

## *The Dwelling Place Of God*

**W**hen God created Adam, He made him different from the rest of His creation, in that He created him in His spiritual image, according to His own likeness. Man is spiritually stamped with the eternal image of his Creator.

### **MAN: GOD'S UNIQUE CREATION**

Scientists have concluded that little physiological difference exists between human beings and other mammals. From a scientific viewpoint, man *is* an animal. However, not even a scientist's microscope can show us all there is to see of man. An invisible part of our nature can be seen only through the "microscope" of God's Word. This part of us is the human spirit, which is eternal in nature. This eternal spark which makes us different from the beasts of the field also gives us the special privilege and opportunity to become the spiritual dwelling place of God on earth.

### **Animals—Created for an Earthly Element**

God created the fishes of the sea that they might live and multiply in the waters of the earth, swimming about in their own special element. He created the birds that they might fill the skies overhead and soar on wings in their element (Genesis 1:20, 21). God created the beasts of the field that they might roam the earth (Genesis 1:24, 25). From the mighty, roaring lion in the jungle to the graceful deer in the forest, each beast was created by the hand of an almighty and all-wise God, that it might live in its own unique element.

### **Man—Created for a Spiritual Element**

Finally, God created man. Like the beasts of the field, man was given a physical body taken from the dust of the earth. Unlike the way He dealt with all the rest of creation, God directly breathed an eternal spirit into man, and "man became a living being," or a living soul (Genesis 2:7). We need to understand that God created man to occupy a special element in His creation. He created the fishes of the sea to fill their element in the waters below. He created the birds to fill their element in the skies above. He created the beasts to occupy their element on land. God created man in His own image, that we might occupy the spiritual element of a fellowship with Him as our Creator.

Science has taught us that man is just another animal. Many have believed this lie of the devil and are living as animals. In contrast to this lie, God's Word tells us that man was created in God's own spiritual image to become His dwelling place on earth. Until we recognize our spiritual element and begin to live in that element, we will never find the real meaning and purpose of life!

### **Man—At Home in His Element**

What a glorious sight it must have been as God placed Adam and Eve in that beautiful paradise of the Garden of Eden! Love and glory colored the scene as God shared His perfect love with man and as Adam and Eve shared God's love with one another as husband and wife. As

long as they loved and submitted to their Creator, they were at home in their own spiritual element for which God had created them. Through their spiritual fellowship with God, they enjoyed the rich blessings of a perfect love and an unbroken communion with their Creator.

### **Man—Out of His Element**

One sad day Eve chose to declare her independence from God and to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She gave the forbidden fruit to her husband, Adam, and he also partook of it. Adam and Eve made the fatal choice to abandon their element and to break their perfect spiritual fellowship with God. They chose sin over obedience to God, self over the Lord. They chose to allow the body, rather than the spirit, to control their lives. As a terrible consequence of their choice, the soul of man was brought under the captivity of the body; man could no longer enjoy the rich blessing of an unbroken spiritual union with his Creator. Banished from the Garden of Eden and cut off from the tree of life, Adam and Eve experienced the tragic separation of their spirits from communion with God. Like fish out of water, Adam and Eve were out of their element, and they died a death of spiritual separation from God.

### **The Physical Consequences of Man's Leaving His Element**

Following man's sin in the Garden of Eden, the human race became more and more corrupt. Man became so caught up in living for his own lusts and desires that we read in Genesis 6:5, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is hard to imagine that man's heart had grown so corrupt that all he ever thought about was himself and his own lusts and desires. Man had turned his back upon his Creator. He had chosen to go his own stubborn and selfish way. We read, "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:6).

All God ever wanted from mankind was his love. Man was created to enjoy fellowship and spiritual union with his God, but man abandoned his spiritual purpose. He chose to ignore God's will and to grasp for all the lusts and the

pleasures that his sinful heart could find. Once again, the sad result was the pouring out of God's wrath upon mankind. God sent a great flood to destroy the human race, with the exception of Noah and his family. In spite of man's sin and rebellion, our God continued to long for a closer spiritual relationship with mankind.

## **ISRAEL: GOD'S OLD TESTAMENT CREATION**

Many years after the great flood, a faithful man named Abram found favor with God. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." God was so pleased with the sincere faith of Abraham that He promised to bless him by developing his family into a great nation of people. This nation—known as the Jews, or Israelites—was the nation through whom God would later send our Savior into the world.

In the meantime, Abraham's family developed into a nation of people in the land of Egypt, where they found themselves slaves of Pharaoh. Their lives were made miserable by the oppressive work they were forced to do, but God remembered His covenant with Abraham. Through His divine providence, God raised up and empowered Moses to lead the Israelites from their bondage to Mt. Sinai. There God met with Moses and gave him the law which was to govern His people. God told Moses to construct a special tent, a tabernacle. This tabernacle would become God's own sanctuary, His holy dwelling place in the midst of His people. Once again, we see the loving heart of a holy God longing for a more intimate fellowship with His human creation. Out of His love and compassion, our God provided an avenue through which He could dwell in the midst of His people and through which they could approach Him with their acts of public worship.

### **God Dwelt Among His People**

*First, God dwelt in the tabernacle.* During Israel's forty years of wilderness wanderings, the Lord's glory filled a special room of the tabernacle known as the Most Holy Place. The tabernacle was covered by a cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire at night, as a visual reminder of God's holy presence among them. Whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, it was a signal to

the Israelites to move to another location. Wherever the cloud settled, they would set up their tents around the tent of God. The people approached the tabernacle of God with bowed heads and reverent silence, for to treat this tent as a common tent was to invite instant death!

*Next, God dwelt in the temple.* Hundreds of years later the tabernacle was replaced by the temple which King Solomon built in Jerusalem. There, in the Most Holy Place, God made His special dwelling place on earth, as He had in the tabernacle.

What does this rich history say to us? It declares that the God of Israel was a high and holy God, who out of His great heart of love and compassion always wanted to dwell in the midst of His people. God longed for a people who would approach Him in great reverence and awe, honoring Him as the one and only God of heaven and earth.

*Then, God dwelt in His Son.* Years later, this awesome and powerful God of the universe came down from heaven to dwell among us in the form of His only begotten Son, Jesus. In commenting on this great miracle in which God became a human being, John wrote, “And the Word became flesh [i.e., a physical body], and dwelt among us [literally “tabernacled” among us], and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

For some thirty-three years God took up His dwelling place on the earth, in the fleshly tent of His Son’s human body. During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ was “Immanuel,” or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). He came to “tabernacle” among us, and through the tent of His physical body, God Himself lived in the midst of sinful mankind. God still longed to be closer to His people. He did not want merely to live *among* them; He wanted to live *in* them.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus declared to His apostles in John 14:17, “The Spirit of truth, . . . abides with you, and will be in you.” He went on to explain that He would have to leave them and return to His Father. “I tell you the truth,” He added, “it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). Jesus fulfilled this promise

after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. On the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit baptized the apostles, and the church—the new dwelling place of God upon this earth—was miraculously brought into existence!

## THE CHURCH: GOD’S PERFECT CREATION

*Through the church, God has created His most perfect dwelling place on the earth since the days of the Garden of Eden.* Cleansed by the blood of Jesus and indwelt by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the church of our Lord has become the New Testament temple of God, the spiritual body of Christ, the holy dwelling place of God upon this earth (see Ephesians 2:21, 22).

### Called Out of the World

When many in the church begin to awaken to the fact that the church has been purchased by the blood of the Lamb to be God’s holy dwelling place upon this earth, they will begin to live out of a deep sense of reverence for their high calling. No longer will their lives be self-centered, but Christ-centered. No longer will they live for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Christians have been called out of the darkness of the kingdom of Satan and into the eternal light of the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

### Called Into God’s Holy Dwelling Place

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” When Christians know that their bodies are temples of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in them, it will make a big difference in the lifestyles they choose! The difference between victorious Christian lives and defeated Christian lives is not the presence of the Holy Spirit, because all Christians are promised the Holy Spirit when they obey the gospel (Acts 5:32). The difference is in *knowing* the indwelling presence of Jesus in our lives. When we know that Jesus lives in us, we will “consider [our]selves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11). When that is the attitude of faith by which we live our daily lives, “the Spirit of glory and of God [will rest] upon [us]” (1 Peter 4:14), and “as

living stones” we will be “built up as a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5).

The only purpose for having a house is to live in it. The purpose of God’s house is to provide the Holy Spirit a dwelling place upon the earth. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that you and I can become that dwelling place of our Lord until Jesus comes to receive the church to Himself and take her home forever as His eternal bride. There, around God’s throne, the glorified church of Christ will experience the fullness of God’s presence and glory without fleshly limitations or worldly hindrances!

## CONCLUSION

Only those washed by the blood of the Lamb are added to the church of our Lord as living stones of His temple. Only His church will go to heaven when Jesus comes again. Are you a living stone of God’s temple? If not, trust Him and obey Him. He will take up His holy dwelling place in you, and you will be able to claim His promise: “Lo, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). At the end of your life, you will be able to claim His victory: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Amen! ▲

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