



# The Church as God's Temple

(Note to leaders - when a question in the study is followed by possible answers, these are for your benefit, try to encourage your group to come up with answers for themselves)

This week we are going to look at how God has always been up close and involved, dwelling with man, through looking at the big picture of **God's Temple**.

## **Genesis 3:8**

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day...

*Q For what did God create Adam and Eve for?*

- For relationship
- He walked with them

*Q What did creating man in His own image with free will mean could happen?*

- Free to choose to love Him and obey
- Or to disobey and to break their relationship with Him

Yet God did not avoid this pain, but had a plan before the foundation of the world for our redemption to bring us close again.

We see this plan out-working when he chooses Abraham. God makes a covenant with Abraham and makes promises that have an impact on us today!

- That his descendent would become a great nation: one day as numerous as the stars in sky
- He would be their God and they His people, giving them a land of their own
- And through them one day all nations would be blessed

God protected this family during a famine, using Joseph to bring his father Jacob and his brothers into Egypt. 400 years later they are still in Egypt and now this family's grown to hundreds of thousands. They are now slaves.

*Q Who does God use to bring them out of bondage in Egypt?*

- Moses

*Q How long do they wander in the desert learning about God?*

- 40 years

God was actively leading them & present with them in the wilderness as a pillar of cloud by day to guide them and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.

**Ex 25:8-9** God said "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will  dwell  among them. Make this  tabernacle  and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

This was also called the Tent of Meeting. It was literally a movable tent where Moses would go to speak to God on behalf of the Israelites

The word "Tabernacle" in Hebrew **Mishkan = Dwelling place**

Dwell in Hebrew: **shakan = to abide, to dwell, to tabernacle**

*So Tabernacle means "to dwell" and to dwell means "to tabernacle"*

→ both Tabernacle & dwell have roots in word "**shekhina**" = **dwelling presence of God**

The phrase the Shekhina glory is often used in describing **God's abiding presence and glory.**

God "tabernacled" with His people first in the Tabernacle and later, when the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land in the time of the kings, God had Solomon build a permanent dwelling place, the Temple.

*Q What was the role of the priests in the Tabernacle and Temple?*

- Priests ministered in the temple
- Made animal sacrifices on behalf of the people, for sin

We see in God choosing this man and this nation that it was by grace and not earned or deserved. He made a distinct people for Himself. Setting them apart and different from the nations around them.

*Q What should the nations around Israel have come to know about God?*

- Through God's dealings with Israel His character should have been seen
- His Name would be known through all the earth
- Israel would have reflected glory back to God

**Ex 19:5-6** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

*Q Did they remain faithful to God? What did they do?*

- Rebelled against God and turned to idolatry

*Q Whom did God send to call them back to Him?*

- God repeatedly sent prophets to His people
- They rejected His call to return

*Q What happened about 600 years BC?*

- King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem & most were taken into exile to Babylon
- and the temple where God met with his people was destroyed.

As prophesied by Ezekiel, their exile lasted 70 years. Then King Cyrus, moved by God, allowed Ezra to return to Jerusalem with a remnant of Jews to start the rebuilding of the temple. Later Nehemiah came and rebuilt the wall.

There was then 400 years of silence between the OT and NT and at the time of Jesus birth the Romans occupied Jerusalem. The rebuilt temple was being used and the High Priest and Jewish leaders led the people spiritually.

### **John 1:14**

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Greek dwell = **skēnoō** = **to fix one's tabernacle, to abide (or live) in a tabernacle**

God had himself become flesh and blood and made His dwelling - literally tabernacled- among men. Immanuel - God with us.

### **John 2:19-21**

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

*Q Was Jesus' body - the temple where God dwelt - destroyed?*

- He was crucified and 3 days later He was raised
- His body broken for us - His blood spilt for us

Jesus, who had tabernacle with man, brought salvation and peace with God. He died and rose again and is seated on the right side of His Father

But that was not the end of God dwelling with man. God tabernacles with us today:

### **John 14:16-17**

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you.**

*Q Where is God now dwelling?*

- Christ through His Spirit dwells in us and is with us
- He tabernacles with us individually and is building us together as His church as His temple - His dwelling place

Peter speaks of this dynamic in **1Peter 2:4-10** and in it he quotes Isaiah and Psalms:

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"<sup>8</sup> and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Lets consider:

1. Jesus - the living cornerstone
2. Ourselves - like living stones being built into a temple
3. The church - the temple of God

### 1. Jesus

Peter's picture here is that God is building a spiritual temple using living stones.

*Q How is Jesus described?*

- Living stone, rejected by man
- In God's sight chosen and precious
- The corner stone, a stumbling stone and stone of offence

*Q What is the role of a cornerstone?*

- Most important stone in the foundation of a building, giving the rest of the building its angles and size. If removed the entire building could collapse

*Q What does it mean to us that Jesus is the cornerstone of His Church?*

- It is only upon Him that our faith can be based

*Q On what else can we build our lives and in what way is this like building on sand?*

*Q In what way is Jesus a stumbling stone and rock of offence?*

- Some did recognise Jesus and followed Him, at great cost. Seeing Him as their saviour and with joy come into His marvelous light.
- Whilst others rejected Him not wanting the repentance and changed life He demanded preferring to stay in darkness.

*Q If Jesus, the living stone is a rock of offence will we also be an offence to some?*

Paul speaks of this using the idea of an aroma - a smell - in **2 Cor 2:14-15**

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.

*Q How can we apply this to our lives?*

- At times our witness is treated as a bad smell
- We offer the gospel of life but to those who reject it's the aroma that brings death
- Live in such a way that our lives are a fragrance of life that draws people to God

## **2. Ourselves as living stones**

V5 As you come to him.....you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house

*Q What does "as you come to him" tell us?*

- It's not passive - it's through faith

Jesus is the living stone and we are like him. He is alive and we are now spiritually alive. The spiritual connection lost in Adam has been restored in Christ

### **1 Cor 3:16-17**

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple

### **God Spirit tabernacles inside us!!**

*Q Do you think we sometimes take this for granted?*

*Q How should this impact how we live?*

Our passage said we are a "being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

*Q But what are the spiritual sacrifices we offer?*

### **Romans 12 :1**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship

*Q Why do we offer our bodies as sacrifices?*

- In view of God's mercy - in view of Christ's sacrifice of his body

*Q What day of the week are we to offer ourselves?*

- All! We are not our own - we have been bought at a price
- We love him with our all and all our heart and all our soul and with all our strength.

*Q What does the picture of us being priests also mean?*

- Being involved in church and in ministry

God is in us and we can do all things through Him who gives us strength. We living stones are joined together, working together in unity to become:

### **3. The church as the temple of God**

We don't **go** to church, we **are** the church. The church, or temple, is not a building but a people.

#### **1 Peter 4:9**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. .

These are names we have seen given to Israel! Like Israel - who were supposed to be light to the nations around them - we the church are God's temple, His dwelling place on earth through which the world can see the glory and power of the Lord.

*Q What are the parallels of Israel's role and purpose to ours as the church?*

- God called us / set us apart as His people
- so that we can go into the world and proclaim His excellence

*Q What must the church be involved in doing?*

- Take the gospel to all nations
- There needs to be temples of God's presence in all nations, all tribes on the earth
- That throughout the earth there is an expression of the presence of God
- People being genuinely built together into communities of lives living in the Spirit

*Q What ways at City Hill can we get involved with this mission?*

- Giving to this work financially
- Praying in our Citigroups for the church we have committed to
- Joining our mission - to China in May or the Philippines in August

God has never been at a distance, since His creation He has been close and involved. As we saw with Adam & Eve, with Abraham and his descendants Israel in the Tabernacle and Temple. Ultimately when Jesus dwelt with man and now in the church age He dwells in us.

He is tabernacle with us! All this in anticipation of the final fulfilment of the dwelling place of God being with man. When all nations have heard the good news Christ will return:

#### **Rev 21 1- 3 & 22**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will  dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God

himself will be with them as their God..... I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.