

The Living Temple of God

A Royal
priesthood

We are The Living Temple of God

'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'

(1 Cor 3:16) 'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?' (1 Cor 6:19) 'For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' 2 Cor 6:16

'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, 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 corner stone, 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.' Eph 2:19-22

A dwelling for God

Before Jesus Christ came to live amongst men and die for the sins of the world, God's dwelling place was in the holy of holies in the

Temple in Jerusalem. Access was only available once a year when the high priest would enter to sprinkle the blood of sacrifice on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. This once a year opportunity to be in God's presence was a time of fear and trembling, because of the fear of sinning in God's presence and being killed by God. In case this happened the high priest would have a rope tied around his ankle so that his body could be recovered if he displeased God.

After Jesus Christ atoned for all sin, and after He sent His Spirit to live in all those who turned from self determination to believe in Him and obey Him, things changed; God was now to dwell in the hearts of those who found their life in Christ. The old for of priests was no longer needed as a mediator between man and God. Christ is now the only mediator. Fear was no longer necessary, God was now our Father, and we are chosen to be His special people whom He walks amongst by the presence of His Spirit.

The redeemed born again Christians are now the Temple where God lives, only because they have died to self interest, now *they are not their own*, they belong to God. (1 Cor 6:19) They have come to live in Christ who lives in them. (Gal 2:20) If we have denied ourselves and taken up our cross to follow Jesus, (Luke 9:23) we no longer live to please ourselves; now *Christ is our life*. (Col 3:4) We have been reborn according to the image and likeness of Christ in holiness and truth. (Col 3:10) In Christ we have received the Holy Spirit. (1 John 2:20) He now rules in us and governs our life in Christ. Being a Temple of God means our life is not our own, Christ is our life; and He dwells in us as His living Temple.

Set apart for the service of God

Those who truly belong to Christ can know that this Temple is cleansed by Christ's blood which makes them a suitable place for the dwelling of God. And if God dwells in them, they are indeed the Temple where God lives,

so they are God's household. And for God to be God He must rule in His Temple. In His Temple there is only whatever God wills to take place as an expression of His life and purpose. Those in Christ who are indwelt by God can be assured it is God who works in them to will and do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:13) Our part as His dwelling place is to die to self interest as we seek His kingdom to be made alive in us; (Matt 6:33) God's part is to make us alive in conforming us according to the image of His Son. Rom 8:28-29

We are a royal priesthood

We hold a special position, in the same way as the Old Testament priesthood was to be free of defilement, as symbolised by being ceremonially clean, Christ made us free of defilement and placed us in a holy position before the Father. Consequently He calls on us to live holy lives that we might also be a "*holy priesthood*". (1 Pet 2:5) We are a royal priesthood. Believers are called "*kings and*

priests" and a *"royal priesthood"* as a reflection of their privileged status as heirs to the kingdom of the Almighty God and of the Lamb. Because of this privileged closeness with God, no other earthly mediator is necessary on our behalf. Believers are called priests because salvation is not merely a ticket to heaven, or fire insurance to escape from hell. Rather, believers are called by God to serve Him as priests by offering up spiritual sacrifices that is, that they will be a people zealous for God's good works and aspirations.

Christ our High Priest has made one sacrifice for sin for all time, (Heb 10:12) and there is no more sacrifice of animals. Now the chosen ones of God are to offer themselves. *'Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.'* (Rom 12:1) God has chosen Christians *"to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* 1 Pet 2:5-9 Heb 13:15.

Now we are chosen to *proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light*. Therefore by our life (Titus 2:11-14; Eph 2:10) and by our words, our only purpose is to serve God. 1 Peter 2:9; 3:15

A change of management must be made

For God to live in us, He must rule in us through the life of the Spirit. His Spirit gives the faithful not only the fruit of the Spirit's life, (Gal 5:22-23) but also the very character and holiness of God. (2 Pet 1:3-4) This is seen, not only in working out the passions and purpose of God in all His redeemed people; but also in pursuing those who are lost in the world of darkness, who are naturally unwilling to live according to God's word.

Under the enabling power of the Spirit those who represent His will are His Temple priests and they will be a true witness to Him and His life and work. His Temple people will be seen as collectively as a place where His word is desired and perfected. This Temple called the

Church is where people are taught the truth about God. This Temple is where Disciples of Christ are made complete according to His image and likeness as they obey all He has commanded. Therefore, if God is to manage life in His Temple according to His plan and purpose, we have to make certain of the death of our ego and our will to do what we think in human terms; otherwise God is not God in us, and we will not manages His household well, or be faithful priest in His temple.

Consequently, the Spirit who lives in us will want to have full expression of His life in His Temple. So the natural human life has no place in the Temple of God. The Spirit gives life to the faithful; the fleshly efforts of men have no benefit in attaining the kingdom of God.

John 6:63

To live as the rest of humanity in the world which lives in opposition to God's rules is to deny His life, and this denies Him our service as His dwelling place.

God is working in His priesthood

Growing in holiness as those set apart for God's purpose as His priests is not something that takes place in that somehow we are separated from God who is supposed to only live in Heaven. We, the faithful Disciples of Christ, are God's dwelling place. Our spiritual growth, that is our holy transformation by God, is not just concerned with us working our way towards God, God is working in us, He is here already; we may not see Him or hear Him, but He sees all and hears all. God is working in His priest, (Phil 2:13) by the power of His might. (Eph 3:20) He will not stop until He perfects His work. *'Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

Eph 4:12

We are working with God

Our task is to obediently grow up into the fullness of Christ's life while God oversees

and assists our progress and our work. Our mission as priests who make up the Temple of God, is first to become like Him and then carry out the work of Jesus Christ. We undertake His mission when we love Him and therefore obey all He taught and commanded us to do. To fail to carefully seek His life to be complete in us and make it known in others, is to deny His living presence. To disregard His mission is to disregard His purpose for us, and others. To say we believe in Him, but fail to seek our life to be transformed into His life by the power of the Spirit through ongoing obedience, is to show our belief is empty and able to produce nothing spiritual that is worth keeping.

If we truly believe the Lord, He will work His passion in us, along with the desire to know more of Him and how we can please Him. If our leaders are unable to satisfy our hunger to know more of Him, God will find a way to assist us in our desire. If we are not motivated to know more about God, we must consider if

we have the Spirit of God at all, for this is His work in us. *'If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.'* Rom 8:9

If our behaviour as Temple bearers and priests isn't consistent with Christ's life working in us, (since we are growing up into Him, and the Spirit gives us His life) our words of faith are of no effect. To say we believe in Him and at the same time fail to obey all He taught about being a disciple, is to really present ourselves as unbelievers who don't bow down to Him, regardless of what we say. Believing means doing what God has revealed in His word, and commanded us to do. Failure to do what God commands indicates unbelief and disobedience.

Believing is doing; unbelief is not doing. In fact, this behaviour is actually denying Him His rightful place. If we believe Him, the power of His Spirit will find a way through His word to work according to the best of our ability to improve the level of our maturity.

This is because God will work it in us according to His divine power and loving kindness, because He always seeks our highest good without ceasing.

God misses nothing that needs to change

Since God dwells in His Temple, He is a witness to everything that is thought, said, and done by those who make up the Temple of God. Nothing escapes His notice, for He is closer to us than our own breath. He knows us more than we know ourselves.

Those who are called to be part of the Temple of God must know that only those things which are thought, said, and done which are consistent with His life will honour Him.

When His will for the Temple to mirror His life and reflect His holiness is disregarded because of earthly desires, the Temple is desecrated. His Temple is to be a holy place, a worshipful place, and a place of service to Him, completely set aside for His life to be made visible to the world and the spirits

which are not of this world. (Eph 3:10) Therefore human aspirations and desires according to the will of men are counted as disrespectful intrusions in His Temple; grieving the Holy Spirit who only seek our best according to Christ's life.

Consequently, Temple priests are urged by the Spirit to work out their life in Christ by eagerly seeking the transformation of their lives into the image and likeness of God in all they think, say, and do; because it is really God who is at work in them to achieve His holiness in them, and He misses nothing.

The Temple of God is open for business 24 hours a day 7 days a week. It's not just open for an hour on Sunday, or at some point in time when we are interested in doing what we think is needed. There is not time off for good behaviour, good behaviour is required all the time. The Temple priests are on duty all the time.

The Temple is built on Christ's life

Our Temples are not dwellings built by hand or built on sand. *Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.* The Lord Jesus has made it clear that following Him requires we enter by the narrow gate by separating ourselves from the worldly ambitions and desires of men who walk in the darkness. He has made it clear we must deny self interests if we want to follow Him. We must build on the rock of His teaching and His life, in order to be a Temple of God. Therefore doing religious work in one's own strength doesn't make someone a disciple, or equip them to be a Temple of God. Jesus said if we don't *deny ourselves and take up our cross we cannot follow Him.* Temples are built on the lives of those who build on Christ's foundation having died to self rule so Christ can live in them as the risen Lord. It is not us and He who have a say in His Temple, it is He alone who rules.

The Church is the body of Christ, the Temple of God. The Temple is made up of many parts but has one life in Christ. Each part is accountable to the others. The quality of the parts affects the appearance of the whole Temple. If many parts live and behave as if the temple is just a good God idea, and they live as if they are just human beings untouched by His Spirit, the Temple will have earthly tones and have earthly expectations and goals. The Temple will not be a true representation of what God has designed it for; it will be a sad reflection of compromise and complacency instead of a holy place where God rules on earth. Be true to Him,

'He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.'
(Rev 1:6) *'Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.'* Rev 20:6

Living Water Resources



Come to the river

'For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' 2 Cor 6:16

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