

GOD'S HOUSE – A DWELLING

We are looking at Hebrews chapter 3, verses five and six, “Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm unto the end.”

The house of God, or the Father's house, is mentioned in three relationships in the New Testament. We looked at one of these when we spoke briefly about the house of God, in that the house of God is a Dwelling Place. John 14:2, “In my father's house are many mansions (or many dwelling places).”

The house of God is also spoken of as a priesthood. First Peter, chapter 2, and verse five, “You also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

And then in First Timothy, chapter 3, and verse 15, “. . . I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”

So the house of God is a dwelling place, it's a priesthood, and it's a foundation of truth. Today I want to look at the dwelling of God. We'll consider these other aspects of it in the weeks to come.

The house of God, or the church...the body of Christ, is the **dwelling place of God in the world**. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 19 through 22, the apostle says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Now Hebrews 3, verse six, that we read a moment ago, shows that being the house of God is contingent upon our holding our confidence fast and holding our hope firm. Both our confidence and our hope have to do with access to the Father. Chapter 6 of Hebrews and verse 19, he speaks of our hope and he says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters into the veil, where Jesus entered as a forerunner for us.”

And then, in chapter 10, and verse 19, “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus.”

So our confidence and our hope has to do with entering into the very presence of God. And so he says we are God's house if we hold our confidence and our hope firm. And that confidence and that hope has to do with the fact that we can enter into the very presence of God.

So . . . we must realize and know the presence of God in order to understand that we are the dwelling place of God, or that His house is His dwelling place. In fact, the passage we read in Ephesians 2:19-20 is based upon verse 18, where he says, “for through Him we both (that is Jew and Gentile) have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”

In all three passages where he is talking about our being the dwelling of God, he talks about access . . . being in the very presence of God.

Now, the resurrection and the ascension of Christ made a radical break in human history . . . the world works differently now than it did before the resurrection and the ascension. And there is not much of the world that really understands that, or recognizes it, or knows that. But, the resurrection and the ascension of Christ from that time onward . . . everything in the universe has been different.

Now, originally, there was only one place on the face of the earth where people could fully worship God, and that was in the temple of God. There was not a place on earth where they could really come in contact with God in worship.

In the Old Testament, they could pray to God in anywhere, but to come into the presence of God and to realize what it means to worship God, they had to go to Jerusalem, and basically be a Jew, or a convert to Judaism, and they had to go to the temple. That was really the only place on earth that man could contact God . . . a physical earthly temple in the city of Jerusalem.

Now, when God made his presence known among man, it was always accompanied by some kind of great shaking noise, or by fire, smoke, and wind, and these things showed forth the glory of God. It happened on Mount Sinai when He came down and gave the Law. It happened whenever they finished the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord came down there was noise and fire and smoke and the glory of God was displayed because God was coming into or unto man. And when Solomon finished the temple, and they dedicated it, the glory of God was shown in smoke, and fire, and wind. When this happened, the presence of God was known to be in that place . . . God always made it known that He was there.

Now Jesus comes along, and in the fourth chapter of John, a familiar passage to all of us, **Jesus foretold of a coming change**. Down in vs. 20, this woman from Samaria is arguing with Christ about the place of worship. And so Jesus said to her, when she pointed out that, vs. 20, “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain (which was Mount Gerismana when the Jews contended you had worship in Jerusalem),” Jesus said to her, vs. 21, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father”... **things are going to change**.

Vs. 22, “You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for such does the Father seek to be His worshippers.” **Things are going to change . . . it is not in this mountain, is not in Jerusalem, it is not even in a temple . . . God is going to be worshiped in Spirit and in truth.**

Now Jesus was not so much speaking of individuals here, as he was saying that He was going to usher in a new era in human history . . . something that has never happened before is going to take place. **The environment for worship would not be in a location. God is going to create by the Holy Spirit a new environment of worship for all people.**

On Pentecost, the second chapter of Acts, the supernatural noise, the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and the cloven tongues of fire that set upon the Apostles demonstrated that the Spirit of God had entered the church.

God had once again come to man, and that was not unlike the Spirit coming in the Old Testament whenever God demonstrated His presence with fire, and wind, and smoke and noise in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. I often wondered why it was the sound of a rushing of mighty wind, why was this noise brought to all in Jerusalem, and why the cloven tongues of fire set upon each of them? It wasn't just to get their attention (although that happened), it was to demonstrate, as God had demonstrated in the Old Testament when he came down and dwelt with man, it was to demonstrate that God, once again, had come down in the Spirit to dwell with man. **It signified the presence of God among men as Jesus had prophesied to the Samaritan woman . . . that day had come.**

Now, in our modern teaching of Scripture, we emphasize individual salvation. We talk about personal emotional experiences that men have with the Holy Spirit. We debate between charismatics and non-charismatics about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And I think we de-emphasize the importance of the church in our thinking today. As a result of this, I think we have lost the scriptural teaching that the church is God's Temple . . . and that God actually dwells in His people. He dwells in the church . . . it is not a tabernacle, is not a physical temple . . . it's in the His people . . . it is not in a place, it is everywhere.

Now , here is one of those which came first questions . . . the chicken or the egg?

I have found nothing in the New Testament to suggest that individuals are granted the Holy Spirit apart from their relationship to Christ through His body. The emphasis in the New Testament is not so much upon the individual possession all of the Holy Spirit (although it's there . . . and it's stressed that the Holy Spirit dwells individually in our lives and that our physical body is a temple of the Holy Spirit) but for the most part, the emphasis is upon the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church—not in individuals.

And most of the New Testament text dealing with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit speaks in the context of the Spirit dwelling in the church, not an individual. Some of the passages relating to this are First Corinthians 3:9, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building," and, vs. 16 and 17, Paul says your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit dwells in you, he was talking about the church as a body. Second Corinthians 6:16 the promise of God dwelling in His people in the New Covenant. Ephesians 2:20-22, a passage we read a moment ago, emphasizes the fact that we are being built together into a body and that body becomes the dwelling place of the Spirit. The passage we pointed out in First Peter 2:4-5 speaks of the house of God as being a priesthood is speaking of God dwelling among His people as in a body.

The notion that the individual body is the temple and that the Spirit indwells us individually is clearly taught, for example, in Romans eight . . . that's what Romans eight is all about -- the Holy Spirit dwelling in individuals and dwelling with in us individually . . . that's commonplace and we understand that . . . and we accept that, but the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in the church is a neglected theme in Christianity.

Usually when we talk about receiving the Holy Spirit, or having the Holy Spirit, we are thinking in terms of the individual, whereas I think the Scripture lays emphasis upon these individuals being collected together into a body and Christ dwelling in that body. The by passage we read in Ephesians 2:20, and also the one we pointed out in First Peter 2:5, **the individual stones in the building are indwelt by the Spirit but it is not because of some relationship that they had as individuals with the Him, it is because He dwells in a spiritual house and they are a part of that house . . . see?** And I think that is the emphasis in Scripture . . . that the church is made up of living stones, yes-- in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, but those living stones are brought together as a body, or as a temple . . . **and so the difference that the Spirit makes in the world today is a difference that is to be seen and demonstrated in the church.**

What is to make a difference out they are in the world is not that you as an individual full of the Holy Spirit goes out into the world (and that may be true) but what's going to affect the world and that part of the plan of God is for the church to demonstrate the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the body.

Now the difference that the Holy Spirit dwelling in the body makes is demonstrated in several passages of scripture. I want to look at just one or two of them.

Let's turn to a passage in the Old Testament to the Book of Haggai, in the second chapter, there is an interesting statement. Vs. 10, "On the 24th of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Haggai the prophet (now when the word of the Lord comes to a prophet you are going to expect an important message, and this is a very unusual word), vs.11, 'Thus says the Lord of Hosts, Ask now the priests for a ruling (in other words, I want you to ask the priests to give their judgment or to give a ruling on this question) If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment (now the holy meat would have been meat of an animal that was going to be sacrificed and here he is carrying that holy meat under his garment) and as he is walking if it

touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, **will it become holy (will that food that this holy sacrifice touches will that food become holy)?** And the priests answered and said, 'No.'"

Vs. 13, "Then Haggai said, 'If one who is unclean from a corpse (a Jew that touched a corpse is considered unclean) if he touches any of these (the cooked food, the wine or the oil) will the latter become unclean? And the priests answered and said, 'It will become unclean.'"

Now, that is not very important to us. We'd probably read that and not pay any attention to it. But this was a message of God from Haggai **and it represents the very essence of the Old Covenant . . . the unclean could defile the clean, but the clean could not make the unclean holy. Do you get what He is saying? The unclean could defile the clean, but the clean could not make the unclean holy.**

When Jesus came into the world under the new covenant, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, He changed this and this is illustrated for us in the gospel record.

It is given us in the ninth chapter of Matthew (which we will read) . . . it's also given in Mark 5, and Luke 8 . . . but in Matthew 9:20-22 (let's turn there), "And behold a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage or from an issue of blood for 12 years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she was saying to herself, 'If I only touch garment I shall get well.' But Jesus turning and seeing her said, 'Daughter take courage; your faith has made you well.' And at once the woman was made well."

Now this event is an illustration of what we're talking about . . . the clean touches the unclean and changes it. It didn't happen under the Old Covenant, but it is illustrated here in this woman with an issue of blood . . . the unclean touched the clean and was made holy . . . and that is the principle that is given to us in the New Covenant. Salvation flows from Christ (the sacrifice) Christ (the holy meat) Christ (the holy sacrifice) salvation flows from Him and whatever it touches is made clean.

This didn't happen in the Old testament . . . the holy meat could touch anything but it didn't change it. But in the New Testament, the power flowed from Christ and whatever it touched it changed.

And that's the principle that is given us in the indwelling of the Spirit in the church . . . that as the Spirit flows through the body of Christ it touches the world and when it touches the world the world is made clean.

And that's illustrated in a powerful passage in the 47th chapter of Ezekiel, beginning in vs. 1, when Ezekiel was brought to the door the house and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced the east, and the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the alter . . . and in vs. 2, he took Ezekiel outside and the water was trickling from the south side, in vs. 3, he walked a thousand cubits and the water was up to his ankles; he

walked another thousand cubits and the water was up to his knees (vs. 4), and then it was up to his loins, and then it was a river he could not ford (vs. 5), and then he said the waters had risen enough to swim, and it continue to rise until it could not be forded.

Then, vs. 6, he says, "Son of man, have you seen this?" He's telling him he wants him to understand what is going on here. Vs. 6, "Then he brought me back to the bank of the river and when I had returned behold on the bank of the river that are very many trees on one side and on the other. Vs. 8, "Then he said to me . . . the waters go out toward the eastern region and they flow down into the desert and they go toward the sea (probably the Dead Sea) being made to flow into the sea and the **waters of the sea become fresh.**"

Notice the illustration . . . vs. 9, "And it will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live." Where ever this water goes and whatever it touches that is dead, it will come alive. Continuing in vs. 9, "And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there, and the others will become fresh; **so everything will live where the waters go.**"

Go down to verse 12, "And by the river on its bank, one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

Now notice the water is coming from the sanctuary . . . it is flowing into the desert . . . it is giving life to the Dead Sea . . . and on either side of the banks there are trees that are growing that gives fruit for food and the leaves are for healing.

Jesus gives us an interpretation of this vision of Ezekiel in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel . . . and this is what He said, vs. 37, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

There is a time coming Jesus said when there will flow from people who believe in Him, there will flow rivers of living water the time. **The time is coming when the deadness of the world will receive life from a river flowing from those who believe in Me.**

Vs. 39, "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified." **So He identifies what the water represents . . . instead of being locked up . . . inside an unapproachable sanctuary . . . the water's life flows out freely through His people . . . and as it flows out from His people, it transforms the world around it. That's the New Covenant principle of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.**

God was once locked-up in the holy place . . . and only the priest had access to Him . . . and that was only once a year . . . and **NOTHING WAS CHANGED BY THAT . . .**

nothing was changed. **God was there, but the clean had no effect upon the unclean. There was no life flowing out of that temple. Jesus comes and says the day is coming when God is going to indwell His people, and they will worship not in a temple but it will be in Spirit and in truth.**

And this water flows out of the temple of God into the hearts of Dead Seas everywhere . . . and it brings live and fruitfulness to the world. **You see where that puts the church?**

The church is to be the instrument . . . it is to be the building . . . it is to be the temple from which flows the water of life out there into the deadness of the world . . . and wherever it flows and whatever it touches **comes alive** . . . and as a Result of this flowing there is to be trees bearing fruit for food and leaves for healing.

My . . . what a responsibility God has laid upon the church.

Sin no longer has the upper hand. Corruption cannot win . . . and evil is not going to be victorious . . . because the water of life is flowing out of the church. The church has been given the gifts of the Spirit . . . it doesn't flow out of individuals because no individual has all of the gifts. The church has been given the gifts and everything that it touches comes alive and for the world it produces fruit for them to live by, and healing, the Book of Revelations says, healing for the nations.

The early church won an Empire. They didn't have the modern methods that we have. They didn't have the technology we have. They didn't have the church growth programs that we have. They didn't have all of the modern means that we have, but they swept across the Empire and without any of these things that we have become so dependent upon, they changed not only the course of the Empire, they crumbled the Empire, and changed the course of the world because the Holy Spirit while flowing through that body. And that's the way it's supposed to be. And that's the way God intended for it to be. He meant for the world to be fed spiritually by the fruit that flows from the church and He meant for the world to find healing in that which flows from the church.

You look at our health care program they the mess it is . . . there is no answer to that problem . . . but God had the answer all along in His word.

Look at that the hunger out there in the world . . . there is no answer to poverty and hunger in the world. The more we dabble in it, the more we try to fix it, the worst it gets. But God had the answer here in the Word . . . the Spirit flowing through the church brings forth fruit for the world to live on.

What He is saying is I want to dwell among My people in order that I might flow out and give the world some answers to their problems that they can find no answer for.

So, I think the church succeeds simply by being the church. It is the house of God. It

is the dwelling place of the Spirit. And it is to touch the world. Our mission then is not just to come together and enjoy sermons and sing songs and get on an emotional high or to build an impressive organization.

God has ordained that the church be the instrument through which the Holy Spirit flows. The individuals that make up the church . . . the living stones . . . have to be right with one another and with God for that to happen, but that's what God wants to happen . . . is that we may affect the world around us.

That's our mission and that's why God wants to dwell in His people. The house of God is God's dwelling place.