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The Temple of God

By Harold Turner

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Cor. 3:16-17.)

During the period of Bible history when Israel was God's chosen people, the temple of God was of special importance. The temple was the sacred meeting place with God. When Solomon had completed this beautiful structure, God said, "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." (2 Chron. 7:16.) This temple, located in Jerusalem, was the holy place where the people could meet with and worship their God.

The statements in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 indicate that a change has taken place. The temple of God today is no longer a beautiful structure standing in the city of Jerusalem. In fact, the temple of God is not even a building in which we meet for worship. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (Acts 17:24.)

God's temple is a spiritual house. This spiritual house is built from living stones rather than from lifeless materials. In 1 Peter 2:5, the apostle wrote, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Hence, as Paul wrote the church in Corinth, he referred to them as "The temple of God."

There are at least three important things that need to be impressed upon our minds relative to being the temple of God.

The first important thing is stated in 1 Cor. 3:17; "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In this warning a demand is made for holiness. After referring to the church as the temple of God in 2 Cor. 6:16, Paul wrote, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." In

that our body has become the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19), we are personally responsible for keeping our body clean. In Matt. 15:18-20, Jesus shows that the things that defile a man, are the things that come forth from the heart. Therefore, purity and holiness must begin in the heart. In Phil. 4:8 Paul shows that the heart is affected by thinking, and states that we should think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and things of good report. Though we must do everything within our power to keep our heart and life pure, the power to cleanse is with God. By responding to his instructions for our cleansing we purify our souls (1 Peter 1:22), and by continuing in His instructions the blood of Christ continually cleanses us from our sins (1 John 1:7).

The second important thing in our being the temple of God is that we become a dwelling place for God. Paul said, "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you." In 2 Cor. 6:16 Paul repeated this idea, but added, "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The purpose involved in this statement is seen in Gal. 2:20; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." When we become a Christian, we not only become the dwelling place for God in our life, but we become the instrument through which He works His will. In Phil. 2:13 Paul wrote, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." As someone has said, "We become His hands, His feet, His eyes, His mouth." Eph. 5:30 puts it this way, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." God has a great purpose here on earth, and this purpose is worked out through His temple, the church, with each member fulfilling his part.

The third important thing about being the temple of God, is that only from within this temple can we express acceptable worship to God. As 1 Peter

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The Kingdom of God

By Clovis Ragsdale

The most practiced form of government throughout all history is called a monarchy. Under this form of government a king rules with absolute power over the subjects of a given area or areas. This is referred to as a kingdom. In this kingdom the king's every wish is law.

God's plan for the salvation, protection, and guidance of mankind is similar to that of an earthly kingdom. In fact, the church is frequently referred to as a kingdom. In Col. 1:13, and 4:11 the use of kingdom certainly refers to the church. In Col. 1:13 Paul speaks of those who have become Christians, saying that God "Hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." In Col. 4:11 Paul speaks of his fellow workers in the kingdom of God. In Heb. 12:28 the author states that Christians have received "A kingdom which cannot be moved", wherein they have received grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

This kingdom is not earthly, but spiritual in nature and design. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

This spiritual kingdom has not always been in the world. Daniel, the prophet, spoke of a time when the God of heaven would set up a kingdom which would have no end (Dan. 2:44, 7:13-14.) Other prophets foretold other things about this kingdom and of the blessings this kingdom would bring to man.

Early in His personal ministry, Christ spoke of "Preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (Matt. 4:23.) Later frequent references were made to the kingdom being NIGH AT HAND. In Mark 9:1 Jesus assured his apostles that the kingdom would come before they tasted death. This could only mean that the kingdom would soon be established. As promised, the kingdom did soon come. On the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ the promises of the coming kingdom are fulfilled. All things

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The Family of God

By James Knight

The church is the greatest, grandest, and most glorious institution upon the face of the earth. There are several things which make this so. The church was built by Christ himself (Matt. 16:18). It was purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28). Christ is the only head of the church, which is his body (Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18). Christ is also the Saviour of the church (Eph. 5:23). Combined together, these things show how great and glorious the church really is.

The church is also described by many terms which show how great and important it is. Each term shows some distinct relationship that the church sustains to Christ. For example, when Christ said, "I will build by church", he was showing that it belonged to him, rather than to man. When the church is referred to as "The body of Christ", it indicates the unique relationship between Christ and his church. There are many other terms showing the special relationship between Christ and the church, however, in this study we want to notice one specific term that shows the importance of the church. We want to look at the church as the FAMILY of God.

Let us first notice several Scriptures which show this relationship that we might have a better understanding of this aspect of the church. In 1 Tim. 3:15, Paul speaks of "The house of God, which is the church of the living God..." In Eph. 2:19, Paul tells the church at Ephesus that they are "Of the household of God." In these Scriptures, the expression, "House or household of God" refers to the family of God. This can be seen from similar expressions. In Acts 10:2 we are told that Cornelius "Feared God with all his house." In Acts 16:15 we are told that Lydia was "Baptized, and her household." In Acts 16:31-34 we are told that the jailor believed on the Lord with all his house. It is obvious that these expressions refer to the family of each one mentioned. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of God's house or household, it is speaking of His family.

Now let us notice some of the passages which teach the various family relationships that the church sustains to God and to each other.

In Romans 8:16-17 we learn that we are children of God. God is our father, and we are his sons and daughters. Since God is our father we are to be obedient

to him. We should no more think of disobeying our heavenly Father than we would our earthly father. Too, we should be honored in wearing the family name that our Father has given his children, the name Christian (Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Pet. 4:16). It is truly a great privilege to be a child of God.

In relation to each other we are brethren in Christ. In Rom. 10:1 Paul addresses these Christians as "Brethren." As a family of brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to have a strong love for each other. Jesus taught, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." In John 13:35 Jesus said that love was a proof that we are the children of God. In 1 Thess. 4:9 Paul said, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Another important factor to being a child of God is that we become heirs of his eternal blessings. In Rom. 8:16-17 Paul wrote, "We are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The apostle Peter taught, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Pet. 1:3-4.) What a great privilege to be an heir of God's eternal blessings.

The church—family—of God, should be united in all her efforts to serve him. Jesus prayed for this unity in John 17:20-21. The apostle Paul commanded unity in 1 Cor. 1:10-13. He gave the platform for this unity in Eph. 4:1-6.

There is no greater blessing than being a member in the family of God. But, how does one become a member of God's family? The Bible is very plain in teaching us what to do to become a member of the church family. We are born unto this family. The seed that produces this birth is the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23, Luke 8:11-14). This seed is planted in the heart of man. When it is received it begins to germinate and grow into faith (Rom. 10:17); into repentance (Rom. 2:4, Acts 17:30); into the confession of Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), and into obedience (Rom. 6:17-18). This obedience that puts him into Christ, where he becomes a

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The Temple of God (Cont.)

2:5 stated, we compose a "Spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Paul reasoned that since God does not dwell in temples made with hands, He "Neither is worshipped with men's hands" (Acts 17:25). Our worship is to arise from the heart, hence it is not a mechanical ritual, but a spiritual expression from the heart. Jesus showed displeasure with those who, "Draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." (Matt. 15:8.) Every act of worship described in the New Testament is directly related to the heart. The apostle Paul shows the seriousness of worship that does not employ the heart in 1 Cor. 11:27-29. Here reference is made to eating the Lord's Supper in an indifferent manner. In doing so, Paul said, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The seat of worship is within the heart, and only those who have become a part of God's temple—the church—can offer up acceptable worship (1 Pet. 2:5).

These three expressions which describe the function of the church as "the temple of God" should help us to understand both the importance of the church, and the necessity of being a part of it. God dwells only within His temple—the church.

"People usually get at odds with one another when they try to get even."

"You're never going to get anywhere if you think you're already there."

The Body of Christ

By Leslie Leonard

God has used parables, similes, metaphors, and analogies in the Scriptures to illustrate spiritual truth and to assist us in having a better understanding of what He is trying to tell us. We find such familiar items as a door, vine, house, net, field, sower, etc. used to represent some spiritual truth. God cannot be described except by analogy because he is unique. Our relationship with God can only be described by the use of analogy because we are dealing with a relationship that exists in the spiritual realm while we exist in the physical realm.

One of the relationships that is difficult to grasp is that of those who are members of Christ's church and Christ, who is their ruler, priest, and redeemer. The analogy used is that of a person's body and head.

We are told; "And he is head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), and "Gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22). From this we learn that Christ is the head of the church in much the same way that our head is over our body. We should then reach the conclusion that everything the body (church) does ought to be under the guidance and direction of Christ, who is its head. Of course that guidance and direction would come through the Scriptures since they tell us what Christ wants his church to do, and how he wants it done.

A body as only one head, and every head has only one body. If it doesn't it is a monstrosity; so we should expect Christ to have only one body; and that body (church) should have only one head. This is not only reasonable but is what the Scriptures teach. In speaking about the division that existed between the Jews and Gentiles, we're told in Eph. 2:16, "He has reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby." Notice he said, "One body", and when he spoke of the body he was speaking about the church; so all are reconciled in one church. This oneness is repeated many times in the Scriptures. Let us notice a few of them.

Romans 12:5 "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."

1 Cor. 12:12 "For as the body is one,

and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ."

1 Cor. 10:17 "For we being many are . . . one body."

Eph. 4:4 "There is one body."

The body which these verses are talking about is the church. "And he is head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18.) Since the body and the church are the same thing, and there is only one body, it follows that there is only one church. This is what the Scriptures teach, "There is one body." (Eph. 4:4.) Or to put it another way, there is one church.

Of course we know that there are many churches in the world; so what does this verse mean? Since it states that there is "one body", and since the body is the church, then it must mean that there is only one church over which Christ is head. Our task then is to make sure that we are a part of that body (church), which Christ is the head of. But how can we be sure?

The only safe way is to compare ourselves with the members of the first century church. We can be sure that we are a part of the body, the church, if we have become members in the same way they did. In 1 Cor. 12:13, we're told, "We were all baptized into one body"; so first century Christians were baptized into Christ's body, the church. If that is the way that they became a part of the body, then we become a part of the body when we are baptized into it. This makes us a part, or member of the body over which Christ is the head, the body which is His church.

"It isn't necessary to blow the other fellow's light out to let your's shine."

"If there is righteousness in the heart . . . there will be beauty in the character . . . if there is beauty in the character . . . there will be harmony in the home . . . if there is harmony in the home . . . there will be order in the nation . . . if there is order in the nation . . . there will be peace in the world."

The Bride of Christ

By Coy Walters

The church is described by several different images in the New Testament. The apostle Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2.) Paul, here, views himself as the arranger of the marriage, in that he founded the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 4:15.) The loyalty which Christ claims is exclusive, as in the marriage relationship.

The best treatise found on this subject is in Eph. 5:22-32. Here Paul uses the marriage relationship to describe the relationship between Christ and his church. One relationship which can be seen here is the seriousness of the subjection of the church to Christ. The Scriptures read, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." (Eph. 5:23-24.) This truth is also expressed in the idea of Christ being the "Lord" (ruler) of his people. The church is in subjection to Christ when it is in subjection to the message which our Lord has left for us to obey and to be faithful to. The Bible records; "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . And whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. 3:16-17.)

The church must worship according to the teachings of His word (John 4:24, 17:17.) The church must also abound in doing the Lord's work by the same rule (1 Cor. 15:58.) A loving husband would never ask his bride to do anything that she could not do. Jesus Christ, who loved us enough to die for us (Eph. 5:25), asks us to do those things which benefits us. We should count it a privilege to be obedient to our loving Lord.

The reason that Christ gave his life for the church was that the church might be sanctified and cleansed. Purity has always been important for brides in all ages. The purity of Christ's bride demanded a cleansing. This cleansing takes place by "A washing of water." (Eph. 5:26.) Most scholarly works on this verse say that this is a specific reference to baptism. God's word reveals his grace, Christ's death, and the commands that men must obey in order to be cleansed from the guilt and

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The Kingdom of God (Cont.)

foretold by the prophets and by Christ concerning the kingdom begin their fulfillment with Acts 2. In this same chapter, and on this same day we read of people who were told what to do to be saved, and those who obeyed were thereby added to the church. They thereby became the subjects of the kingdom under the absolute authority of Christ the king.

Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 4:15.) He is also the king of His kingdom (Col. 1:13, John 18:36.) The saved make up the church. (Acts 2:47.) Those who have been delivered from the power of darkness (sin) are translated into the kingdom. From that day of Pentecost we notice that those being saved were added to the church. Therefore, all Christians are the subjects of Christ in his kingdom.

The area of the church-kingdom was the whole world. Jesus told his apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.) Thus the church and the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ, are interchangeable terms used to describe God's people in this special way.

What does the Bible teach concerning the future of the church or kingdom? The answer is to be found in 1 Thess. 4:14-17. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

These verses teach that all who are in Christ, both the dead and the living, will be caught up into heaven and will ever be with the Lord. This is in harmony with Daniel chapter two, which states that God's kingdom will be forever.

"The reason some people can't pray is because they are not on speaking terms with God."

"If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail."

The Bride of Christ (Cont.)

stain of sin. Unfaithfulness to Christ is spiritual adultery (James 4:4.)

In our generation we have heard many say that they accept Jesus, but that they want nothing to do with the church. This shows a real lack of understanding of the closeness between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:28-32.) The Lord loved the church so much that he gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25.) The Lord is so close to the church that what one does to the church he in reality does to Christ. In Acts 9:4, Jesus cried out to Saul of Tarsus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Paul didn't believe in Christ. How was he persecuting him? He persecuted Christ by persecuting His bride, the church.

The bride of Christ must be in subjection to His word. It must be pure through obedience and faithfulness to His commandments. It must have the same closeness to Christ that he has shown to us. When this is true, the bride will long for the coming of the bridegroom, and the prophecy will be fulfilled, "And the Spirit and the bride say, come." (Rev. 22:17.)

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"No apologies for failure are necessary, if one has done his best. Not success but faithfulness is the divine requirement."

"The water is shallowest where it babbles."

The Family of God (Cont.)

member in God's family, is baptism. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26-27.) This shows that we are children of God in Christ, and that we are baptized by faith into Christ. See also, Rom. 6:3, Acts 2:38, Mk. 16:16.

Are you a member of God's family, the church? If not you are lost. Only those in the church are God's children, and only they will receive the eternal inheritance of God.

"A man is also known by the company he avoids."

"He who talks without thinking, runs more risk than he who thinks without talking."

"It is often profitable for a quick thinker to be a slow speaker."

"Whether blessing or cursing, the giver gets the most."

"Keep an open mind, but take care it doesn't become a hole in your head."

"When men speak ill of you, live so that nobody will believe them."

"Joy is something that is multiplied when it is divided."

"No time is wasted that is used in getting ready for a good work."

"An atheist belittles the Christ, but prefers to live among Christ-ians."

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