

TEMPLES OF THE LIVING GOD.

God has a special purpose for man, making us in His image? It is something beyond even the angels, that makes them wonder. It's not just that God would have fellowship WITH man but that God would dwell IN man in His Glory. This is where we part with those who just want a religion, a code, an ethic, a set of rules, for true Christianity is about the living God dwelling WITH US and IN US! **"Behold, the tabernacle (permanent dwelling) of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God"** (Revelation 21:3). To prepare man to understand this, God gave man the concept of a Temple (this was so deeply ingrained that every god man worshipped had his temple). The Temple was God's localised dwelling place, the place you would come to meet with God, a place dedicated to worship and prayer.

The Temple Pattern.

(1) At its heart was His throne-room where He dwelt in His glory where none dare enter, from which flowed a river of life (signifying His blessings poured forth in answer to the prayers and praises of His people). The glory desired to fill the whole Temple.
(2) The Holy Place where only the priests could enter and minister.
(3) The Outer Court where the people could come.
They, as sinners, did not have direct access to the holy God whose presence was guarded by the cherubim (as in the Garden of Eden). This taught the separation of man from God because of sin, which could only be remedied by blood (sacrifices) which provided the only way of access. But even this was very limited for the blood of animals could not really atone for sin.

Now it became clear that the God of the universe is not interested in dwelling in physical buildings as Solomon realised having built the state-of-the-art temple of his time. **"Solomon built Him a house.**

However, the Most High 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?`" (Acts 7:47-49).

So what was going on. God was preparing man with physical symbols for the ultimate reality.

It was Jesus who brought the Temple concept to its amazing fulfillment.

One woman asked: "**Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship** (which is God's true Temple where He should be worshipped?)." **Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming** (there is a new day when worship is transformed) **when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father** (He is announcing a new Temple development that He is introducing which would replace the old buildings). **You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews** (to answer her original question, it was the Jewish Temple that was the authorised one at that time, but now He goes on to make a more profound point). **But the hour is coming** (the New Testament dispensation), **and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"** (John 4:20-24).

True Worship will no longer be an outward ritual in a Temple building with a conscious separation between the worshipper and God, but will happen within man's own being IN SPIRIT and TRUTH, with direct spirit to spirit communion.

Thus, **MAN himself would be the TEMPLE OF GOD indwelt by God's Spirit, dedicated to His worship.** Man's whole being spirit, soul and body would be dedicated to worship God in reality (truth).

This has always been the Father's desire.

He seeks human Temples not beautiful buildings. 'In truth' shows that the mind (soul) is fully engaged in this spiritual worship.

The body is also an important part of the Temple also:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your acceptable WORSHIP*” (Romans 12:1).

But Jesus put the emphasis on worship in spirit so that we don't fix on any particular outward form as defining worship. The essence of worship is a spiritual encounter with God and the body is to express that. This might be in kneeling, lying prostrate, standing with hands raised, leaping and rejoicing, in silence or in speaking or singing in tongues. The key is worshipping in spirit and being willing to yield our body to express that. (The one posture commanded in the New Testament is raised- hands signifying the surrender of our body to God's will). If we get locked into one mode that we think is right because we like it or are used to it, we can miss the way the Spirit is moving. Ultimately in worship it's not about how we like to worship that matters, it is about what God likes. It is not whether we like a song or not, it is whether God wants us to sing it. It's not whether we like it loud or quiet but how God likes it. In worship we are called to please, glorify and submit to God. Our bodies in worship are to be yielded to Him, so that they are ready to express however the Spirit is moving. If I say: ***'well I will yield my body when the Spirit is moving this way, but you won't find me lifting my hands, kneeling, shouting for joy, praying in tongues, in silent submission, clapping*** (take your pick of what you don't like to do!). ***I am not going to lose my dignity'***, then I am not offering my body as a living sacrifice to do God's will, which must be because I haven't been sufficiently overwhelmed by God's mercies that I will do anything for Him.

“and now is.” This key statement proves that Jesus was announcing that God was now moving into human Temples. This had always been His real heart’s desire (He just established buildings to teach us the pattern and principles for worship). Jesus claimed this was already being fulfilled. How could this be before the barrier between God and man was removed by the cross? For sin meant God could not indwell man. The answer is that it was fulfilled in Jesus Himself. He (his humanity) was the true Temple indwelt by God’s Spirit dedicated to worship and prayer, out of whom flowed rivers of living water to bless the people who came to him. He was the prototype Temple for he said that the time was coming when there would be many such Temples where true worship will take place.

He verified this claim in John 2:19-21: Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. These new temples will continue forever because if killed they will be resurrected! The ministry of Jesus was a transition - for the Jewish Temple was still in action. But when Jesus paid the penalty for sin declaring ‘it is finished’, it meant the end of the old temple, so the veil was torn in two from above, signifying also the removal of the barrier between God and man. Now God no longer needed to live in the pattern, He could move into the real Temples He had desired all the time - men. So 50 days later the Holy-Spirit came to the Temple and filled His new Temples to overflowing (Acts2:1-4).

Now we have the amazing privelege of being Temples of God, where God lives and wants to manifest His glory: **“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”** (1Corinthians 6:19,20).

“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 you are” (1Corinthians 3:16,17).

“For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among *them*. I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2Corinthians 6:16).

“You are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22).

Since the Temple symbolised God’s purpose to indwell man it was built after the 3-fold pattern of man (**SPIRIT-SOUL-BODY**).

(1) THE HOLY OF HOLIES (dwelling place of God - where the only light is God’s glory) = **our SPIRIT** (the part that contacts God),

(2) THE HOLY PLACE (where the light is the lampstands) = **our SOUL** (mind illumined by the anointed Word),

(3) THE OUTER COURT (receiving the natural light of the sun) = **our BODY** (contacting the physical world)

Conclusion: God’s ultimate purpose for you is expressed in the fact that you are now HIS TEMPLE!

1. He lives in our spirit and wants to fill His whole Temple with His Presence. This requires the Candlesticks (shining the light of the Word) to fill our mind with God’s truth, and it requires our body to be offered up (yielded) to God for His purposes (we receive healing this way).

2. The activity of a Temple is WORSHIP, we are to be dedicated to the worship of God and prayer. It is worship in spirit and truth, spirit to Spirit communion with God, with our mind illumined by the Word so it too is engaged. Our body is to be an instrument yielded to express the spirit in worship.

3. When a Temple is functioning in its first purpose of worship, then God's glory and river of life flows out to minister to others:

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified"
(John 7:38,39).

Jesus is the prototype Temple - His ministry flowed out of His prayer and worship life.