



**God Dwells  
Not in Temples  
Made With Hands**

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**Berean Studies  
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## God Dwells Not in Temples Made With Hands.

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“Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 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; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the

offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"—Acts 17:22-31.

**B**EFORE examining the words of the Apostle Paul in the above passage of Scripture, that the Lord of heaven and earth "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" some references to Old Testament times, when God dwelt with His covenant people, Israel, should be helpful. In former days God's presence was manifested in a particular building, first of all in the Tabernacle which God instructed Moses to build, and later in the Temple which Solomon erected to the glory of the Lord.

There are always good reasons when God arranges certain services for His people, and also for any changes which He desires carried out in His dealings with the human family. It is most im-

portant that we as Christians note well the changes in God's plans and the lessons He wishes us to learn from those changes.

When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, we have references in Exodus 25, giving us a description of the Tabernacle which God desired Israel to build under the direction of Moses. Verse 8 reads—"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." That was a really great condescension by God; He was going to dwell with this sinful people as a nation, but they were a typical people then. Verse 9 continues—"According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Then verse 40 reads—"And look that thou make them (all the fittings etc.) after the pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." That was very important. God would have all the details carried out according to His design, because everything in the tabernacle was typical, pointing forward to God's people of the Gospel Age, this period of two thousand years in which we live today.

Verses 10 and 11 of Exodus 25 explain the construction of the Ark. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two

cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about." This was very important, as the Ark contained particular items. In verse 17 is described the making of the Mercy Seat. This was a most important piece of furniture, because it represented the place on which God accepted the sacrifices of the people. "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another... And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which

I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel"—Exod. 25:17, 18, 20-22. That was a wonderful setup, for this typical people to have the Tabernacle and furnishings. God said He would dwell with them and commune with them, giving them directions and guidance. Many of those directions were pointing forward to this Gospel Age and our own day.

As in the Tabernacle, God's presence was also manifested in the Temple, and God's presence with Israel is pictured in the words of the Psalmist, who picks up the strain which we saw in respect of God's dwelling with Israel. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth"—Psa. 80:1. What a lovely spirit David had, to be able to express this favor of God dwelling with Israel, to be their God especially over and above all the nations of the world at that time. The same spirit is found in Hezekiah's prayer recorded in Isa. 37:16—"O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth."

God's presence with Israel down the centuries continued to be manifested in the Temple and the synagogues, and it is important to note that Jesus acknowledged the Temple as His Father's House. He had cause to rebuke those who were using the precincts of the Temple as a place of merchandise, as recorded in John's Gospel. It is also interesting that even as a child of twelve, when Jesus was taken to Jerusalem at the Passover time, He was so interested in learning about the Temple that when His parents began their journey home He did not accompany them. When they returned to Jerusalem and finally found Him, He said—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was a perfect child of course, and became the perfect Man later on. His mind was dwelling on the preparation time before He began His ministry. In John 2 we have the record of the time when our Lord saw that this typical House was being wrongly used, as we read—"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple

... And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" —John 2:13-16. There were the money changers, making profits from changing money and selling animals and birds for sacrifice, which was out of order in the precincts of the Temple. The Lord felt constrained to witness against that behaviour in the vicinity of His Father's House.

However, in John 4 our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria revealed that a change of dispensations was at hand, and with that a change in God's dealings with Israel, and those who became followers of Jesus, who were then also God's special people. The Lord was resting by the well, and met this woman of Samaria. The record reads—"He (Jesus) left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there, Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to

drink . . . Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How it is that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw"—John 4:3-15.

Then Jesus revealed Himself as a prophet to this woman, and from her words we read—"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in

Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet as Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"—John 4:20-24. We note in verse 20 the Samaritans worshipped in a mountain, which dated back to the days of Jacob. A temple had been built on this mountain, and the Samaritans felt it was holy ground, just as the Jews thought of Jerusalem. But how enlightening are the words of Jesus—"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There was not going to be any location now, no particular building in which to worship the Father, but wherever God's true people were from that time on, they would worship Him in spirit and in truth from their

hearts, not because they assembled in any particular location or building of any kind. Now God was going to select a people in whom He could dwell, and they could dwell with God in spirit and in truth.

Our Lord's ministry fulfilled these words He spoke to the woman of Samaria. He had no special building or location in which to worship or teach the people. It is interesting to find how naturally the Lord travelled about Palestine, teaching the people as He met them, as we read in Matt. 5:1, 2—"Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened h's mouth, and taught them." The Lord was on the side of the mountain and the people down below, like a natural amphitheatre. He taught them in the beautiful natural setting of the mountain; there was no special place at all. In Matthew 13 there is another incident in the life of the Lord of good interest, when He was by the sea side. We read—"Great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables"—Matt. 13:2, 3. There again the

Lord taught the people in a beautiful natural setting, which helps us to see how God dwells with His people. He does not need any special location or building, only the natural desire of the heart, to learn the lessons of His word, that we may be His people indeed, guided and blessed by His holy spirit.

Our Lord did not shun the Temple which was still acknowledged as His Father's House, for He preached and taught wherever there were ears to hear and appreciate His message of the Kingdom. One occasion at the Temple is of special significance, as recorded in John 7. This was a very special occasion, and the Lord gave a helpful lesson in regard to the water of truth. Verse 2 introduces the matter—"Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand." These feasts were arranged by God, and when they were kept our Lord acknowledged them and took the opportunity to teach appropriate spiritual lessons from the festivals. Verses 14-16 read—"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is

not mine, but his that sent me." Jesus had never gone to their particular colleges, so—"How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" But what a lovely lesson He gave at that time, and for all of us—"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Whatever we say about God's truth is not our own. The Plan of God that appeals to us so much is not our ideas of what should be, but rather what we find in the Word of the Lord.

From verse 37 of John 7 we read—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." Here the Lord was saying that in due time, when you become My people, enthused with this lovely message I am receiving from the Father, it will flow out through you also, out of your innermost being. In this great day of the feast He took the timely opportunity to declare—"If any man thirst (for the higher things in life), let him come unto me and drink." Verses 38 and 39 show

the outcome. He will be so impressed with this message from God that he will also be able to speak words helpfully to others. "But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the holy spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The explanation being, the Lord Himself had to ascend to the Father's presence and then, after the period of ten days, came the Pentecostal blessing. From that time on the Apostles in particular, and all God's true people down the Gospel Age, have had the guidance and blessing of the holy spirit, to guide them into all truth. Our Lord's reference to the spirit's guidance after He was glorified, revealed the meaning of His words to the woman of Samaria, that those who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth. For those who did receive the spirit this was then possible.

While Jesus was still with His disciples they were unable to rise to great understanding because the holy spirit was not given to them until His sacrifice had been completed and He had ascended on high to the Heavenly Father. This is why the minds of the disciples were working as

expressed in the words of Matt. 24:1—  
“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.” The disciples were proud of that Temple. It was still the House of God, and probably they had the idea that Jesus might set up His headquarters there when He established the kingdom which He preached. Probably there was an attachment to that Temple which corresponds to the attachment which many people have towards their cathedrals and churches today, with stained-glass windows and statues of various kinds. Can we imagine the surprise of the Lord’s disciples at the answer He gave to them? Verse 2 reads —“And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” That beautiful Temple was to be thrown down! Imagine what the disciples would have thought! Our Lord’s words were actually fulfilled about forty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Why did God permit the destruction of the Temple? Did its destruction interfere with the true worship of God? No, not at all! Suppose the same thing happened to the great

cathedrals and churches of today. Would that hinder the worship of God? Certainly not! God allows certain things to happen so that the minds of His people may be centred in Him, and not on temples made with hands. When Jesus had completed His sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world, we read in Matt. 27:51—"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." That was the veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy in the Temple. The Most Holy was the place that represented the very presence of God. That veil was wonderfully made, about 4 inches thick, and was rent from the top to the bottom. God's Son, their Messiah, had been put to death. Here was God's judgment from heaven! Jesus' sacrifice has been consummated; He was the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Henceforth there would be no more Temple services acknowledged by God, now that the antitype had come. There would be no more animal sacrifices typically cleansing Israel that could be accepted by the Heavenly Father. The Temple now was outside God's jurisdiction, and was no more acknowledged as the place where He dwelt with Israel. From that time forward

God dwelt not in temples made with hands. Those who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The Apostle Paul having been brought into God's service after our Lord's death and resurrection, it is quite understandable that he would be fully informed by God's spirit respecting the change in worship which God desired from His servants. So it is no surprise that when the Apostle came to Athens and found many altars, and one dedicated "To the Unknown God", that he very diplomatically declared—"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." What an opportunity for Paul! The Athenians had many gods; in case any had been overlooked they had one altar "To the Unknown God." After declaring in verse 24 that the "Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands", the Apostle continues—"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things . . . That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far away from every one of us." God is with us at all times and in all places

and circumstances. How thankful we are that God is present with His people wherever they are.

From Acts 17:29 we read—"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." In Exodus 20 the Lord gave typical Israel a clear indication of His will in relation to the creating of anything to help them worship their God. From verse 4—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." There was an instruction given to Israel, which if it had been carried out down the centuries how much better would the human family be today!

The Apostle continued in verse 30 of Acts 17—"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." God "winked" at the various kinds of ignorance, at the idols and altars created down to the time of our Lord's first advent. He ignored the

nations generally, except Israel, as they were a typical nation. God declared through the prophet—"You only have I known of all the families of the earth"—Amos 3:2. They were a people set apart, and the Lord gave them His law through Moses as a "schoolmaster to bring them to Christ"—Gal. 3:24—if possible. Few were able to benefit by the instructions of the Law Covenant, so few received the Messiah when He came. But from Jesus' first advent was the beginning of the time when God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Three thousand years have been allotted in God's Plan for repentance of the human family—two thousand years of this Gospel Age, when "as many as the Lord our God shall call"—Acts 2:39—have this privilege of repentance and coming into God's family for the heavenly kingdom, and one thousand years of the Millennial Age when all the remainder of mankind will be required to repent to inherit the earthly kingdom. All who have gone down into the death condition will be included, for all shall be resurrected and instructed in the Millennial Age to "know the Lord from the least unto the greatest"—Heb. 8:11. That the Apostle included the Millennial Age in the period when all

men are required to repent is clearly indicated in verse 31 of this 17th chapter of Acts—"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." God will have a righteous judgment, and Christ the righteous Judge at the head of it—"By that man whom he hath ordained." What a wonderful theme and lesson Paul gave us in these lovely verses. Are we not thankful that God will not lay all those misdemeanours against mankind. He forgives them freely when they repent and acknowledge Christ as their Saviour. God is glad to forget the things behind—"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—Heb. 8:12.

After Paul's conversion and yielding his life to the Lord in full consecration, we read in Acts 9:17 of him receiving the holy spirit. As he had been begotten of the holy spirit for the heavenly calling, henceforth all his words and writings were directed towards encouraging all believers to enjoy the same blessings and enlighten-

ment by the indwelling of God's spirit, thus making them "new creatures in Christ." So, throughout Paul's Epistles we have numerous texts impressing the great privilege and favor of being members in Christ's Church, growing up into Christ, and worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

In Ephesians 2 from verse 12, the Apostle tells us about the Jewish and Gentile Christians being united in gaining access to the Heavenly Father through the indwelling of the holy spirit. "At that time ye were without Christ... But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Those "far off" were the Gentile Christians, those "nigh" were the Jewish Christians. "Therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit." This is the **temple** in which God dwells,

builded together for an **habitation** through the spirit. What a wonderful favor it is that God gives His people here on earth the privilege of being His **temple**, that they may by His spirit be developed into vessels of honour, transformed from very imperfect beings into vessels for His use. They are used in His service now, but more so in the Kingdom, when they have the spirit nature and are with Christ to reign with Him a thousand years to accomplish the "restitution of all things"—Acts 3:20, 21. The word "habitation" means dwelling place. God's true people are a dwelling place, a temple in whom He dwells by His spirit, transforming them in preparation for the heavenly kingdom, to His praise.

In writing to the Corinthian church, the Apostle presents a stirring exhortation when he declared in 1 Cor. 6:19, 20—"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." Here Paul presents the individual aspect of this wonderful relationship between the Lord and the members of His Body. As there is the collective Body as the Temple

of God, there are also the individual temples—each member in Christ is a temple of God's holy spirit. How it humbles the followers of the Master to know that God is dwelling in them as individuals, to develop, fit and shape them for a place in His wonderful composite Temple in heaven. "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body."

This favor and privilege is also shown in 1 Cor. 3:16—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Here again the individual aspect is shown—God's true people are His temples. We also see in this text the sacredness and solemnity of the Christian life. It is a solemn undertaking, and only by the Lord's grace can we continue on faithfully to be His people indeed and rejoice in the privileges He bestows upon us, and to pass the same on to others as we have opportunity.

In Rev. 3:12 we have a reference to the members of the Church victorious, showing the great stability that will operate when God's Church is on the other side of the veil with their Lord and Head in the kingdom. This verse describes the over-

comers of the Philadelphian Church period, historically located in the last century. There were seven churches, covering seven periods of the Gospel Age. Each of the messages to the churches has an individual application as well as an historical and a local application. In the early verses of Revelation our Lord is shown "in the midst of the seven candlesticks"—in the midst of the churches. He is present in spirit with His people, seeing how they are reacting to His leading, guiding and blessing, and pointing out their shortcomings, as well as their commendations. This Philadelphian church was commended for its brotherly love during part of the last century, when many of our beautiful hymns were composed. Individual Christians also exhibit the spirit of brotherly love now, having the qualities of character fitting that particular period. Our Lord's words in Rev. 3:12 read—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." A pillar in the temple of God—there is the

thought of strength, stability. We think of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, what wonderful pillars they will be in supporting this great new heavenly administration, from which the power and guidance of God will come down to the new earth, through the Great Company and the Ancient Worthies to Israel as a nation, and thence to all the families of the earth. Those who overcome will be pillars. There is indicated a stability in the new heavens that will last forever, because all who will have part in the "new heavens" will have been "temples of God" during the earthly pilgrimage.

Near the end of our Lord's earthly ministry we have His Words to His faithful disciples recorded in Luke 22:28-30, which read—"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Thrones are places of authority to carry out the requirements of the Lord in the heavenly sphere, so that the administration may be in accord with God's will to bring about mankind's rehabilitation on the restored earth.

The Apostle Paul was inspired also to warn against a false system which would be established in the earth during this Gospel Age, as recorded in 2 Thes. 2:3, 4 —“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (the day of Christ) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” This is the great Papal system in particular depicted here, and the associated daughter systems of religion that have similar erroneous teachings against which the warning is given.

In Apostolic days the Lord’s disciples met in the homes of those who loved the Lord in spirit and in truth. An example of this is found in Rom. 16:3-5—“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus... Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” What a privilege it is to worship God wherever we are, in all circumstances and conditions. If we must have special buildings, special ceremonies and services, we have not yet experienced the indwelling of God’s holy spirit without

which no one shall prove an overcomer. How true it is that God dwells in the hearts of His people; He invigorates and stimulates, guides and directs them along the pilgrim way. How favored we are to be responsive to His will. No temple or edifice of mankind is required for the true worship of God, for God dwells not in temples made with hands.

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