



Lesson 19

You are the Temple of God. Be Holy.

INTRODUCTION

God has always made His presence known to man. His ultimate goal is a loving relationship with us. He is not limited or bound by particular structures. He can choose to make His presence known at any time He chooses. When He does so, there is increased holiness at that location.

In the Old Testament God:

Walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Accepted and rejected the offerings of Cain and Abel.

Walked with Enoch.

Spoke to Noah.

Called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to His service and guided them in all their ways.

Spoke to Moses from the burning bush, where God told Moses to take off his shoes because the ground on which he was standing was holy.

Led the Israelite nation out of Egypt and miraculously sustained them through 40 years of wandering. He made His presence known through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

EVENTUALLY, GOD CHOSE TO MANIFEST HIS PRESENCE IN A PHYSICAL DWELLING, WHICH HE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR THAT PURPOSE.

1. The Tabernacle at Mount Sinai. God gave instructions to Moses for the construction of this tent. His presence was evident by the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. His divine glory filled the tent in the area known as The Holy of Holies.

THEN THE CLOUD COVERED THE TABERNACLE, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TABERNACLE. MOSES COULD NO LONGER ENTER THE TABERNACLE BECAUSE THE CLOUD HAD SETTLED DOWN OVER IT, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TABERNACLE. NOW WHENEVER THE CLOUD LIFTED FROM THE TABERNACLE, THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WOULD SET OUT ON THEIR JOURNEY, FOLLOWING IT. BUT IF THE CLOUD DID NOT RISE, THEY REMAINED WHERE THEY WERE UNTIL IT LIFTED. THE CLOUD OF THE LORD HOVERED OVER THE TABERNACLE DURING THE DAY, AND AT NIGHT FIRE GLOWED INSIDE THE CLOUD SO THE WHOLE FAMILY OF ISRAEL COULD SEE IT. THIS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT ALL THEIR JOURNEYS. EXODUS 40:34-38 (NLT)

2. Solomon's Temple. This was built by David's son, King Solomon. It was the most grand and luxurious structure ever built, and it was filled with the glory of the Lord for centuries.

WHEN SOLOMON FINISHED PRAYING, FIRE FLASHED DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND BURNED UP THE BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES, AND THE GLORIOUS PRESENCE OF THE LORD FILLED THE TEMPLE. THE PRIESTS COULD NOT ENTER THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD BECAUSE THE GLORIOUS PRESENCE OF THE LORD FILLED IT. WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL SAW THE FIRE COMING DOWN AND THE GLORIOUS PRESENCE OF THE LORD FILLING THE TEMPLE, THEY FELL FACE DOWN ON THE GROUND AND WORSHIPPED AND PRAISED THE LORD... 2 CHRONICLES 7:1-3 (NLT)

Sadly, Solomon's temple was destroyed in 587 BCE. As we continue in the lesson, we will see that God will not occupy a space that is not holy unto Him.

WHY DID GOD ALLOW SOLOMON'S TEMPLE TO BE DESTROYED?

The Israelites defiled their temple by committing sins of idolatry, adultery, lust, anger, hatred, strife, and envy. Within the walls of the temple they exhibited drunken and loud behavior, and acted in ways that offended the Lord. They neither listened to nor obeyed God's Word.

The Israelites mocked and laughed at God's messengers for their true and serious warnings about how they were living lifestyles opposite of God's ways. They treated God's prophets as enemies.

The Israelites rebelled against the government they had vowed to serve.

BUT IF YOU OR YOUR DESCENDANTS ABANDON ME AND DISOBEY THE DECREES AND COMMANDS I HAVE GIVEN YOU, AND IF YOU SERVE AND WORSHIP OTHER GODS, THEN I WILL UPROOT THE PEOPLE FROM THIS LAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN THEM. I WILL REJECT THIS TEMPLE THAT I HAVE MADE HOLY TO HONOR MY NAME. I WILL MAKE IT AN OBJECT OF MOCKERY AND RIDICULE AMONG THE NATIONS. 2 CHRONICLES 7:19-20 (NLT)

Because of the Israelite's decisions to rebel against God, and desecrate His holy dwelling, He allowed this most awesome structure to be completely destroyed. There is no record of God's glorious presence ever occupying an earthly building again.

But, God is not bound by earthly structures...

GOD'S PRESENCE RETURNS TO MANKIND WITH THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

THAT NIGHT THERE WERE SHEPHERDS STAYING IN THE FIELDS NEARBY, GUARDING THEIR FLOCKS OF SHEEP. SUDDENLY, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED AMONG THEM, AND THE RADIANCE OF THE LORD'S GLORY SURROUNDED THEM. THEY WERE TERRIFIED. LUKE 2:8-9 (NLT)

JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM IN JUDEA, DURING THE REIGN OF KING HEROD. ABOUT THAT TIME SOME WISE MEN FROM EASTERN LANDS ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM, ASKING, "WHERE IS THE NEWBORN KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR AS IT ROSE, AND WE HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM." MATTHEW 2:1-2 (NLT)

SO THE WORD BECAME HUMAN AND MADE HIS HOME AMONG US. HE WAS FULL OF UNFAILING LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS. AND WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, THE GLORY OF THE FATHER'S ONE AND ONLY SON. JOHN 1:14 (NLT)

AFTER THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, GOD'S PRESENCE COMES TO DWELL WITHIN US AS HOLY SPIRIT.

"...AND I WILL ASK THE FATHER, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER ADVOCATE, WHO WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU. HE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO LEADS INTO ALL TRUTH. THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE HIM, BECAUSE IT ISN'T LOOKING FOR HIM AND DOESN'T RECOGNIZE HIM. BUT YOU KNOW HIM, BECAUSE HE LIVES WITH YOU NOW AND LATER WILL BE IN YOU." JOHN 14:16-17 (NLT)

DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO LIVES IN YOU AND WAS GIVEN TO YOU BY GOD? YOU DO NOT BELONG TO YOURSELF, FOR GOD BOUGHT YOU WITH A HIGH PRICE. SO YOU MUST HONOR GOD WITH YOUR BODY. 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 (NLT)

DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT ALL OF YOU TOGETHER ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD LIVES IN YOU? GOD WILL DESTROY ANYONE WHO DESTROYS THIS TEMPLE. FOR GOD'S TEMPLE IS HOLY, AND YOU ARE THAT TEMPLE. I CORINTHIANS 3:16-17 (NLT)

Our body is is now the physical dwelling place for the glory of God. We are the temple of God. His Spirit lives in our spirit.

CONCLUSION

How do you maintain a polished temple, fit for the glory of God to dwell within?

This is not a one-time event. It is a daily exercise, smoothing the rough places in our lives to make them acceptable to the Lord. God wants our temples to be so glorious that the world admires and seeks to be like the places in which He dwells.

Do we guard our thoughts, speech, and actions in order to be pure before God?

Do we check ourselves against pride and self-righteous attitudes?

Are we greedy... hoarding our money and possessions instead of using them to bless others?

Are we reading the Bible daily, filling up with His Word and instructions for our life? Are we living according to God's commandments and principles?

Do we forgive others quickly, being certain not to hold a grudge?

Do we exercise The Golden Rule, treating others the way we wish to be treated?

Do we walk in peace and unity with family, friends, and the world around us?

Do we invite Holy Spirit to fill us up, so that we may overflow in His presence to the world around us? Do we walk in close companionship with Holy Spirit, seeking His guidance in all that we do?

When we accept Jesus as our Savior, and commit our lives to Him, Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts. Our body becomes the temple of Holy Spirit. It is Holy Spirit who helps us to live in ways that are pleasing to God. There is not a believer alive who can walk according to the check list above without the help of Holy Spirit. It is the call of Holy Spirit to help us to grow as image bearers of Christ, as a dwelling abode for Him.

BUT NOW YOU MUST BE HOLY IN EVERYTHING YOU DO, JUST AS GOD WHO CHOSE YOU IS HOLY...YOU MUST BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY. 1 PETER 1:15-16 (NLT)