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**God Isn't Far Away,
His Dwelling Place
Is With His People**



By Dan Maines

God Isn't Far Away, His Dwelling Place Is With His People

Introduction

† From the beginning of Scripture, one great theme runs through the entire biblical story, God desires to dwell with His people.

† Eden, the tabernacle, and the temple weren't disconnected stories. They formed a developing picture of God's presence with mankind, pointing forward to something greater.

† The tabernacle could be taken down. The temple could be destroyed. But God's final dwelling place isn't a building made

by human hands. God dwells with His people through Christ.
† Jesus didn't come merely to bring people closer to a physical sanctuary. He brought His people into fellowship with the Father and made them God's dwelling place (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:21-22).

† This is why believers don't need to look toward an earthly temple, a sacred city, or a future building to find the presence of God. In Christ, God isn't far away. His dwelling place is with His people.

Scripture

Genesis 3:8

Now they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

† Eden introduces the pattern of God present with mankind. Adam and Eve weren't pictured as searching for a distant God. God was present among them.

† Sin disrupted that fellowship, and mankind was driven from the garden. The rest of the biblical story develops the restoration of access to God's presence (Genesis 3:23-24).

† What was lost in Eden becomes an important theme running through Scripture, God dwelling with mankind without the separation caused by sin (Revelation 21:3).

Exodus 25:8

Have them construct a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them.

† The tabernacle continued the dwelling theme. God commanded Israel to construct a sanctuary so that His presence would be represented among His covenant people.

† Yet the tabernacle wasn't the final destination. It was movable, temporary, and connected with the old covenant system that pointed beyond itself (Hebrews 8:5; 9:8-11).

† God was teaching Israel through visible things about a greater

spiritual reality. The sanctuary pointed toward the day when God's dwelling wouldn't be centered in a tent or physical structure.

1 Kings 8:27

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

† Even Solomon understood that the temple couldn't contain God. The building represented God's covenant presence, but God was infinitely greater than the structure.

† This prevents us from treating the Jerusalem temple as God's ultimate dwelling place. Solomon himself recognized the limitation of the physical house.

† The temple had a purpose in God's redemptive plan, but that purpose pointed beyond stone walls toward the greater dwelling God would establish in Christ (John 2:19-21; Ephesians 2:21-22).

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

† Here the dwelling theme takes an enormous step forward. God's presence wasn't centered merely in a tent or temple. The Word became flesh and lived among mankind.

† Jesus was the true meeting place between God and man. That's why He could identify His own body with the temple (John 2:19-21).

† The movement of Scripture is becoming unmistakable, Eden, tabernacle, temple, Christ. Each stage moves the story toward God's ultimate dwelling with His redeemed people.

John 14:23

Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.

† Jesus didn't tell His disciples that the Father's presence would ultimately depend upon another physical temple. He promised that the Father and Son would make their dwelling with those who belong to Christ.

† God's presence under the new covenant isn't restricted to one geographical location. Jesus had already announced that worship wouldn't remain centered in Jerusalem (John 4:21-24).

† This means believers don't have to travel to a sacred building to become closer to God. Through Christ, fellowship with the Father is a present covenant reality.

2 Corinthians 6:16

Or what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell among them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

† Paul couldn't have stated it more clearly. God's people are His temple.

† Notice where Paul places God's dwelling. He doesn't point believers toward a rebuilt sanctuary in Jerusalem. He tells them that they themselves are the temple of the living God.

† The physical temple system was giving way to the spiritual reality it anticipated. God's covenant presence was now identified with His people in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

† This is one of the strongest reasons Christians shouldn't be waiting for another earthly temple to restore God's presence. God's dwelling place has already been revealed.

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

† Paul describes believers themselves as God's holy temple and God's dwelling in the Spirit.

† The building isn't made from limestone, cedar, gold, or silver. Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles and prophets form the foundation, and God's people are being joined together into the dwelling place.

† This also destroys the idea that God's ultimate dwelling is limited to one nation or geographical location. Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ belong to the same household and the same temple (Ephesians 2:14-18).

† God's dwelling place is a people united in Christ.

Hebrews 12:22-24

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† The writer doesn't tell these believers that they would someday come to Mount Zion. He tells them that they had come to it.

† This Zion is identified as the city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem. The movement is away from earthly shadows and into new covenant realities centered in Christ.

† God's people don't need to return to earthly Jerusalem to find the city where God dwells. Through Jesus, they belong to the heavenly Jerusalem and have access to God (Hebrews 10:19-22).

† This prepares us to understand the New Jerusalem in Revelation as the completed covenant dwelling of God with His people.

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her

husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† Revelation brings the entire biblical dwelling theme to its covenant goal. The language intentionally reaches back through Scripture to God's desire to dwell among His people.

† The New Jerusalem is also described as the bride. This isn't merely a description of buildings, streets, and physical architecture. The city represents God's covenant people in their completed relationship with Him (Revelation 21:9-10).

† Notice the announcement, God's tabernacle is with mankind. What was pictured in Eden, symbolized in the tabernacle, represented in the temple, revealed bodily in Christ, and experienced through the Spirit reaches its full covenant expression.

† Revelation doesn't end by directing God's people back to an earthly temple. In fact, John specifically says that he saw no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

† From a fulfilled perspective, Revelation's New Jerusalem describes the established new covenant order following the judgment of the old covenant city. God's people now live in the reality toward which the earlier dwelling places pointed.

Historical References

† Josephus described the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in AD 70. His account records the burning of the sanctuary and the devastation that brought the old temple-centered order to its historical end (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6).

† Josephus' description is important because the New Testament had already identified believers, not the Jerusalem building, as God's temple before that physical temple was destroyed (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

† Eusebius later recorded that the Christians in Jerusalem departed from the city before the war and went to Pella. His

account preserves an early Christian tradition that believers didn't regard physical Jerusalem as the place where they had to remain in order to stay near God (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5).

† The destruction of the temple didn't leave God homeless. Scripture had already revealed His new covenant dwelling place, His people in Christ.

How It Applies To Us Today

† God isn't far away from His people. We don't have to wait for a future temple, travel to Jerusalem, or enter a sacred building to find Him.

† We can rejoice because God's presence isn't limited by geography. Wherever His people are, they belong to the dwelling place He established in Christ (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:22).

† This gives tremendous meaning to the church. Believers aren't merely people who attend a religious meeting. Together, we're described as God's household and His temple (Ephesians 2:19-22).

† It also gives us confidence in prayer. We aren't trying to convince a distant God to come near. Through Christ we already have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

† It gives us joy when we understand Revelation. The Bible doesn't end with God's people separated from Him and desperately waiting for access. It ends with the declaration that God's dwelling is with mankind (Revelation 21:3).

† Eden showed God's presence with mankind. The tabernacle pictured it. The temple represented it. Christ embodied it. The Spirit established it among God's people. The New Jerusalem reveals its completed covenant reality.

† We aren't waiting for God to move back into a building. We aren't waiting for another earthly holy place. In Christ, God's people are His dwelling place.

† That's good news for every believer today. God isn't far away. We have access to the Father through Christ, we're citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and we're being joined together as

God's dwelling in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18-22; Hebrews 12:22-24).

† The biblical story of God's dwelling doesn't end with mankind trying to get back into Eden. It ends with God dwelling with His redeemed people.

† We can live with confidence, peace, gratitude, and great joy because the promise has reached its goal, God is with His people.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Is God waiting for another physical temple before He can dwell with His people?

A: No. Paul explicitly says that believers are the temple of the living God and that God dwells among them (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

Q: Does this mean church buildings are God's temple?

A: No. The New Testament identifies God's people as His temple. A church building can be useful for gathering, but the building itself isn't God's new covenant sanctuary (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22).

Q: Do Christians need to go to Jerusalem to experience God's presence?

A: No. Jesus said worship would no longer be centered in Jerusalem, and Hebrews says believers had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem (John 4:21-24; Hebrews 12:22-24).

Q: What happened to the temple theme after the Jerusalem temple was destroyed?

A: It didn't disappear. Before AD 70, the apostles had already taught that Christ and His people were the true new covenant dwelling place of God (John 2:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

Q: Is the New Jerusalem connected with God's people?

A: Yes. Revelation identifies the New Jerusalem with the bride

and then announces that God's tabernacle is with mankind (Revelation 21:2-3, 9-10).

Q: Why is there no temple in the New Jerusalem?

A: Because the old temple system isn't needed in the completed new covenant reality. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

Q: Are believers waiting to come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem?

A: Hebrews uses present reality language for its original readers, saying they had come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Q: What does this truth mean for us personally?

A: It means we don't worship a distant God. Through Christ we have access to the Father, and together believers are God's dwelling place in the Spirit (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:18-22).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Genesis 3:8; Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 8:27; John 1:14; John 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:2-3

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5

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