

The Dwelling Place of God

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being the dwelling place of God on earth, where the wall is down, the word is distinct, and the work is getting done.

Scripture: John 9:1, John 20:19, 1 Corinthians 14:20, Ephesians 2:13, Ephesians 2:19

Topics: "Gods Presence", "Living Temple"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the significance of the temple as a symbol of God's presence among His people. The temple thrived when the people were submissive to God but dried up when they rebelled. Ezekiel's vision of a new temple symbolizes God's dwelling place among His restored nation, with a river of life flowing from it. Jesus fulfills Ezekiel's vision as the dwelling place of God on earth, and through His death and resurrection, believers become part of this temple as living stones. The temple is where the wall of division is broken down, the word of God is distinct, and the work of God is being accomplished through His Spirit.

Transcript

The book of Ezekiel comes to a climax with the vision of a glorious new temple...a vision given to Ezekiel when he was a captive in Babylon and when the temple in Jerusalem was nothing but charred ruins. Why this vision? What's so important about the temple?

- The temple was the sign of God's presence among his people ... God's dwelling place.

When the people were submissive to God, the temple was alive with his Spirit. When the people rebelled, the temple dried up and became a religious museum. When the people turned from God and went their own way it wasn't long before God's judgment fell on Israel and the temple was destroyed.

In his vision Ezekiel sees a wonderful new temple at the center of a restored nation. This temple was to be the dwelling place of God among his people.

From the threshold of this temple a spring of water flows down the steps around the south end of the great altar, across the courtyard, out beneath the Gate of the Great Prince which faces east. It trickles out that gate as a tiny stream... but the farther it goes the deeper it becomes until it's a mighty river.

In other words, life from God which looks almost inconsequential when it first leaves his dwelling place becomes a mighty power in the land, a river of life for the whole earth.

There are multitudes all over the earth who long to find such a temple.

- "If only I could find the dwelling place of God on this earth."

- "If only I could find a place where I know that God is really present ... see his glory, hear his voice."

Multitudes carry this cry in their hearts since before their birth...

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

But where is this temple? Where do we find the dwelling place of God on earth?

Ezekiel's vision began its fulfillment when Jesus appeared on the scene. When people looked at Jesus they were looking at Ezekiel's temple ... the dwelling place of God on the earth.

If I with the finger of God cast out demons,

no doubt the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Words coming out of his mouth were straight from God. The signs flowing from his hands were the life of God. Jesus was the source of that water flowing from the temple threshold. His death and resurrection were the great altar which sent the stream flowing across the courtyard. Pentecost turned the stream into a river flowing out the last gate and into the world. That river is still flowing. And wherever you find it flowing on this earth, there you have Ezekiel's temple... there is the dwelling place of God.

With Jesus, the dwelling place of God on earth switches from a temple of stone to a temple of flesh and blood. He is the temple.

...Destroy this temple; and in three days I will raise it up...

When Jesus rose from the dead the temple that contained the Spirit of God was suddenly enlarged. It was no longer just Jesus' flesh-and-blood body...it was his Body of faithful ones.. He breathed on his disciples and said,

Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any they are retained.

Now we have a temple of living stones built on the cornerstone ...Jesus ...His Church ... men and women who carry in their union with him the power of his resurrection life.

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

In this temple, this union of living stones, God dwells.

- His glory is revealed.

- His voice is heard.

- His power changes human lives.

I remember the night Jean and I walked into a gathering of Pennsylvania Dutchmen who were held together by their love for Jesus. The thing that struck me was,

"God is here! Some crazy things may be going on, but God is here.

This is the dwelling place of God!"

And your congregation and mine are part of this awesome mystery. Our calling is to be a dwelling place of God through the Spirit ... both when we're gathered together and when we're scattered in our appropriate places through the week...where those who have a cry burning in their hearts can find God. We, along with our brothers and sisters in the Body all over the earth, are called to be, when we're gathered, and when we're scattered, Ezekiel's temple ... the dwelling place of God on this earth.

To answer the Lord's call to be his temple we need to yield to the Spirit in three specific areas:

We are the dwelling place of God---

- when the wall is down between us,
- when the word is distinct among us,
- when the work is getting done by us.

1. The dwelling place of God is where the wall is down.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:13-18

By shedding his blood on that cross Jesus has broken down the wall of guilt between us and God, a wall which has also been a barrier of hostility between Jew and Gentile,

black and white,

rich and poor,

male and female,

and every other division that our sin has caused between us.

The primary proof that God is really among us is that the wall is down and we have access to God. We can come into his presence. We can stand before his throne and worship, praise and thank him. We can pray. We can intercede. And if that wall is in fact down between us and God, it is also down ... it has to be down...between man and man. No division ...no division! Holy, heavenly, glorious unity around Jesus and around Jesus only.

- In place of the two,

one new man.

- In place of Jew and Gentile,

one new man.

- In place of black and white,

one new man.

- In place of male and female,

one new man.

- In place of Democrat and Republican, Catholic and Protestant, Charismatic and non-charismatic, Suburban and Urban, one new man.

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.

thereby bringing the hostility to an end...

- God has torn down the wall,

- God has brought the hostility to an end.

When we submit to that, and let the blood of the Lamb wash away every wall of guilt and of hostility, then God moves among us ... his Spirit rules. We are Ezekiel's temple and living souls will find God among us.

2. The dwelling place of God is where the word is distinct.

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature. In the law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord,": Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. If therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. I Corinthians 14:20-25

What does it mean to prophesy? It means to give forth a clear, distinct, understandable word from God.

When I'm by myself I often pray in tongues ... praise God in tongues. But when I'm in the assembly or talking to someone on out on the streets, I speak English...(or if I'm Hispanic, speaking to Hispanics, I speak Spanish ... words they understand.)

Nor is it a matter of merely quoting scriptures or repeating spiritual platitudes ... but a word from God that points clearly to Jesus....

- a word that's authentic,
- a word that's part of our life,
- a word that's truly from our heart.

If our fellowships are giving forth a distinct word, people will be convicted, people will be called to account. The secrets of hearts will be disclosed and, falling on their faces, they will worship God and declare that God is really among us.

3. The dwelling place of God is where the work is getting done.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, the man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. John 9:1-4.

We are saved by grace. Our salvation is a finished work.

All we have to do is look at that cross and believe... and if there's anybody reading these words who hasn't looked to the cross and received God's life, today's your day.

But the instant we are joined to Jesus as sons and daughters of the kingdom, we are put to work. We enter into the work of God.

"My Father worketh hither to, and I work," says Jesus.

"We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work."

The first thing Jesus did when he manifested himself to his disciples alive from the dead was put them to work.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

John 20:19-23

Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these fish?

Yes Lord, you know that I love you.

Feed my sheep. Get to work!

God, through the Spirit is the one who does the work.

- He opens blind eyes.
- He brings people to faith.
- He draws them to the Lamb.
- He raises them from the dead.

But, we are to be so yielded to him that he can do these things through us just as surely as he did them through our Lord in the days of his flesh.

You did not choose me, I chose you and commanded you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain... that you should bring human souls from death to life by the power of the word I have put in You."

Our assemblies may not look like much to the eyes of men, but in the sight of God they are a holy thing, a living part of his Body on earth, his temple where thirsting souls can find the living God and be changed forever.

By his death on the cross,

by his resurrection,

by the outpouring of his Spirit upon us afresh as you read these words,

Jesus is commanding us to be a people

- where the wall is down,
- where the word is distinct,
- where the work is getting done.

If we obey the Master, in these areas, we are "one new man" we are indeed the dwelling place of God on this earth.

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