

The Dwelling Place of God

By Matthew Day

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

-Exodus 25:8 ESV

This verse raises the question: Can God dwell among His people without a Tabernacle? Did He not dwell with Enoch, Noah, and Abraham? These people walked with God! Does He not dwell in each of us? Surely He does for it is written “We are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (2 Cor. 6:16). Was it any different for the Israelites who came out of Egypt?

Note how Paul proves his point. He is quoting from Leviticus 26:11-12. This was addressed to the same people who built the Tabernacle. The idea of God’s people being the Temple is nothing new. God did not need a physical building to dwell with Israel. In fact, no earthly building can contain Him (1 Kings 8:27).

Why did God have Israel build a Tabernacle then? It could not be to offer sacrifice for Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Elijah all offered sacrifice without the Temple. All of them could draw near to God without going up to Jerusalem. Why then have a Tabernacle or Temple?

*You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, **everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes**, for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, **then to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you:** your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.*

-Deuteronomy 12:8-12 ESV

When everyone does what is right in their own eyes, there is division. Notice what is put as the antithesis to this condition: the place where God has placed His Name. That is Jerusalem—the Temple.

Each of the men above drew near to God individually. However, you would be hard pressed to find an instance of the people drawing near to God as a nation without a Tabernacle or Temple (Mt. Sinai being one possible exception). The Temple is where the people gather to worship in unity. It is a picture of all Israel coming together as one. This is exactly what Paul says in Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy Temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

-Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV

Together we form the Temple of the Most High God. Each one of us is like a plank or a curtain. Apart from each other we are worthless. But when we come together we form the dwelling of our Creator.

To put it another way, who built the Tabernacle in the wilderness? God said “Let **them** build me a sanctuary” and asked that “**They** take for me a contribution.” In Exodus 30, we read that everyone was required to give a half shekel for the census. These were used in the construction of the Tabernacle. All of their possessions (might) were put towards the Temple. Exodus 35 describes how both men and women of Israel came together to build the pieces of the Tabernacle. Their mind was set to the work. Scripture says “From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me” (Exo. 25:2) and “All the women whose hearts stirred them to use their skill spun the goats' hair” (Exo. 35:26). The Tabernacle is the outpouring of our hearts. All of our heart, soul, and might is put into the construction of this structure—this house for God.

From the very beginning this was the purpose of creation. The first letter in the Hebrew Bible is a beit—a house. Stone by stone, plank by plank, curtain by curtain, God has been building a house for Himself.

I want to step aside for a moment and relate this to something that we have experience with—congregations. In Judaism, a synagogue is compared to a mini temple. Think about that. The Temple was a place for all Israel to come together and draw near to God in unity. Our churches and synagogues should perform the same function on a smaller level. They should be places where we can draw together and offer our sacrifices of praise. Even though there is no Temple standing in Jerusalem and we are scattered among the nations, we should be able to achieve some level of unity through our congregations.

Let's look at this from another angle. How glorious is the unity in a single congregation? How much more the unity that will be brought about when our God gathers us together again. No more baptists, methodists, catholics—no more Jews, Christians, Messianics. One God. One people. One Faith. One Torah. Should the Temple be rebuilt, it will give us a taste of that unity that will only be fully realized with the return of Messiah.

As mentioned before, God placed His Name on Mt. Zion, the location of the Temple. He placed His Name on His people (Num. 6:27). As long as we are divided, the Temple is divided and His Name is divided.

One day the prophecies of Zephaniah and Zechariah will come to pass,

For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

-Zephaniah 3:9 ESV

And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

-Zechariah 14:9 ESV

Last time I requested stories about how your congregations have come together for the glory of God. Here is what you wrote:

Jennifer Derrick:

Last summer our church did a few "Block Parties". We basically went into the neighborhoods and took over the block! We set up some inflatables, gave away a ton of free food and set up water slides...lots of free stuff including clothes just to bless the people in the neighborhood. We've already done a few and we plan to do more. We've had people walk from their neighborhoods to our church after that because they wanted to know this love that was displayed. It's really awesome to be a part of a body that is focused on Christ and wants to spread His love in bodily form. God has so much in store and I'm excited daily to be a part of His amazing plan!

Tom Young:

I can say this - it was a miracle that less than 20 of us, with YHVH as the Head Provider, paid the rent of over \$4000 each month for a number of months, before we moved into our present facility, the Sunday people of which do not want anything but us to be there. We have developed a very good relationship with them, including looking at inviting them to be present at our Passover. We continue to reach out to Yeshua in prison, from Woodward to McAlister, and on March 31 will have a 20+ attendance at the former, in western OK. We do not have a leader, per se, but Yeshua continues to be the Head. We are not perfect of course, but also, YHVH has annointed my reading of the Hebrew scroll - for example, today, the passage that follows the '10 Commandments,' there are 4 Aleph-Tavs (untranslatable) attached to 4 of the Hebrew words. Although we have a long way to go, we are finding that YHVH is placing people where He wills, for the upcoming Ministry.

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