

Women & More

House of Our God

March 14, 2013

God has always had a plan to ‘dwell’ with His people—Israel; Christians! In Eden He walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. He had close, continual communion with them—a mere step from His palatial dwelling to the garden path. When the garden-dwellers were expelled ‘east’ of Eden because of sin, God ceased to walk with them or meet with them, but He had put into effect His plan to redeem them to Himself through His Son—they’d dwell with Him!

God appeared in a burning bush to Moses; wrapped Himself in a pillar of fire and cloud to aid the moving Israelites, and spoke with Aaron, Miriam and Moses in a movable tabernacle, tent, ‘place-of-meeting’ when the siblings challenged Moses’ leadership—and Miriam left leprous. God made Himself known from within something, now, because His holiness would not abide the presence of sin: **There would be a separation of the sacred from the sinful!**

And speaking of the ‘sinful’, though their lives appeared seamless and unchallenged, what would be their end? Asaph answered in Psalm 73:12-17—*“This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. ¹³Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. ¹⁵If I said, ‘I will speak thus,’ I would have betrayed your children. ¹⁶When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me. ¹⁷**Till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.**”*

King David wanted to build a dwelling—a residence instead of a tent—for God in 2 Samuel 7:1-2 *“After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, **while the ark of God remains in a tent.**”* But it was his son Solomon whom God appointed to actually build it. In 1 Chronicles 1 David made preparation: *“Then David said, ‘The house of the LORD God is to be here, and also the **altar** of burnt offering for Israel.’”* In verses 6-7—*“Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁷David said to Solomon: ‘My son, **I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God.**”* And then he reiterated to Solomon why God had chosen him to build His temple.

► Solomon built the temple, and in 2 Chronicles 6 began his prayer of dedication: *“But **will God really dwell on earth with men?** The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”* And in verses 18-19 said, *“Yet **give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence.**”* There would be prayers made and heard in this dwelling place for the LORD God! And prayer would be made and heard where God is present both then and now!

Psalm 132:7-9 (Psalm of ascents: worshipers were literally climbing the steps to temple) **“Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool—***arise, O LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. 9May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy.”* Psalm 109:30 **“With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD; in the great throng I will praise Him.”** Psalm 149:6 **“May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.”**

And Isaiah in 56:6-7 **“And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—7these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”**

The house of God would be a house of prayer for all nations: all nations would be blessed through Israel! But Israel’s fascination with the no-gods of other nations caused the Living God to allow the temple that Solomon had built to be destroyed. Though briefly restored, it was totally demolished when Jerusalem was destroyed, and afterward God’s glory would not be present—dwelling—in Jerusalem or among His people for the rest of the Old Testament.

†**The promised end:** Ezekiel was given an apocalyptic vision of God making His dwelling place with Israel again in the Millennium in 37:26c-28 **“...I will put my sanctuary among them forever. 27My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. 28Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.”** And then he was given the most preeminent vision of God’s glory returning to the ‘millennial temple’ in Ezekiel 43:1-5 **“Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, 2and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. 3The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. 4The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. 5Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”**

♥**The New Testament brims** with the genealogy of a new king in the lineage of David, and the miraculous birth of Jesus! It was in the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of the Passover that, as a young boy, Jesus’ parents left Him behind unaware. Luke 2:49—**“Why were you searching for me?’ he (Jesus) asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’”** Of being in the house of the LORD, in His tabernacle, David had said in Psalm 27:4-6 **“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. 5For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. 6Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.”**

Psalm 84:1-4, 10—the sons of Korah—“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! ²My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ³Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar. O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. ⁴Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.” Selah. And verse 10: “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”

When at 30 our Lord began His ministry, He ministered in the synagogue—the temple! Mark 1:21 “They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.” John 6:58 “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.’ ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.” Luke 4:14-15—“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” And in John 18:20 Jesus is being questioned by the high priest about His disciples and His teaching, and He said: “I have spoken openly to the world,’ Jesus replied. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.”

The Beloved Disciple recorded Jesus clearing the temple right after His first miraculous sign of water into wine—John 2:12-16 “After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

¹³“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’” And then the next verse, John 2:17 “His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’” quotes Psalm 69:8-9 “I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother’s sons; for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.”

And before His arrest and crucifixion in Mark 11:4-11 “They (Jesus’ disciples) went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, ‘What are you doing, untying that colt?’ ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted.

‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’

‘Hosanna in the highest!’

¹¹“Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.”

Mark 11:12-14 dealt with Jesus being hungry and coming to a fig tree and cursing it because it had no figs, and right after this Jesus entered the outer court of the temple and this time He saw something that ‘angered’ Him—His **righteous anger** was aroused! Mark 11:15-17—“*On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷And as he taught them, he said. ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?” But you have made it ‘a den of robbers’.”* Ousting of the money changers and sellers is also recorded in Mark 11:17b and Luke 19:46a = the same verse: “*Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?’”*”

And after Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection and ascension, His ‘church’ was introduced and began to grow in the book of Acts! Acts 16:5 “*So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.”* Philip Yancy, “Church exists primarily **not** -to provide entertainment or

-to encourage vulnerability or

-to build self-esteem or

-to facilitate friendships, **but to worship God**; if it fails in

that, it fails.” And God has always required sacrifices as part of worship. Hebrews 13:15-16 “*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶And do not forget to **do good** and to **share with others**, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*”

And every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a ‘temple’ for the Holy Spirit who has taken up dwelling there. 1 Corinthians 6:19-2—“*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”* And every believer is also an individual part of the ‘body’ of Christ—the Church—“*After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body,”* Ephesians 5:29-30.

People, today, come to church and hear God’s convicting word, and decide for His Son, Jesus, *or not*: Seventeen year old atheist, Kirk Cameron, was a Hollywood star who played the role of Mike Seaver on *Growing Pains*, when **he was invited to attend church with a friend, and was confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.** He began to earnestly examine the ‘truths’ proclaimed in Scripture and one day pulled his sports car off the road to pray and receive Christ as his Savior and Lord. Now 42, Kirk readily shares his testimony of faith and heads an outreach called: The Way of the Master. Psalm 65:2-4 “*O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come. ³When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions. ⁴Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! **We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.**”*

Jesus gave us examples of the importance of prayer with some 20 occasions and circumstances recorded in the Gospels where He prayed to His Father—and He prays for us, today! “We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives,” said Spurgeon. “If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it.”

And we are exhorted to pray in the ‘house’ of our God, because He is particularly pleased with the corporate—in agreement; where two or three are gathered in My name—prayers of His people. Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 “*I urge, then, **first of all**, that **requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving** be made for everyone—²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³**This is good, and pleases God** our Savior, **who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** ⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.” And in Colossians 4:2-4 “**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.** ³And **pray for us, too,** that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”*

Some quickening ‘quips’ to ponder about prayer:

√Anything that is big enough to worry about is big enough to pray about!

√God answering prayer is the only way things are going to change!

√Do the math: Shared joy is doubled; shared sorrow is halved!

√We have enough of self in us that God will work in us first!

√Prayer is one weapon that Satan cannot duplicate!

√We do not know what prayer cannot do!

√We cannot force God’s answer!

√God is as close as a prayer!

√And no prayer is lost!

♥Jesus threw out the defiling dealers and their dirty dollars from the temple in Jerusalem: Scripture warns that if we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us, so we must throw out what would defile our hearts—temple of the Holy Spirit—and our church, to offer prayers that would be heard and answered by our God! Remembering that after this life, we will ‘dwell’ in the house of the Lord forever! (Psalm 23:6). Revelation 12:12a “*Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!*”

Henry van Dyke, who wrote the words to our theme song, *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*, to the music of Beethoven’s Ninth, said, “There are a hundred touches of kindness that come to us every day to tell us that we are not orphans or outcasts upon the earth. Every trace of order, every gleam of beauty, every provision of bounty in the natural world, is an evidence that it is God’s house.”