

God Dwells Not In Temples Made With Hands

Sunday PM 04/07/19

Introduction:

In both Jewish and pagan temples there is the concept of the "house of deity." Paul at Mars Hill states "God dwells not in temples made with hands" (*Acts 17.24-25*). In this lesson we want to look at the sense in which the Jewish temple was the house of God, and the "temple of God" concept in the N.T.

Keep in mind, God is the Creator but Hs exist separate from creation. He is omnipresent but He is not confined to one place.

I) Pagan Temples and Gods

A) The gods and goddesses of the pagans were identified with images or statues. I.e. stones, wooden images, etc.

B) Temples were constructed as homes for gods.

1. "In all ancient temples the proof of the deity's presence was his statue, which somehow was thought to house his essence... he was believed to be in the statues.

2. Athens and Ephesus as examples.

a. Athens - "The Athenians surpassed all other states in the attention they paid to the worship of the gods; and hence the city crowded in every direction with temples."

b. Athens - was considered the center of idolatrous worship, the Acropolis or citadel was the center of Athens, the Parthenon was the center of the Acropolis, and the

colossal statue of Athena was the central attraction in the Parthenon. She was the guardian goddess of the city and the Parthenon temple was her home.

- c. Ephesus - *Acts 19* Diana or Artemas was the deity and the statue of her stood in the temple. It was believed she had fallen from heaven and was present in the image.

II) The Jewish Temples

A) Three temples

1. Solomon's temple-*1 Kings 6-8*, completed about 950 B.C.
2. Zerubbabel's temple - built after the return of the Jews from Babylon in 5236 B.C. *Ezra 6.3-15*.
3. Herod's temple - through the years the temple had decayed and needed remodeling.
 - a. Shortly before the birth of Jesus, Herod the Great began a restoration and remodeling, *John 2.20*.
 - b. *Ezekiel 40.2, 4-5aff, 46* was given to give exiled Jews hope and motivation to look to the deliverance and restoration in their homeland. Took place during the Persians.

B) Description of Solomon's temple

1. Proposed and planned, *2 Chronicles 2.3-7; 9. 12*.
2. Completed, *2 Chronicles 6.2,10*

C) Details

1. The actual temple was small in comparison to some pagan temples and modern day cathedrals and mosques. It was not designed for assemblies of the public.
2. The greater court areas surrounding the temple were for the assemblies, and the total temple complex of courts and buildings gave the temple a more impressive appearance.
3. The temple was long and narrow (100 ft. long, 30 ft. wide). Side chambers were added, built of limestone.
 - a. Large decorated doors opened into the temple.
 - b. First compartment was "The Holy Place" there was the golden altar or incense, five golden lampstands, and the table for the "showbread."
 - c. Next was the "Most Holy Place" (different from Herod's temple). Within was the Ark of the Covenant.

III) Did God Dwell In the Jewish Temple?

A) The temple as God's dwelling place, 1 Kings 6.13, 2 Chronicles 6.2

B) Principles

1. *1 Kings 8.27-29* the special place or function of the temple
2. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman states, *John 4.21ff.*

C) The difference between pagan and Jewish temples

1. In the Jewish temple there was no statue or tangible representation of God.
2. It was not assumed God was confined to the physical temple; not a mere local deity.

D) How God dwelt in the Jerusalem temple

1. He was present in name, *1 Kings 8.29*
2. He was present in the "glory cloud" *2 Chronicles 5.13-14; Ezekiel 43.2-5.*
3. It was a spiritual presence of "ears and heart" of God, *2 Chronicles 7.14-16.*

E) The point

1. God's presence or dwelling in the temple was not a literal permanent, continuing indwelling of His eternal essence.
2. By the dramatic, miraculous "glory cloud" God impressed the Jews with a representation of His presence from heaven.
3. The temple was a place of access to God "prayers made at the temple, or even directed toward it from afar," would gain the ear of the Lord, *1 Kings 8.30.*
4. God did not and does not literally dwell in temples made with hands.

IV) God's Temple Today

A) When the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD the last vestige of physically oriented O.T. religion was laid to rest.

B) The New Testament church

1. New Testament churches did not even have their own buildings for nearly 300 years.
2. O.T. ways and concepts were revived in the Roman and Greek cathedrals and artistry started to be used in "church buildings."
3. Protestants have imitated the cathedrals with their magnificent "houses of worship"
4. There is a tendency to equate the building with the church and the place where God dwells.

C) God's temple today

1. The church - the called-out people, *1 Corinthians 3.16-17*.
2. Individuals Christians who make up the church. *1 Corinthians 6.19*.
 - a. God's presence is in His people but God dwells in heaven and not buildings made with hands.
 - b. God listens to His people's prayers.

Conclusion:

God does not literally dwell in temples made by hands. The dwelling of God is spiritual in nature. His church was built by Jesus and is spiritual in nature. We are His people as we are born again. This is where we come to God.