

## Does God Live in a House?

King David wanted to build a house for God because David found himself in a grand palace, but the Ark and Mercy Seat of God remained in the tent, also called the Tabernacle. David's desire is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:1-2. God's response is the prophecies concerning; (1) David's descendants on the throne of Israel, (2) that his son Solomon would build the house for the Ark of the Covenant, and (3) the eternal kingdom ruled by one of David's descendants (2 Samuel 7:5-16).

When it came time for Solomon to begin the construction of the Temple, he asked, *"The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods. But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him, except to burn incense before Him?"* (2 Chronicles 2:5-6). Solomon continued with the construction of the Temple as recorded in 1 Kings 7. When it is finally completed, He transferred the contents of the Tabernacle to the Temple, 1 Kings 8. During the process of moving the furniture from the tent to the new structure, Solomon asks, *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"* (1 Kings 8:27).

God answered Solomon's prayer and told him, The LORD said to him, *"I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by **putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually**"* (1 Kings 9:3). Notice that God did not say He would live there. God consecrated the Temple as the place where His people could look to His presence, where they could offer sacrifices to Him and share in the peace He provided. The Hebrew word for "forever" refers to the time between two dates or conditions. In the conversation between Solomon and God, there is no promise that the temple would never be destroyed. And in fact, it was destroyed twice, but God continued then and continues now to be with His people.

About 250 years after the dedication of the Temple, God said through Isaiah, *"Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,' declares the LORD. 'But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word'"* (Isaiah 66:1-2). Then about 750 years after Isaiah, Stephen quoted from Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah as he faced the Jews (Acts 7:46-50). Stephen pointed out the limitations of the Temple which had served its purpose and was being replaced by the Church that Jesus built.

The need to view God as an infinite spiritual being that is not confined to a building or specific location is pointed out to those who worship false gods as well as the Jews. Paul made this point in Athens as he preached Jesus to the judges who decided cases and events on the Areopagus. *"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things"* (Acts 17:24-25). The cities and towns where Paul and the other evangelists preached were filled with temples and shrines to various idols. The Jews in their synagogues still held the Jerusalem Temple sacred and prayed, bowing toward it as Daniel had done, and as Solomon's prayer suggested (1 Kings 8:46-52).

As a "called out," "separated and sanctified people," Paul said we can, "*prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). That cannot be done in a building. God designed His final temple to be His people, not a building with doors shut but living and shining in the world. "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul says; "We are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. We the church built by Jesus, are the people of God, are the Temple of God, to offer continual praises, and works to His Glory."

So, does God live in a house? Not one made with hands, but by the Father, and bought by the blood of His Son.