

THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

"For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
– 1 Cor. 3:17.

THE usual Hebrew term applied to the Jewish temple was *heykal*, which signifies a royal residence. It was also often qualified by the term *kodesh*, sanctuary, to indicate its sacredness as the visible dwelling place of Jehovah among his people. The same significance also attached to the movable tent or sanctuary of Israel, the tabernacle in the wilderness. The idea thus visibly expressed was that God was in the midst of his people, as he said, "And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God." – Exod. 29:43-45.

In fulfilment of this promise, as soon as the tabernacle was finished, the glory of the Lord filled it, as we read: – "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle....The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys" – Exod. 40:33-38.

So also at the dedication of Solomon's temple there was the same divine recognition of this more permanent structure: – "So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and the vessels did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord....And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the [R1981 : page 114] priests could not stand to

minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." – 1 Kings 7:51; 8:10,11.

The idea conveyed by the several accounts of this glory of the Lord, as it appeared in the Tabernacle, in the Temple, on Mount Sinai, and as it guided and protected Israel in coming out of Egypt, is that of exceeding brightness, enveloped, and usually concealed, by a thick cloud, from which, on special occasions, it shone forth. Thus we read, "And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days....And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." – Exod. 24:16,17. See also 19:9,18,19; 40:34,35; 1 Kings 8:10,11.

But the tabernacle and temple of God, built by divine direction and under the divine supervision, and thus honored with the visible, typical manifestations of the divine presence and glory, were only types of that grander tabernacle, not made with hands, of which fleshly Israel could have no conception, and of that holy temple which should by and by eclipse the grandeur of the earthly temple with all the gold and precious stones that adorned it. Let us, then, look away from, or, rather, let us look through, the typical temple of God to its antitype. The Apostles tell us that the Gospel Church, both individually and collectively, constitute the antitypical temple: – "For the temple of God is holy, *which temple ye are.*"

Considering the matter first in its individual application, we hear Paul say to the consecrated people of God, "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?...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." (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Lev. 26:12.) Thus every faithful, consecrated child of God in whom God, by his holy spirit, dwells, is a temple of God, a royal residence of the King of kings, a holy sanctuary, this high privilege being ours through Christ, who first

redeemed us by his precious blood, and thus made us eligible to the call of God to be thus sanctified and set apart wholly to his use – "for a habitation of God through the spirit."

It was to this that our Lord also referred, saying, "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*....The comforter which is the holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:23,26.) Thus each individual saint becomes "a habitation of God through the spirit," a holy temple, a royal residence.

How precious is the thought, how great the condescension of our God in thus honoring his chosen ones who believe and trust in him and are fully consecrated to his will and service. "Ye are the temple of the living God"; and "ye are not in the flesh [in the old carnal condition], but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. 8:9.) And if the spirit of God dwell in us, it is to sanctify and glorify these temples of his, that even now we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

It is in this view of our relationship to God that Paul would impress upon our minds the sanctity of these temples of the holy spirit, saying, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy." That is, if, after he has been made a partaker of the holy spirit, and consequently, through the enlightening and guiding influences of that spirit, has tasted the good word of God and the powers [privileges of divine instruction, etc.] of the coming age, he should stifle all these blessed influences, refusing to be further led of the spirit of God, and turn again, either suddenly or gradually, to the spirit of the world, such a one is destroying his spiritual life – destroying the temple of God, which was holy and consecrated to God. And if such a one should hope thereby to have his portion in the coming age with the restitution class, let him quickly undeceive himself, for the judgment against all such is,

"Him will God destroy." The Lord has "no pleasure" in any who "draw back" from such high privileges. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation... We are not of them who draw back *unto destruction*, but of them which believe to the saving of the soul." – Heb. 6:4-9; 10:38,39.

It was in allusion to this same thing that our Lord, addressing his disciples, said, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it"; and that Paul also said, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Luke 17:33; Rom. 8:13) It is to those who appreciate the sanctity of these temples of God that all the blessings of divine grace belong; for God shall dwell in them and walk in them, and his glory shall be manifested in them and to them. It is their blessed privilege, in reverent humility, to realize the condescending favor of God in recognizing them as his temples, and making his abode with them, and to profit by all the hallowed influences of his presence and favor. And if indeed these bodies of ours be the temple of the holy spirit, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godlikeness? and how ought these mortal bodies to be quickened by his spirit that dwelleth in us? – quickened into active and diligent service and to the bringing forth of all the fruits of holiness. – 2 Pet. 3:11; Rom. 8:11.

But while the saints are thus individually the temples of God, they also collectively constitute the great temple in which Peter likens each individual to a living stone, and Christ to the chief or foundation corner stone, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone,...ye also, as living stones, **[R1982 : page 114]** are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices* acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5.) Paul also refers to this same thought, saying, "Ye are...of the house of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [the foundation of hope in which they trusted, and which they pointed out to us], Jesus Christ, [he] being a foundation corner stone of it; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy

temple for the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit." – Eph. 2:20-22.

*Sinaitic MS. omits "spiritual" before sacrifices.

The fact of the chief corner stone being also the foundation stone of this building, as well as the "head-stone," the crowning glory of it, as suggested by the prophets (Zech. 4:7; Psa. 118:22), calls to mind the form of the Great Pyramid whose top stone is the chief corner stone, and whose internal structure corresponds so perfectly with the Tabernacle and its symbolism.+ And further, if Christ [R1982 : page 115] be the chief corner stone, the top stone and also the foundation, as he surely is (1 Cor. 3:11), the manifest suggestion is that the foundation of this building of God is laid in the heavens, not on earth, and that all the other living stones built upon this foundation are drawn and cemented to it by heavenly and not earthly attractions. Yes, "ye are God's building" – "ye," both individually and collectively, consecrated sons of God who have become the habitation of God through the spirit, ye are the temple of God. Howbeit, though now it is but a tabernacle in the flesh, and though in this tabernacle we often groan, being burdened, we know that when this tabernacle is destroyed we have a building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." – 2 Cor. 5:1,2.

+See *Millennial Dawn, VOL. III., Chap. 10.*

Though the Church, like a tabernacle in the wilderness, is now a habitation of God, owned by him, and blessed by his presence, and filled with a large measure of his glory, yet enveloped, as it generally is, by clouds of trouble, etc., which hide the glory from others, except as occasionally manifested, it is not always to be a moving tent with its glory concealed. By and by her glory will be manifested without the enveloping cloud; – "She shall shine forth as the sun." (Matt. 13:43.) The prophet Isaiah joyfully anticipates that blessed time when the

finished temple of God shall displace the present tabernacle, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,...and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." – Isa. 60:1-3.

What a hope is thus set before the faithful ones, who, as living stones, come to Christ to be built upon this foundation! From the eloquent imagery of prophets and apostles we catch the inspiration of that holy joy which shall be fully realized when all the living stones of the glorious spiritual temple of God shall noiselessly come together without the sound of a hammer – in the first resurrection, and when the headstone shall crown this glorious building of God, amid shoutings of "Grace, grace, unto it." (Zech. 4:7.) What tongue can tell or pen portray the glory to be revealed in the saints by and by, when the sacrifices of this day of atonement (the Gospel age) are all over? and what plummet can sound or line measure the wealth of blessing that will flow to redeemed humanity from the glorified temple of God?

But, aside from this inspiring theme, let us return to the thought which the Apostle would impress upon the minds and hearts of all God's people; *viz.*, the sanctity of the temple of God, – "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

If the spirit of God does not dwell in us, then we are not of the class addressed; "for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And those who have that spirit are led by it in the paths of righteousness and truth. And not only so, but those who have and who are led by the spirit of God have therein an earnest or pledge of their future inheritance as the sons of God, as the Apostle tells us, saying, "After that ye were sealed with the holy spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." – Eph. 1:13,14.

Yes, our present divine recognition as sons of God is the surest evidence we can have of his recognition when we shall have finished our course. If to-day we have his manifest approval and fellowship, and if these mortal bodies are quickened into loving, active zeal both to know and to do the will of God, we may also look forward with joyful anticipation to that blessed time when we shall see the Lord and be like him.
