

The House of God and the Temple

Revelation 21: 1-3, 22

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It is on my mind to attempt a brief summary of some of the many helpful things which have come before us in relation to the house of God. The types and shadows of the Old Testament where we see in picture some of the many thoughts of God, may engage our attention, as also what God is doing for His own pleasure and glory; His own work which can never fail. Keeping this in mind, it has occurred to me that we may profitably consider a few thoughts as to Solomon's temple. That the temple presents an important link in the subject I hope to show as the Lord may help me, for it involves, in type, the display of the glory of God in the world-to-come.

There are, amongst others, two outstanding aspects of the house. On the one hand, it is the place in which God is approached by man, and on the other it is the place through which God is displayed to man. The tabernacle clearly opens out the way of approach to God; and we believe the temple gives us just as clearly the display of the glory of God to man. This explains why the temple was much more ornate than the tabernacle; so much so that it is described as being "exceeding magnificent." (1 Chron. 22: 5).

It may be interesting to recall that Solomon built four houses, according to the Scriptures. First, the temple which took seven years to erect; then his own house, which took thirteen years to complete. He also built a house in the forest of Lebanon, and a house for Pharaoh's daughter his Egyptian wife for , said Solomon, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel," (2 Chron. 8: 11). We have thought that all these houses have a typical bearing, and that all have the world-to-come in view. The world-to-come is the kingdom day, the thousand years reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, when God will be publicly displayed in all His glory to the utmost bound of the universe. The beginning of the reign of Solomon, as recorded in the Scriptures, gives us a wonderful picture of that day.

We understand that the temple, as well as the tabernacle, is a picture of the world-to-come. Each building having three compartments suggests this; the holy place, the most holy place, and the court in the tabernacle; the holy place, the oracle, and the court in the temple. Now this very word oracle has the manward aspect of the house of God in view. You will remember how Peter uses it, "If any man speak, as the oracles of God" (1 Pet 4: 11). The temple then is a type of the universe, looking on to the day when the glory of God will be displayed, but in Solomon's own house we rather judge we have a picture of the assembly. Taking almost twice as long to build as the temple did would perhaps suggest the twofold work of creation and redemption, in order to bring the assembly into actual existence. It is true that God will dwell in the universe and fill it with His glory, but He will dwell in the universe by dwelling in the assembly, which we know from Revelation 21 is the Holy City Jerusalem. It will mean, as it were, a house in a house.

The house in the forest of Lebanon would suggest the place which Israel will have in the kingdom, while the house for the daughter of Pharaoh suggests the place which the saved among the Gentiles will have. Taking them all together, we believe we have a composite picture of the world-to-come as the sphere in which the glory of God will be displayed. The assembly will be planted in the heavens; Israel and the Gentiles in their respective places on the earth, and all in some way displaying the greatness and glory of God. This suggests itself as being the bearing of these houses and their

relationship to one another. Every family in heaven and earth has been named of the Father (Ephesians 3: 15); each family will be in the place for which He has formed it, and all together they will display the wonderful working of the Godhead for Its own pleasure and glory.

In building all these houses, we read of another interesting feature which adds embellishment to these labours of Solomon; he used seven distinctive kinds of gold. In the Tabernacle we have mention of gold and pure gold only, but with Solomon, taking in all his labours, he used gold; pure gold; fine gold; perfect gold; best gold; gold of Parvaim and gold of Ophir. We may well ask, Why is all this distinctiveness taken account of and recorded for us? Is it not to show that these distinctive kinds of gold portray the distinctive rays of divine glory which will be manifested in the day of display? These rays of glory are called in Ephesians 3: 10, "the all-various wisdom of God" (New Trans.); they are seen by angels today, and will yet be seen in display in the kingdom.

Another distinctive feature of the temple is apparent in the various woods which were used. In the tabernacle shittim wood only was used for the vessels, but in the temple four kinds of wood are spoken of as being used by Solomon, shittim; cedar; fir and olive. It has been pointed out that an answer to the four kinds of wood may be seen in our resurrection bodies as described in 1 Cor. 15. "It is sown in corruption; it raised in incorruption" — Shittim. "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory" — Cedar. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" — Fir. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" — Olive. All these statements describe the condition of the bodies of the saints who will form the Holy City Jerusalem, which is the vessel in the kingdom used to display the glory of God. We believe this "exceeding magnificent" temple has that day in view.

While distinguishing between the tabernacle and temple as endeavouring to show the two outstanding characters of the house of God, it is in view of seeing also the connection between the two thoughts. We have one outstanding link which clearly shows the connection between them; the Ark of the Covenant had the central place in each building. In type, our Lord Jesus Christ is the centre of both. We may see the answer to the Ark in the tabernacle in Psalm 40, and as in the temple in Psalm 132; the law of God in the heart of Christ when in this world Psalm 40; the risen Christ in glory, and God entering His rest, Psalm 132.

When the Ark reached the temple only the tables of the covenant were found in it; Aaron's rod and the pot of manna were no longer there. Both these things were needed for the wilderness journey; priestly grace established in resurrection, and daily food for the desert. All three may be seen in Psalm 40; Aaron's rod, verse 2; the two tables, verse 8; the manna, the lowly Man, "Christ once humbled here," verse 17. But in the kingdom, where the desert will be over, this provision will not be needed; though the will of God must still abide as evidenced in the two tables. Indeed, God's will will be carried out in that day by those brought into blessing and who will have these laws written in their minds and in their hearts.

When the Ark was in its place in the temple, two cherubim were looking down upon the mercy seat, and two others were looking out towards the house. In type the two looking down would witness the blood; while the two looking out would bear witness to the reconciliation of all things, and to God as looking out in complacency over the whole scene redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. We do not read of a great day of atonement in Solomon's day; we have rather the effect of the atonement seen in display. So, beloved, we have briefly attempted to show that both these buildings were needed to portray to us some of the many details connected with the house of God.

Turning now to the New Testament, we see these features brought out in a fuller and greater way. First we read "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," (John 1: 14). This word "dwelt" is

really "tabernacled" among us. Again we read "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," (John 2: 19). In the first Scripture there is presented to us the glory of the Son of the Father, while the second involves a manifest display of the power of God. The Pharisees had asked for a sign, and this great sign is a demonstration of the power of God in resurrection. In the Son of God in Manhood there was the manifestation of His glory, and the demonstration of the power of God for all who had eyes to see.

Both these things are seen in the assembly today. In the epistle to the Hebrews the tabernacle is always referred to as a type of the house of God. On the other hand, in Peter's first epistle the temple is always referred to as the type of the house of God; for in this epistle the showing forth of the praises of God is clearly the main theme. While the thought of "offering up" is in view, inside the veil as such is not stated. Indeed, so far as we are aware, access within the veil as in the temple is never once referred to in the Scriptures. We rather think 1 Peter 2: 5, is in line with Hebrews 13: 15 — "outside the camp" rather than "inside the veil." Again in 1 Corinthians 3, the company is spoken of as the "temple of God," for testimony to God is in view in the Corinthian epistle. In Ephesians 2: 21, 22, we have both thoughts again. The habitation formed today (verse 22) is the answer to the tabernacle, while "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (verse 21) has the kingdom day of display in view. Let us not forget that both these privileges are open to us today.

Turning again to Hebrews, we read in Heb. 3: 6, "whose house are we," and we well know that this is the epistle wherein approach to God **inside the veil** is taught. For this we have the spiritual house, composed of true believers, and a Great Priest over the house of God to lead us in. Aaron was the High Priest in his day, but he was never called a Great Priest. The greatness of the One Who is our Priest is seen in that He is called a "Great High Priest" over the house of God. Hence, in this epistle, where approach to God is in view, we read that first of all, Christ has gone in, in the power of His own blood. This has in view the reconciliation of all things, and has already secured our reconciliation to God. In Heb. 10 we read of His "body"; His "blood," and His "flesh." We understand that in the offering of the **body** of Jesus Christ once, our state has been dealt with. Through the shedding of His **blood** our guilt has been dealt with, but His **flesh** would speak of His death as available for our appropriation. It is Christ in Manhood, going unto death to open the way for us to pass through death, and thus to join Him in faith in resurrection on the other side of death in all the privileges He has secured for us. Through the offering of His body we have our old **state** judged and set aside; through the shedding of His blood we have our **guilt** removed; in the giving of His flesh in death He has opened the way for us to participate in His death by faith, and as **appropriating** it we have access to God within the veil. Hence the way of approach is open for us today, and the more we avail ourselves of it in drawing near to God, so much the more shall we be able to express God in temple character in testimony to Him today.

In Revelation 21: 22, we read that there is no temple in the Holy City in the world to come; God and the Lamb are the temple of it. Dwelling there, they enlighten the city, and through the city, the universe. The light which then shines will be of temple character. "The glory of God enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb," (v. 23, New Trans.). We do not read of any veil being there, for we shall be in the light; fit to be there, the vessel through whom that light will shine to the utmost bounds of the universe. This will produce the great Hallelujah of Psalm 150; and note, beloved, it is "praise ye Jah," not "praise ye Jehovah." ("Jah may be a short form of Jehovah; but it seems to express His **absolute** rather than His **continuous** existence" — footnote Ex. 15, New Trans.). God will be known in that day in His absoluteness, supreme above all, and as such will be praised by every thing that hath breath.

In Rev 21: 1-3, we read that John saw a new heaven and a new earth; not "heavens." It is

interesting to note the wonderful accuracy of Scripture even in the very first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning God" — **plural** — "created" — **singular** — "the heavens" — **dual**, (see Genesis 1: 1, New Trans.). We have been given to understand that the Jews do not understand this plural name of God. Be that as it may, we understand it, and we know it now to be the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet in regard to the action of creating the verb is singular. We know that the Godhead is triune, but we also know that the Persons of the Godhead act in oneness in whatever They effect for Their pleasure. Luke 15 is one of the happiest places we can turn to demonstrate that truth. If in Genesis we also read of the Godhead saying, "Let us make man," we also read of the Godhead saying, "Let us make merry," in Luke 15. One in creation, and one in redemption; each doing His own work, and all working in unity for Their eternal pleasure and glory.

The first eight verses of Revelation 21 refer to eternity, the only word we can use of that time as contrasted with the present time state. In the vision John tells us that he saw a new **heaven**, a new **earth**, and new **Jerusalem**, three new things. In one other place only does this term New Jerusalem appear. It is in the address to Philadelphia. Does this not suggest that what is being formed in our hearts today of true Philadelphian character will go into eternity? What an incentive that is for us to hold fast His Name and not deny His word, though we have but little strength.

We read that the city comes down from God out of heaven, and we have often heard that explained as being **divine** in origin and **heavenly** in character. The first heaven and the first earth have gone, and the Holy City appears as the link between the new heaven and the new earth.

The Holy City is also seen as "a bride adorned for her husband." We read in Rev. 19: 7, "His **wife** hath made herself ready." We believe this to be the assembly, not yet seen in her bridal character, but seen as a wife. With care the Holy Spirit has selected this term "wife" as showing the assembly to be a vessel competent and fit to share with Christ in His Headship and Lordship in the kingdom day. The bride is rather an object for the affections; the wife speaks of a vessel fully fitted to share as an helpmeet to the man. We believe this competency is being developed in the saints today in the power of the Holy Spirit. "His wife has made **herself** ready." This is being worked out in practice today. When the assembly is spoken of in her place in the world to come, she is seen as a "bride" and a "wife," and the bride is mentioned first. It seems to suggest that she will be displayed in this twofold way, as the object of the affections of the Lamb, and as a vessel competent to reign with Him in the kingdom. When she is seen in her eternal place, it is as "a bride adorned for her **husband**", and the term wife is not used. It suggests the most intimate thought of relationship and shows the place of favour and nearness we shall have with the Son throughout that eternal day.

Thirdly, the assembly is seen as the tabernacle of God. We gather from these verses in Revelation 21 that these thoughts of God are eternal. That which the Godhead is bringing into being today has in view the eternal pleasure of the Godhead. Hence, in these verses, one of the last things mentioned as abiding in that eternal day is, "the tabernacle of God is with men."

We read of this dwelling-place first in Genesis 28; we see it established in the people of Israel as based upon redemption; we see its features worked out in the affections of the saints today in the power of the Holy Spirit of God; we see it to be the vessel through which God will be displayed in the world to come, and lastly we see it as the eternal dwelling of God.

Let us go on then, beloved, in the knowledge that what the Godhead is bringing to pass in the souls of the saints today will go into eternity. May we have grace to answer to it today by the help of the Spirit of God, knowing that we all have our place in "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

