

Who Are We

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 10/20/2012

When someone asks, **Who are you?**, How do you define yourself?

When we were young, we might have answered that we were someone's child. "I'm the son of Mr. Jones."

When we grew to maturity, we were able to define ourselves by our profession. "I'm the plumber."

A woman may define herself by her spouse. "I'm the wife of Mr. Jones."

But, how do we define ourselves as **Christians**? Who Are We?

We are the people of God.

We are followers of Jesus Christ.

We are the true saints – just like the true Christians of the first century.

We are the family of God.

We are the called out ones.

We are the New Covenant people of God.

We are the Children of God.

We are the Church of God.

We are the *'ekklesia'* of God.

We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

We are lively stones.

We are a holy priesthood.

We are the Body of Christ.

We are the household of God.

The Bible provides us with many, many designations.

The Biblical **characterization** that I wish to look more closely at today is found in **2 Corinthians 6:16** where we find that "**We are the temple of the living God.**"

Let's turn to **2 Corinthians 6**

Definition of "Temple": A building devoted to the worship, or regarded as the dwelling place, of God.

In the Bible it is “*Heykal*” [hay-kawl] - A large (in the sense of capacity) public building such a palace or temple.

We are the temple of the living God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? --- **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.

And interestingly – to me – the Temple is not mentioned in the Bible until **1 Samuel**.

First God instructed Moses to construct the Tabernacle when He gave Moses the law, after leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

God told Moses:

Exodus 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 25:9 According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the **tabernacle**, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

The Tabernacle was the centerpiece of the tribes of Israel and would move (transportable) wherever they camped in their journey to the Promised Land.

The various tribes had designated areas around the Tabernacle (**Numbers 2:1-31**).

The Tabernacle was not like a synagogue or meeting hall. It was a place where God visited the people and made His glory known to them (**Exodus 40:34-35**).

Leviticus 26

The Tabernacle was a constant indication that God was with the people of Israel.

Leviticus 26:11 And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.

Leviticus 26:12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

Leviticus 26:13 I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.

After Israel was in the Promised Land God would allow them to build a fixed – glorious Temple of stone as there was no further need for it to be mobile.

When David was king of Israel, he wanted to create a permanent building in which God could dwell, but God told David through the prophet, Nathan, that he was not allowed to do so because of his bloody past. (**2 Samuel 7:4-17**).

David passed the throne of Israel to his son, Solomon, and he shared his desire for building a temple for God on to Solomon (**1 Kings 5:3-5**). Solomon built a majestic, gold-adorned temple to honor the God of his father (**1 Kings 6**).

Solomon, with help of Hiram of Tyre and 183,600 workers, built the Temple in seven years using stone, cedar from Lebanon and great amounts of gold and silver. (1 Kings 5-9, 2 Chronicles 2)

Matthew 23

Study into the history of the Temple in the Old Testament.

It was destroyed and rebuilt by Herod – but then Jesus explained that an amazing thing would shortly take place...

There would **no more** be a need for the temple... Why???

Jesus was in the temple teaching:

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kills the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Matthew 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Matthew 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Matthew 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from **the temple**: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of **the temple**.

Matthew 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be **thrown down**. [destroyed]

The old temple would make way for what it foreshadowed.

1 Corinthians 3

**How do we get from that magnificent stone temple on Mt Moriah, the Temple mount in Jerusalem to the concept :

****We** are the spiritual temple to whom Jesus Christ will soon return?

Paul writes to the gentile Christians of Corinth:

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

That was an incredible statement when Paul made it to the early Christians.

That is a tremendous leap of thought from what had historically been understood of the Temple at Jerusalem.

The stone temple was still standing at Jerusalem when Paul gave the Church this spiritual revelation.

Repeat:

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

This extraordinary statement does not strike us with the same force – because we've heard it all of our lives!

For too many years in the Church of God I have heard this scripture defined by --- how we should take care of our **physical** bodies.

But let's look a little closer because it goes much deeper than that.

1 Corinthians 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.**

We see in that verse that the temple of God **is holy.**

“Hagios” in the Greek means sacred, consecrated for a **spiritual purpose.** **“Hagios”** means **Set apart** for a Godly function.

The **temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.**

We are the spiritual temple of God.

Now that is a tremendous claim – isn't it?

We need to explore and develop **this concept** of “The Temple” that we find spread throughout the Scriptures.

“God dwells with His people,” This thought is a continuous thread throughout the Scriptures.

From a fabric mobile tabernacle in the wilderness at first... to a magnificent stone temple at Jerusalem... to the **saints of God ? -- is a quantum leap in the development of the meaning of the Temple!

“Holy” shows that this verse is to be understood in a **spiritual way** – rather than merely a physical taking care of ourselves.

John 14

John covers those important things not covered in the synoptic Gospels.

In Chapters 14 and 15, John gives us the words of Jesus Christ explaining the fulfillment for the Church, of God's desire to DWELL with us – to abide with us—to **be in us by way of God's Holy Spirit.

We are the temple of the living God. What an incredible revelation!

John 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us.

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the

Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

John 14:10 Believe thou not that **I am in the Father, and the Father in me?** the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, he doeth the works.

That is an **incredible revelation** that Jesus gives to His disciples.

That's a new concept to the disciples. - the Father that dwells in me.

I am in the Father, and the Father in me – Jesus told them...

And Jesus is about to expand this "Dwelling in us," concept to those who have God's Holy Spirit.

John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that **IT** may abide with you forever;

Let's study the next verse very carefully – because it reveals so much about the working of God's Holy Spirit.

****John 14:17** Even the Spirit of truth; which the world cannot receive, because it sees **IT** not, neither knows **IT**: but ye know **IT**; for **IT** dwells **with** you, and shall be **in** you.

At this point the disciples are yet **unconverted** and being led by God's Spirit – so God's Spirit is **with** them.

But soon – at Pentecost Day they will be **converted** and God's Holy Spirit will be **IN** them.

Next we see Jesus making a tremendous clarification!

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**

Jesus declares Himself to be the one who comforts.

John 14:19 Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

Watch how Jesus expands the concept of the Father being in Him, and He being in the Father – **to include us** – the brethren.

John 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and **ye in me, and I in you.**

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

John 14:22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **We** will come unto him, **and make our abode with him.**

There: **we have it revealed to us.**

God the Father and **Jesus Christ DWELL in us – they make their ABODE IN US.**

John 14:24 He that loves me **not** keeps not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

John 14:25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

John 14:26 But the **Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **IT** shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

****God the Father and Jesus Christ dwell IN us by means of their Spirit which they bestow on us.**

Jesus makes the point of [Dwelling] Abiding a dozen times in chapter 15 – here are a few – if you cannot find a dozen let me know and I'll help you find them.

Let's briefly look at a few...

John 15:4 **Abide** [Dwell] in me, and I [Dwell] in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it **abide** in the vine; no more can ye, except ye **abide** in me.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that **abides** in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Jesus Christ said, "I will build My Church." (**Matthew 16:18**)

He started **His Church** with the disciples and those believers who received His Spirit on Pentecost Day.

Jesus did not construct a cathedral, basilica, chapel, mosque, church-hall or **any other** kind of physical structure – but he began bringing together His saints – he began to build the Church **brethren** into a Dwelling place for God.

Brethren, what does the Scripture mean that says: "The Most High dwells **not** in temples made with hands."

It means that God the Highest dwells in Spiritual temples – **US**.

Acts 7

Let's take a look at this because many jump to the conclusion that our God is afar off – away in the heavens --- when it is His desire to DWELL in us His Church brethren.

Act 7:44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

Acts 7:45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

Acts 7:46 Who found favor before God, and desired to find [build] a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

Acts 7:47 But Solomon built him an house. [that was the magnificent temple]

****Acts 7:48** Howbeit the most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet,

Mark 14

Mark 14:57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him [Jesus], saying,

Mark 14:58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days **I will build another made without hands.**

1 Corinthians 6

Brethren, we are that Temple **made without hands.**

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your **body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

We are the people of God in Whom He dwells.

We are followers of Jesus Christ in Whom He dwells.

We are the true saints – just like the true Christians of the first century in Whom He dwells.

We are the family of God in Whom He dwells.

We are the called out ones in Whom He dwells.

We are the New Covenant people of God in Whom He dwells.

We are the Children of God in Whom He dwells.

We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ in Whom He dwells.

We are a holy priesthood in Whom He dwells.

We are the Body of Christ in Whom He dwells.

We are the household of God in Whom He dwells.

We are the temple of the living God in whom He dwells.

We are lively stones in Whom He dwells. [notice]

1 Peter 2

Individually, we are each a temple of God.

1 Peter 2:5 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.

1 Peter 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Drop down e few verses:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

1 Peter 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Peter shows that collectively we are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house [family, household, temple], – and yet, Jesus is not going to marry a temple, city, stones, or a house... [is He?]

This holy temple in the Lord - a dwelling place of God, is the **collective Church of God brethren – Spiritual Israel – Mount Zion – The Firstborn – New Jerusalem – the City of the Lord.

Revelation 21

So, who is this New Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband?

It is the resurrected – spiritual saints of God.

Notice **Revelation 21:3**, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men**, and **He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.**”

Isaiah 66

Isaiah 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

Ephesians 2

Paul explained this wonderful concept to the brethren at Ephesus:

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Drop down:

Ephesians 2:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Now therefore you are... an holy temple in the Lord:

Ephesians 2:22 In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit

Ezekiel 37

We desire for Christ to come into us and make His abode in us. We are His temple – He lives His perfect life in us.

God had prophesied through the prophet Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 37:26 *“I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and **will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.**”*

Ezekiel 37:27 *My tabernacle [Dwelling place] also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*

Who are we?

We are the people of God – the **temple of the living God.**