

God lives with His priests

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

1 Pet 2:9

A holy priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God for His own possession. A high calling to bring to completion as the servants of Christ the work Adam failed to undertake from the beginning.

Adam lived in the garden temple of the presence of God and he was to carry out the plan of God for a world reflecting His glory. God blessed them; and God said to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*” Gen 1:28

Before Adam sinned, he walked in the presence of God and was supposed to take the presence of God throughout the world that was given to him as his Divinely given Domain. As such Adam was God's represented image to Glorify God throughout the world, so all people could know God personally. But he failed because he stopped walking with God when he failed to obey God.

As a result of defiling the garden temple, Adam was put out of the garden, and God's presence was later established through the Tabernacle and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

God wasn't finished with a temple made by the hands of men

In the Jerusalem Temple the presence of God was where He dwelt in the Holy of Holies. The daily sacrifice of animals was given to show the seriousness of sin and the need for forgiveness from God. And the priesthood was established to provide a mediatorial representation for gaining access to mercy in the presence of God.

As the mediator for the people the high priest was only able to enter into the Holy of Holies once a year where the presence of God dwelt. Between the inner sanctum, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies was a dividing curtain that no one but the high priest could pass in his yearly role as mediator priest for the people.

The Jerusalem Temple pointed to a better Temple

Jesus is the "last Adam" and "the second man" (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). He came to undo what Adam did and to do what Adam failed to do. Thus, He became the High Priest of creation that Adam and his posterity were called to be but failed to become. Soon He will have done everything necessary to begin His work of restoration. Now the authority on earth that the first man, Adam, lost will be regained by the second man and last Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:22-28, 45-49).

This is why the Lord Jesus is now able to say what Adam never could: "I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do" (John 17:4).

Sinclair Ferguson 'Lessons from the upper room'

At just the right time, Jesus Christ came from heaven in the presence of God as the second Adam to complete what the first Adam failed to do. Before Christ, the Temple made by man was where the presence of God dwells. Now God dwelt amongst men, in the person of Christ as the true temple, and the dividing curtain has been removed. The sinless Son of God as the second Adam, came as the Holy Temple, bringing the presence of God into the world as God-Man, the Son of God, and offered Himself as a living sacrifice for the salvation of men so they could come into the presence of God anywhere in the world.

As the Son of God, as the perfect high priest, offered Himself as the perfect living sacrifice, once for all time. Through the shedding of His blood Jesus Christ has made access into the presence of God available to all who will believe in Him and obey Him. Those who are incorporated into Christ's life through faith become the temple of God by the giving of the Spirit of God to dwell in them.

'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?'

1 Cor 3:16

The Holy Spirit is the God given gift of the new age for a new temple.

Ezek. 37:14; Joel 2:28- 29; Acts 2:1-4

The Son of God calls His followers to be His royal priesthood occupying a temple not made by human hands, who are to offer themselves as a

living sacrifice and to take His Spirit as the presence of God in into the world to complete the work of salvation in the world.

While each believer is a temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the corporate character of the unity of temple is clear *‘Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?’* 1 Cor 3:16-17

Not only is there unity of the community of believers as the temple of God, they are built up as living stones of the temple, *‘You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’*

1 Pet 2:5

A temple building being built together on the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets, with Christ as the chief corner stone. A temple where the work of God is taken into the world.

The critical role Jesus Christ has in His church is seen in the reference to Him as the cornerstone. As such the corner stone Christ is the source of the church’s life and growth. He is the one building His Church on Himself. It is for this reason that believers are exhorted to keep coming to Him as ‘living stones’ because together with Christ they form a ‘spiritual house’

1 Pet 2:4-8

The living stones have no life other than the life of the Corner Stone. Every believer is cemented to all other believers as they share in the life of Christ. Every stone in the temple lives for the Corner Stone, so His life can be manifest in the world. There can be no idea of living in the Church as individuals and not sharing the priestly life of Christ with each other since we are to reflect His life to one another. We are blessed to be a blessing to each other and the world.

“Peter frequently speaks of New Testament Christians in terms of Old Testament imagery and promises given to the Jews. This theme comes to prominence in 1 Peter 2:4-10, where Peter says that God has bestowed on the church almost all the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament. The dwelling-place of God is no longer the Jerusalem temple, for Christians are the new “temple” of God (v. 5). The priesthood able to offer acceptable sacrifices to God is no longer descended from Aaron, for Christians are now the true “royal priesthood” with access

before God's throne (vv. 4-5, 9). God's chosen people are no longer said to be those physically descended from Abraham, for Christians are now the true "chosen race" (v. 9). The nation blessed by God is no longer said to be the nation of Israel, for Christians are now God's true "holy nation" (v. 9). The people of Israel are no longer said to be the people of God, for Christians, both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are now "God's people" and those who have "received mercy" (v. 10)." Wayne Grudem 'Systematic Theology'

When Jesus Christ returns to collect His royal priesthood, He will make all things in creation new as the living Temple of God.

"Heaven, the place of God's special dwelling, will come down to the earth and God will dwell in the midst of his people. The promise of the future for believers all things will be united in Christ, whether things in heaven or things upon the earth (Eph. 1:10).

All things, whether in heaven or on earth, will have been renewed. The whole creation, heaven and earth, will undergo a process of renewal and transformation. The new heavens and the new earth will be a temple fit for the dwelling of God with his people, a place suitable for the enjoyment of communion and friendship between the Creator and the creature."

Now just as the resurrected body represents the transformation of the present body of the believer, so the new creation represents the transformation, not the annihilation, of the present creation. However new and glorious this resurrection body may be, it does not involve a radical breach with what has gone before. Rather, like the seed that must die before it produces fruit, so the dissolution of the body is a prelude to its glorification (1 Cor. 15: 35-49). In the biblical understanding, the future of the believer, or individual eschatology, corresponds to the future of the creation, general or cosmic eschatology. The resurrection in newness of life that the believer undergoes parallels the resurrection that the whole creation will undergo at

the consummation of all things.”

Cornelis P Venema 'The Promise of the Future'

The church throughout the world is the universal dwelling of God and is the beginning of the establishment of the end time Temple of God in the whole Cosmos. Each little Church is a microcosm of the cosmic Temple of God's presence in the whole creation to be consummated as His bride with the return of Christ when He establishes a new heaven and earth.

Each member of the Church, is especially chosen, deliberately called and purposely justified in the presence of God through Christ, and wedded to Christ as our corner stone, and is therefore incorporated into His temple life as His priesthood by the indwelling Spirit of God.

With this Holy calling as His priests we are equipped by Him to serve the whole priesthood in the building up of one another to a mature faith for the purpose of revealing the perfect Glory of God in Christ through the evangelisation of the world.

If we are in Christ, we are an important inclusion in the work of God's Temple to reveal the Life of Christ's glorious holiness, which God is using in His salvation work to spread His presence throughout the people of the world.

In this temple which is not made by human hands, the believer is appointed to be a priest of God in Christ to the world. Everyone who is called is established in the personal sacrificial labour of the temple to represent the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in all they do by being a reliable witness to His salvation work in the world.

“That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Pet 2:9

“As the church proclaims the good news of the kingdom, people will come into the church and begin to experience the blessings of God's rule in their lives. The kingdom of God will manifest itself through the church, as the future reign of God breaks into the present day reality.

In a way the Kingdom of God is "already" here: Matt. 12:28; Rom. 14:17; but "not yet" fully consummated: Matt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Therefore, those who believe in Christ will begin

to experience something of what God's final kingdom reign will be like. They will live in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Rom. 8:4-17; 14:17), who is the essential power of the coming kingdom. Eventually Jesus will return and His kingdom reign will extend over all creation. (1 Cor. 15:24-28).”

Taken from Wayne Grudem

The Temple is a New Jerusalem Temple

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate fulfilment of all God’s promises in Christ.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” Rev 21:1-2

“I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” Rev 21:22

“The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal” Rev 21:16

Since the new Jerusalem is depicted symbolically as a perfect cube, and we know there is only one cube in the Old Testament — namely, the Most Holy Place, we now see that all the people of God are in the Most Holy Place. We are in the temple of Christ. We are in the presence of the living God. We have really come to something that will be revealed to us like the garden of Eden, only much better.

The New Creation Is the Renewed Cosmos Temple

“Christians throughout the ages have wondered what our eternal home will be like. The phrase "the new creation" offers an important clue. The glorious future reality that God promises is "the creation." It is none other than this very universe, the cosmos that we know. But it is not merely this universe. That future reality is also the new creation. Our eternal home, therefore, is the renewed cosmos, the purified and transformed universe.” Stanley J Grenz 'Created for Community'

The Temple City of God

“The measurements in Revelation 21:15-17 are symbolic (Ezekiel 40-43; Zechariah 2:1-2). 12,000 stadia is 12 (a picture of the complete people of God because of the 12 tribes and 12 apostles) times 1,000 (a picture of a multitude). 12,000 stadia is around 1,400 miles (2,200 kilometres). This is a massive city for it contains all God's redeemed people. It's about the size of the world as they knew it then. The temple-city is a world made new.”

Again:

“In Revelation 22 John's angelic guide reappears and the imagery shifts. We're still in the city, but now it's not a temple-city but a garden-city (v 1-5). This is the Garden of Eden restored (with imagery drawn from Ezekiel's vision of a new temple in Ezekiel 47). A river flows through the garden-city just as a river flowed through Eden (Revelation 22:1; Genesis 2:10). The river feeds a tree (Revelation 22:2). (The fact that the single tree is located on both banks reminds us that this is symbolic.) This is the tree of life that stood in the centre of Eden (Genesis 2:9). "The water of life" feeds "the tree of life". And the tree not only sustains life; it also restores life for its leaves heal the nations. It produces twelve crops each year, one every month. In other words, it constantly gives life to God's people.”

Tim Chester 'Revelation for you'

The Tabernacle of God is with men

“John's vision of a 'new heaven and new earth', is followed by his vision of the 'new Jerusalem descending from heaven' (v. 2). He then hears a 'great voice' (v. 3) proclaiming that 'the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them...' It is likely that the second vision (v. 2) interprets the first and that what is heard about the tabernacle (v. 3) more explicitly interprets both verses. This is to say that the new creation of verse 1 is identical to the 'new Jerusalem' of verse 2, and both represent the same reality as the 'tabernacle' of verse 3.”

Again:

“Revelation 21:1-2 follows the pattern of Isaiah 65:17-18. Since Isaiah 65:17 is clearly alluded to in Revelation 21:1, it is most natural to understand that the new Jerusalem of 21:2 also echoes Isaiah 65:18 and is equated with the 'new heaven and earth' of Revelation 21:1!”

Again:

“Consequently, the new creation and Jerusalem are none other than God's tabernacle, the true temple of God's special presence portrayed throughout chapter 21. It was this divine presence that was formerly limited to Israel's temple and has begun to expand through the church, and which will fill the whole earth and heaven, becoming co-equal with it. Then the eschatological goal of the temple of the Garden of Eden dominating the entire creation will be finally fulfilled (so Rev. 22:1-3).

The temple in Revelation 21-22 symbolically represents the entire new cosmos because that was the goal of God's temple-building process throughout sacred history. Chapters 21-22 form the consummation of the prophetic hope of an end-time universal temple, which Revelation 11 (as well as Rev. 1-2, Eph. 2, 1 Pet. 2 and others) portrays as having begun fulfilment and as advancing to fill the entire earth during this age in Christ and his church. Both Revelation 11 and 21 - 22 indicate various facets of the fulfilment of the Ezekiel 40 - 48 prophecy of the temple. These Revelation passages also make reference to other Old Testament passages to explain how Christ and the church are the realization of the end-time temple. Therefore, the mystery of how John can see a new heavens and earth in Revelation 21:1, but then see only a city in the form of a garden-like temple (21:2-3, 9-22:5), is solved by discovering the purpose of the temple throughout biblical history. His equation of the new cosmos with the temple-city becomes natural, not strange. The new heavens and earth are described as a temple because God's goal of universally expanding the temple of his glorious presence will have come to pass. Everything of which Old Testament temples were typologically symbolic, a recapitulated and escalated Garden of Eden and whole cosmos, will have finally been materialised. The holy of holies stood for

the invisible heavenly dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt; the holy place represented the visible heavens; the outer court symbolized the visible earth (land, sea, the place of human habitation).”

Again:

“This last point is enhanced by observing that God's 'throne' is now in the midst of God's people (see 22:1, 3) throughout the new creation, whereas in the previous chapters of Revelation God's throne was only in the heavenly temple. Furthermore, the ark of the covenant in Israel's holy of holies was viewed as Yahweh's 'footstool', to where his feet extended while sitting on his heavenly throne (cf. Is. 66:1 with 2 Chr. 9:18; 1 Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 110:1; 132:7; Acts 7:49).” Only the high priest could enter once a year into the space where the 'footstool' was. In the new creation, all of God's people living throughout the new world will be high priests always in the presence of God because the dimensions of the heavenly holy of holies and God's ruling presence, symbolized by his throne, have broken in and expanded to include the entire new cosmos.”

G.K. Beale ‘The Temple and the Church’s Mission’

The temple today

We need to forget about thinking our lives are bound to the ways of the world and the things of the world. We have a higher calling in the presence of God as His holy priesthood, a chosen people for His own possession. As His holy priest we are all equipped to carry out the work of His only Son in the Church as the saviour of the world.

Our overriding purpose in all our ways in the place God has appointed or us to live, is that we are a servant priesthood of believers who serve Him as always under the rule of the great and only mediator between man and God, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom we love more than life itself.

As we go about our daily lives in the world, we need to remember that we represent Jesus Christ. We need to be conscious of how we seek to edify and build up one another in love as He loves each of us. We need to be making sure we can be more useful in the further establishment of the presence of God in His Holy temple we call the Church, than we are concerned with the attractions of the world.

In our task of extending the kingdom of God into the world, evangelism isn't the exclusive work of a few. Evangelism is the work of every priest, and begins with building up of one another for the work of ministering in the temple presence of God. As a result of brotherly love we are joined together to take that spirit of God's grace out into the world of darkness to declare the salvation of God by faith in Christ, so that those He has chosen can be bought into the light of the kingdom of God.

Our salvation doesn't begin and end with us. Our salvation brings us into fellowship with God in Christ's Church representing the temple of God.

In reference to Rev 21 and 22 Philip Ryken makes the following observations:

"Jesus is everywhere in these two chapters as His presence pervades the city of the New Jerusalem and His glory suffuses the atmosphere of the new heaven and the new earth. Indeed, this is why they are so glorious. In Revelation 21:2 Jesus is the Husband waiting eagerly to see the beauty of His bride. In verse 3 He is the voice speaking from the throne and pronouncing the fulfilment of God's covenant promise to be with His people and be their God. In verse 4 He is with the Spirit as the Comforter who wipes away our tears. In verse 5 He is with the Father as the re-creator, making all things new. In verse 6 He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the eternal, everlasting, and almighty God. He is the root and the shoot of David (22:16). He is the free and living water (21:6) who satisfies our thirsty souls. He is the Lamb (22:1), the light (22:5), the lamp (21:23) indeed, the very life of the city. Everything that is bright and beautiful in the everlasting city of God shines with the radiant glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the most beautiful one to see in the most beautiful place we can imagine."

Philip Graham Ryken 'Coming Home'

Our salvation is for His glory, and His glory is the glory Christ had before the creation of the world; the same glory that awaits us who sacrificially serve Him when He comes to include us in His new heaven and Earth.

As the priest of the most High God, we must listen to the Lord of the Temple.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matt 28:18-20

Are we the Body of Christ’s temple or archipelago of separation?

On one hand, Churches are to be the people of God who are built together in Christ by submission to the Spirit, closely interweaved together as a unified organic body, working to fulfil the objectives of its Head.

On the other hand, one writer suggested that churches are generally like an archipelago, a group of separate islands separated from one another, but have a collective identifying name.

It doesn't matter how much correct biblical doctrine we think we believe, if we are like the archipelago, we are not one life in the body of Christ.

If the word of God hasn’t become the most treasured gift from God secured in our hearts and minds to keep us in the holy of holies then we only have the word as a monument to separation. *“Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”* Psalm 119:11

Our flesh is the only dividing factor that keeps us from being woven together in Christ as a holy garment. Our flesh is like the dividing curtain in the old temple in Jerusalem. Jesus tore down that curtain to make our access into the Holy place unrestricted. When we behave like the archipelago, we have resurrected the curtain to avoid intimate exposure to the Holy place that is the temple of God in Christ.

Faithful service as a priest of Christ’s church is up to each living stone built in the corner stone of Christ. Stones that willingly put to death what is earthly in us as we work out our salvation that God is working in us, so that we can take part in the unified life of the priesthood of God in Christ in loving one another as God loves us.

Remembering always, we are being transformed into the image of Christ, none of us have arrived at the fullness of Christ as yet. We are a work in progress, so we should not allow the evil one to convince us that our momentary failure means we have deceived ourselves about our calling.

This is important, because our curtain of separation not only splits us from one another, it keeps us from being incorporated into the Holy of Holies who is Christ. If we want to enter fully into the Holy place, we have to undertake the willing sacrifice of our self in order to love one another as Christ has loved us, and given us an example of love for Him and one another that costs us everything.

This is the priesthood of all believers in Christ, who is our greater High Priest. Our place in the temple of God is our permanent inheritance of the promises of God. See 2 Peter 1:3-4

Our priesthood is to have cosmic consequences.

“We are chosen for a purpose: to offer up spiritual sacrifices (see Hebrews 13:15-16 for example), and to proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Thus, by both life (1 Peter 2:5; Titus 2:11-14; Ephesians 2:10) and by word (1 Peter 2:9; 3:15), our purpose is to serve God. As the believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), so God has called us to serve Him from our hearts by first of all offering our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). One day we will be serving God in eternity (Revelation 22:3-4), but not in any temple, for *“the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Revelation 21:22)”* From ‘Got a Question’

“ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.”
2 Pet 1: 10

Living water resources

Come to the River

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