

Where on Earth Is God?

A Look at the
Dwelling Place of God

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"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." ~ Genesis 3:8a

Think of it! Adam lived in a beautiful garden located in a place called Eden, which means *pleasure*. It was a place of breathless wonder. He lived there with a counterpart prepared especially for him by his Creator. But more importantly GOD was with him in the garden! Can you imagine that? He lived in a garden of *pleasure* **and** GOD was there, God walking on the planet. God in Adam's "neck of the woods." Could we find words to describe such a blessed situation?

Nevertheless, with one action there was a disastrous *turn* of events. Adam and Eve sinned against God their Creator. The very next portion of this passage reads:

*"And Adam and his wife **hid themselves** from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (3:8b).*

The presence of God was on the Earth and Adam and Eve hid themselves from Him. The presence of the LORD God became a fearful thing. How disastrous sin is!

*"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (3:9).*

The end result of this sad account is that God,

"... drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (3:24).

Life in the presence of God was over!

THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE

“And let them make me a **sanctuary**: that I may **dwell among** them” (Exodus 25:8).

Many years after the fall, God came to **dwell among** man once again. He came to live among the nation Israel. He instructed them to build Him a dwelling place, which was called the *tabernacle* in its temporary form, and the *temple* in its more permanent version (I Kings 8:12-13).¹ The tabernacle and temple were distinctly known as “*the house of the Lord*,” “*the Lord’s house*,” “*the house of God*” (II Chronicles 7:1-2, 5). That’s because that’s where God dwelt. It was His **sanctuary** from the world that was at enmity with Him.

Imagine it! The children of Israel had the *True* and *Living* God, the God of the universe as one of their national residents, one of their neighbors. They were able to boast that God dwelt among them! When folks came visiting to Jerusalem, they could be taken over by God’s *house* to see where the Eternal God lived. What a wonder! Can you imagine that? Could any sightseeing attraction of the world rival that? God in Israel’s “neck of the woods.” What a blessed circumstance!

However, once again, through a disastrous *turn of events* – the many spiritual whoredoms of the children of Israel – this house became *Ichabod* (“the glory is departed from Israel”).

AN AMAZING TURN OF EVENTS

Let’s take some of the *dispensational* principles that we know and some of the *identification* truth that we know, and see, not just **WHO** we are in Christ, but **WHAT** we are!

After the fall of Israel (Romans 11:11-12), God through His chosen instrument Paul (Romans 11:13) turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:28). In so doing, He carried out His mystery plan which He had kept “*secret since the world began*” (Romans 16:25). The result of Christ’s finished cross work is that “*the riches of His grace*” are now manifested toward all those who trust in Him. As those “*in Christ*,” we are thus “*accepted*” (Ephesians 1:6), “*complete*” (Colossians 2:10), and blessed with “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*” (Ephesians 1:30).

These wonderful truths are multifaceted. One of the many benefits of being “*in Christ*” – and there are many – is that we (those who were once “*without Christ*, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and **without God** in the world” (Ephesians 2:12) are “*now*” (2:13) an “*holy temple in the Lord*” (2:21), “*builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (2:22).

HABITAT FOR DIVINITY

Think of this! **WE** are the temple, the habitation of God. Now, that is significant, is it not? Something to get excited about, I’d say!

1. It was conceived in the heart of David to build such a permanent dwelling place for God; but God would have David’s son Solomon fulfill his heart’s desire (I Chronicles 22:6-10; I Kings 8:12-13).

There is an honorable movement in our country that builds homes for the underprivileged. It is called *Habitat For Humanity*; but there is a far greater housing project underway today! It began some millennia ago. It is the **Habitat for Divinity**. God is actively building a house for His own dwelling. A temple, **not** of bricks and mortar *made by hand*, but of people – people who have placed their faith in the finished cross-work of Christ.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is LORD of heaven and earth, **dwelleth not in temples made with hands**” (Acts 17:24).

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16a).

“What? Know ye not that your **body is the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (I Corinthians 6:19).

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For **ye are the temple of the living God**” (II Corinthians 6:16a).

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto **a holy temple in the Lord**: in whom ye also are builded together for **a habitation of God through the Spirit**” (Ephesians 2:21-22).

“But if I tarry long, that thou thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was **manifest in the flesh** ...” (I Timothy 3:15-16).

Those of us who have now trusted Christ, **we** – God’s *living church* – are the dwelling place of God! *Much more* than walking with God in the garden, *Much more* than having God as a neighbor, *much more* than having God in our “neck of the woods.” We have the **life of God IN US (manifest in the flesh)!** What a wonder! What amazing grace!

A STOLEN IDENTITY

For most of us, our true identity as the *temple*, the *house of God*, has been stolen from us – years before we were ever born. Human organizations and institutions, along with their brick and mortar structures, have taken for themselves *our identity in Christ*. These religious agencies for too long have been pawned off as having the identity of the church, the body of Christ.

The “Reformation” never did free the members of Christ’s body from this type of religious bondage and tyranny. Centuries later, in spite of all the truth that the body of Christ has been exposed to, it is still the common Practice to surrender our true identity to the religious system:

“Where do you go to **church?**”
“Remember that this is the **Lord’s House.**”
“Welcome to the **House of God.**”
“Be reverent when entering the **sanctuary.**”

When will we wake up and realize that our identity has been taken from us? When will we reclaim our *true* identity and live in the fullness of who and what we are “*in Christ?*” What does all this mean – to be the church, the temple, the sanctuary, the house of God?

LIVING THE TEMPLE LIFE

The Old Testament will reveal many aspects of temple life. Paul, our apostle under grace, will show us how these aspects are *now* true of us – we are to *live* the temple life.

We will take neither the time nor space, at this point, to compare and contrast these points in detail. Instead, we will give an abridged concordance for your personal study.

WORSHIP

Old Testament Temple: Psalm 5:7; Isaiah 66:23;
Acts 7:48;
Revelation 11:1
Grace Temple: Philippians 3:3;
II Corinthians 7:3

SINGING

Old Testament Temple: Psalms 100:2; Amos 8:3
Grace Temple: Ephesians 5:19;
II Corinthians 7:5-7

TEACHING

Old Testament Temple: Matthew 21:23
Grace Temple: II Timothy 2:15

GLORY

Old Testament Temple: II Chronicles 7:1-2;
Grace Temple: I Corinthians 2:6-7;
II Corinthians 3:17-18;
4:6-7; Ephesians 3:19;
Romans 8:18

GIVING

Old Testament Temple: Malachi 3:10;
Nehemiah 13:4-5
Grace Temple: I Corinthians 16:1

SACRIFICE

Old Testament Temple: II Chronicles 7:4-5
Grace Temple: Romans 12:1-2;
Philippians 2:17

SWEET INCENSE

Old Testament Temple: Exodus 30:7
Grace Temple: Ephesians 5:2

SO, WHERE ON EARTH IS GOD?

“One **God** and **Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, and **in you all**” (Ephesians 4:6).

God is in us! The God of the universe lives in you and me. He is in everyone who has already trusted in His Son for salvation. We believers are His dwelling place on earth today, and we take Him with us everywhere we go. What a blessed privilege that is. If folks are going to meet God, they are going to meet Him in us.

BEHAVE THYSELF

“But if I tarry long, that thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is the **church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was **manifest in the flesh**” (I Timothy 3:15-16a).

We often hear parents tell their children to “*behave!*” Yet the fact is that all children *behave*, though sometimes they just behave badly.

How are we as believers to behave? Paul teaches us to behave like who we are! We are in the body of Christ, God’s *living church*. Behave accordingly! This way, the God who lives within us can be manifested out through our flesh (i.e., His temple).

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us ... Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the **life** also of Jesus might he **manifest in our body**. ... that the life also of Jesus might be made **manifest in our mortal flesh**” (II Corinthians 4:7, 10-11).

Paul did not stop there – with Christ being *manifest*. His desire was for something even greater, that Christ would be **magnified**.

*“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall he **magnified in** my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Philippians 1:20).*

We behave ourselves as members of Christ’s body when **He** is manifested and magnified in **His** holy temple, “*which temple ye are.*” Behave thyself!

Taken from *The Salvation of All: Creation’s Final Destination* (A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation). Available from StudyShelf.com for \$16.⁹⁵ (+\$3.⁷⁵ s&h).

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