful dwelling place coming down out of heaven to earth. It is the passage about the New Jerusalem. It is a glorious picture of God's dwelling coming to earth.

What is required of us? The believer must be willing to be quarried out, shaped and chiseled; we are to have our edges knocked off—to fit in with a predetermined dimension, and to be made ready before the final structure arises. This is a huge commitment on believers/our part but one that will bring the eternal reward.

After reminding the believers that they are the "temple of the living God"(2-Cor 6:16), Paul made reference to several Old Testament passages (Isa 52:11, Jer 31:1, 9 and Hos 1:10), saying: Therefore ***"come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will a Father to you, and you shall be My Sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty"***.

Notice how close the picture of the family(which we previously saw in Eph 2:19-22) and the picture of the temple are. The temple and the family are united. God is the Father of His family, and he is the God who dwells in His temple.

Apostle Paul continues in advising the believers with these words: ***"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*** (2-Cor 7:1)

This is something the believers/church has to do: cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and the spirit. The Church has to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Let us pray and look into ourselves as we prepare to partake in the Holy Communion. Let us ask Jesus to forgive us of any thing that has defiled our relationship with the Triune God and strengthen us afresh through His Body & Blood. May we become worthy of His abode. ....Amen.