

*Do We Have To Go To*  
***Church***  
*To Worship God?*

By

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# Chapter One

## *What's the Big Deal?*

What's the big deal about going to church to worship God? We can worship Him in private – right?

I don't know how many times I've heard that from people, but it's a lot. Here's the most used line people have given me about why they don't go to church: "I don't have to go to church to worship God. I can worship Him in the woods." My response – "Do you? Do you go into the woods to worship God?" Their response is usually that it's none of my business. In other words – "no." People who don't go to church usually don't worship God anywhere else. Not that they can't worship God outside of a church environment – they just don't.

People can worship God in private – in the woods, on a beach or a mountain top – and they should. Private worship is vital to the Christian life, but that's not where God says we should stop in our worship of Him. He also wants us to gather with other believers and join in corporate worship. How do I know that? In the words of a children's song – "The Bible tells me so."

The worship of God began in Heaven – long before God created the earth and people. Who were those first worshipers of God? Angels! I

love to read about angelic worship of God because it's a beautiful thing to see – and hear. I've often said that Heaven is very "noisy place." Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of angels singing at the top of their lungs, playing trumpets, shouting out the great news about the Holiness of God.

"Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light!" Psalm 148:1-3

So, what about when God created the earth and people to inhabit it? Was worship on His Mind? Absolutely! God created human beings to worship Him on earth in a similar way to how angels worship God in Heaven. Remember that God made humans "just a little lower than the angels" and "crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5) Even though Satan sinned against God in Heaven and Adam sinned against God on earth, worship is still foremost in God's Mind and Heart today and it's been that way for thousands of years.

Corporate worship on earth had its beginning with the family of man. Adam and Eve led Cain, Abel, Seth and their other sons and daughters to worship God. Fathers and mothers through history have told their children about God and what He has said and would lead them to worship God. This family worship of the True God developed alongside the worship of false gods in ancient temples around the world. People would make wooden and stone images of their gods, place them in elaborately decorated shrines and temples and pray to

them. Ancient people even dressed their wooden and stone gods in clothing, left food and water for them, and gave them baths. (You can read more about how ancient civilizations worshiped their gods in my book, “A History of Man’s Quest for Immortality.”) The True God continued to meet with His people privately and in the family structure. That’s what you’ll find in the lineage of Seth, Noah and Abraham: individuals and families worshiping the True God.

God led Jacob and his family from the land of Canaan to Egypt to provide for them during a great famine that plagued that part of the world for seven years. The Lord did all of that through the obedience of one man – Joseph – one of Jacob’s 12 sons. The Book of Genesis tells us that the number of people in Jacob’s family at that time was 70. Jacob, also known as Israel, died in Egypt. So did Joseph and all of his brothers and their wives and children. The years the children of Israel were in Egypt were good at the beginning, but bad at the end. They had the promises God had given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and they worshiped God, but they also lived in a civilization that worshiped hundreds of gods and many of the Israelites participated in that worship as well.

When life in Egypt became unbearable, the people of Israel cried out to God to deliver them and He heard them. God called to Moses from a burning bush and told him what He was going to do for His people:

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will

send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Exodus 3:9-10

## Chapter Two

### *God's Purpose for the Church*

What was God's Purpose in bringing His people out of Egypt? **Service** and **worship** – “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” (Exodus 3:12) What did God tell Moses to say to pharaoh about letting the Israelites leave Egypt? – “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me.’ (Exodus 4:22-23). Moses and his brother Aaron met with the people of Israel in Egypt and told them that God was going to deliver them out of the wicked hand of pharaoh. What did they do when they heard that? “So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.” (Exodus 4:31)

God called Israel out of Egypt for the purpose of serving and worshiping Him. The children of Israel were familiar with their family worship and the temple and tomb (pyramid) worship of the Egyptians, but they had never experienced the kind of worship God was going to teach them in the desert. I highly recommend that you read through the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Make a

note of every verse of Scripture that deals with Israel's worship and service to God. It is stunning! Most of what God taught and commanded the children of Israel in the desert dealt with two primary principles: **love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength** and **love their neighbor as themselves**. God told them to fear Him and obey all His commandments – “that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29)

What kind of corporate worship did God design for the children of Israel? It was quite elaborate and surrounded the concepts of covenants, sacrifices and offerings along with the amazing Presence of God with His people. God provided for the people's needs and protected them from their enemies. That was God's part of His Covenant with them. The people's part was to obey God's Law and be faithful to Him.

“And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.’ Exodus 20:1-6

God is Jealous (Hebrew – *El Kanno*) and demands faithfulness from His people. That is an important aspect of worship that has not changed in the 3,500 years since God gave His Law to Israel. The Lord God will not share the worship of His people with any other god.

Holiness – being set apart for sacred service – is a key element in Exodus. Moses ascended Mount Sinai to hear from God about how the people of Israel would worship the Lord. God spoke to Moses for 40 days and 40 nights as the Lord laid out in great detail how the people would make sacrifices and offerings to Him and how they would build a sacred place (tabernacle sanctuary) where God would dwell among them. This special place would contain insights for the people of Israel about Heaven.

The offerings began with the materials for the tabernacle: gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet thread, fine linen, goats' hair, ram skins, dyed red, badger skins, acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and sweet incense, onyx stones, stones to be set in the ephod and in the priest's breastplate.

Next was the building of the Ark of the Covenant from acacia wood – 2 1/2 cubits long, 1 1/2 cubits wide, 1 1/2 cubits high – overlaid with pure gold inside and out with a molding of gold all around, cast with four rings of gold for the four corners, holes in the rings on the sides of the ark so the ark could be carried by poles that were not to be taken out. The Ark would hold the Covenant that God would give Moses.

Next was the Mercy Seat made of pure gold – 2 1/2 cubits long and 1 1/2 cubits wide – and two cherubim made of gold that would be at two ends of the Mercy Seat. The wings of the cherubim would stretch out and cover the Mercy Seat. The faces of the cherubim would face each other, toward the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat would be placed on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

“And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.” Exodus 25:22

The Lord continued to give Moses details for the building of the Table of Showbread – along with its dishes, pans, pitchers and bowls, all to be made with pure gold – the Golden Lampstand – also made of pure gold – along with branches, bowls, knobs, lamps, wick-trimmers, and trays – all made of pure gold – the Curtains of Linen, the Curtains of Goat’s Hair (“to be a tent over the tabernacle”) – Boards and Sockets for the Tabernacle, overlaid with gold – the Veil hung on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with hooks made of gold and sockets of silver.

“And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy *place* and the Most Holy.” Exodus 26:33

There's more – a lot more – about a screen for the door of the Tabernacle, a Bronze Altar, the Courts of the Tabernacle, the Gate of the Court and Oil for the Lamp.

Then comes details about the Priesthood of Israel with their special garments. Why? For their sacred service to the Almighty God.

“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Elemazar, and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. And these *are* the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.” Exodus 28:1-4

What's this all about? Holiness to the Lord God of Israel! Everything about worship is about God. The high priest of Israel had to be clothed appropriately to go into the Presence of God to present Him with the offerings of His people.

“You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. There shall be an opening for his head in the middle of it; it shall have a woven binding all around its opening, like the opening in a coat

of mail, so that it does not tear. And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around. And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy *place* before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die. 'You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, *like* the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.'" Exodus 28:31-38

## Chapter Three

### *The Pattern is Jesus*

The pattern God gave Moses for the Tabernacle was a foreshadowing of the Person and Ministry of Jesus Christ.

“Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*’ But now *He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*” Hebrews 8:1-6

The Book of Hebrews is amazing in its insight into why God did what He did the way He did it. I highly recommend every Christian take 6 – 12 months to study Hebrews alongside Exodus and Leviticus. You will see God’s Plan for the ages in a new light. The Tabernacle comes alive with phenomenal meaning to every believer. Here are some thoughts from Hebrews 9 -

” ... the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” vss 8-10

The Tabernacle with its blood sacrifices, washings and ordinances could not cleanse the conscience – could not save the soul. It was a type, a figure, of Christ Who would come to cleanse and save.

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the

eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” vs 11-14

The earthly Tabernacle was a figure of what Christ would do on earth and in Heaven.

“For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘*This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.*’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— He then would have

had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” vss 16-28

Jesus entered Heaven to appear in the Presence of God for us! He is the great Mediator through His own Blood. Keep these verses, along with what Moses wrote in Exodus, in mind as we look at the Tabernacle, what was in it, and how all of it pointed to the coming of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!

## Chapter Four

### *The Tabernacle and Jesus*

Jesus told His disciples that He was the **Way, the Truth, and the Life**. No one could come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). This pattern – **Way, Truth, Life** – is found in the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle area was divided into three parts: 1) Outer Court  
2) Holy Place 3) Most Holy Place

1) The **Outer Court** contained the **Brazen Altar** for the blood sacrifice of an unblemished offering. Surrounding the Outer Court was a great **Fence** that no one could enter – unless they came through the one opening God provided. The **Gate** to the Outer Court was only 30 feet wide – “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14) The Gate that led to the Tabernacle was narrow- and it was the only way in - Jesus is God’s only **Way** to salvation – “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The **Brazen Altar** was open to all of the people, but only the priests of Aaron's lineage could make the offerings. The Hebrew root for "altar" means "to slay, slaughter." The Latin word *alta* means "high." The Brazen Altar was placed on a mound higher than the surrounding area – a pre-figure of Jesus being "lifted up" – "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die." (John 12:31-33)

The priests used the **Laver** for cleansing after the death of the sacrifice – a cleansing that set apart for holy service what was cleaned. They washed before entering the Holy Place. Jesus does the same for Christians – "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27) Jesus shed His Blood for us on the Altar of the Cross, then sanctified and cleansed us with the washing of water by the Word. Because of Jesus, we appear holy and without blemish to the Father. The Laver was located half way between the Brazen Altar and the Holy Place.

Entrance —> Brazen Altar —> Laver —> Holy Place

2) The Holy Place contained the **Table of Showbread**, **Candlestick**, and **Altar of Incense**. The Holy Place was where the priests communed with God through these three types of Christ.

The **Table of Showbread** was food for the priests – even as Jesus was the Bread of Life – “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:32-35) The Table of Showbread was placed on the right side of the Holy Place and held 12 loaves of Bread – one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The priests baked the Bread with fine flour and placed it on the Table for a week. The priests removed the Bread from the Table every Sabbath Day and ate it in the Holy Place, because the Bread was holy. The priests then baked new Bread and placed the 12 fresh loaves on the Table of Showbread for another week. The Showbread was also known as the “Bread of the Presence” because it was always to be in the presence of the Lord. “Breaking bread” has long been a vital part of fellowship and communion in the human experience – and so it is with God. We fellowship with Him through His Son – the **Bread of Life**.

The **Golden Lampstand** (also known as Golden Candlestick and Menorah) stood at the left side of the Holy Place. Artisans hammered it from one piece of pure gold – one central branch with three branches extending from each side for a total of seven branches. The branches looked the branch of an almond tree with buds, blossoms

and flowers. There were seven lamps with wicks and olive oil on top of the branches. The priests were to keep the lamps burning continuously. The Golden Lampstand was the only light for the priests in the Holy Place – prefiguring Jesus Christ – “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” (John 8:12) The Prophet John said this of Jesus – “That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” (John 1:9) The Apostle Paul wrote this about those who believe in Jesus Christ – “For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8)

The **Altar of Incense** sat in front of the Curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Four **Horns** came out of the four corners of the Altar. The priests burned Incense on the Altar at the same time of the daily burnt offerings – morning and evening – as they interceded with God on behalf of the people of Israel. Fire was brought from the Brazen Altar to burn incense on the Altar of Incense. The Incense was to burn continually as a pleasing aroma to God – “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we *are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16) The priests placed blood on each of the four **Horns** once a year on the Day of Atonement.

### Altar of Incense



Golden

Table

### Lampstand of Showbread

3) The **Most Holy Place** was where God lived with His people – the **Life** of God shared with His people. God appeared to Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night – above the Most Holy Place. Only one human being was allowed to enter into the Most Holy Place and live – and that just once a year. It was the Place where God accepted the offering the **high priest** brought to God on the Day of Atonement.

The thick curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was known as the **Veil**. It was thick and made of fine linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn. Figures of Cherubim Angels were embroidered on the Veil. The word “veil” in Hebrew means a “divider that hides.” The veil hid the people of Israel from the Presence of God. It was a barrier, a divider, for hundreds of years – until Jesus came as the Lamb of God. The death of Jesus Christ tore down the barrier Veil and opened the way to the Life of God – “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.”

(Matthew 27:50-52) The Veil was torn in two from top to bottom – God tore down the barrier from Heaven to earth. In Christ we have access to God – “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:17-19)

Inside the Most Holy Place were the **Ark of the Covenant**, the **Mercy Seat**, and the **Golden Cherubim**.

The Ark contained the **Golden Pot of Manna**, **Aaron’s Staff** that had budded, and the **Stone Commandment Tablets** God gave Moses. These three items were representative of the Grace of God in the life of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant was where sin met Justice and Mercy. The people of Israel complained about not having enough to eat in the desert, so God fed them Manna from Heaven. The people complained about having to eat the Manna. God had mercy on His people, but they complained. Aaron’s Staff was a reminder of the rebellion of the people of Israel against their high priest, Aaron. God again had mercy on the people and demonstrated that His choice of Aaron as high priest was right. God then directed Moses to place Aaron’s staff inside the Ark – “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Bring Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.’” (Numbers 17:10) The Stone Commandment Tablets were a reminder to the people of Israel that they were sinners in need of God’s forgiveness because they continually failed to obey God’s

Word – even though they had all promised they would.

The **Mercy Seat** was made of pure gold and covered the Ark of the Covenant and the holy items in it. It was the most valuable of all the vessels in the Tabernacle. It represented God's Mercy that covered the sin of His people, Israel. It prefigured Jesus Christ – Who is the Mercy Seat for His people. "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:22-26

The **Golden Cherubim** sat on top of the Mercy Seat and Ark. They were "guardian" angels who supported the Throne of God in Heaven. The images of the Cherubim represented the Holiness and Righteousness of God. They also represented the Guardian Angels God placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to keep Adam and Eve and their family of humans from eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and living forever in their sin.

Chapter after chapter after chapter in the Old Testament – hundreds of verses – thousands of words – all about the explicit details of how Israel was to worship their God. Amazing! What God was doing with the children of Israel was bringing a glimpse of Heaven down to

earth. For the next 500 years, Israel would carry the Tabernacle from one place to another as God moved His people closer to His permanent home on earth – the Temple of God.

## Chapter Five

### *The Temple of the Living God*

We've seen that God developed worship to be both personal and corporate. We've seen that God created angels and humans for the purpose of worship and fellowship. Worship began in Heaven with angels and continued on earth with humans. That worship began in families and eventually grew into the corporate worship of the nation of Israel.

We saw the stunning details of the Tabernacle Israel built in the desert for God to dwell with His people. The Lord gave special wisdom to the artisans of Israel to build the Tabernacle. They followed God's direction for building it to the exact pattern He gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. When Moses and the people of Israel completed building and erecting the Tabernacle, the great Cloud of God covered the Tabernacle of Meeting, "and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34) The Cloud of God was above the Tabernacle by day and fire was over it by night in the sight of all the people of Israel.

The use of the Tabernacle for sacrifice and worship continued for hundreds of years, traveling from one place to another, until the day finally came when it was replaced by the permanent Temple of God in Jerusalem.

“So all the work that Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and all the furnishings. And he put them in the treasuries of the house of God. Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, in Jerusalem, that they might bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD up from the City of David, which is Zion. Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with the king at the feast, which was in the seventh month. So all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. Then they brought up the ark, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that were in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. The poles extended so that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen

from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day.”

2 Chronicles 5:1-9

God waited to reveal His plans for a permanent home on earth until King David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it the capital city of Israel. God blessed David and gave him many great military victories against the enemies of Israel. Then, the Lord gave David the desire to build a permanent House for God.

“Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, ‘See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.’ Then Nathan said to the king, ‘Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” 2 Samuel 7:1-3

However, God had other plans. He told the prophet Nathan to tell David that he would not build a permanent Place for God. That would be for David’s son to do. That man was Solomon.

“Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David. Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the LORD put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my

God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.’ 1 Kings 5:1-5

Those words of King Solomon to King Hiram were the beginning of one of the greatest building projects ever completed on earth – Solomon’s Temple – and we know exactly when it began.

“And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.” 1 Kings 6:1

King Solomon placed tens of thousands of Israelites and more than 100,000 aliens living in Israel into the service of building God’s Holy Temple. It took seven years to complete. You’ll find the great details of this amazing building project in 1 Kings 5 – 6 and 2 Chronicles 2 – 5. Even though King David was not allowed to build the Temple, he did organize the structure of the people who would serve God in the Temple (1 Chronicles 23 – 24).

- They included new responsibilities for the Levites along with a new division into three groups: Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites. Their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the

service of the Temple, in the courts and in the chambers, in the purifying of all holy things and the work of the service of the House of God. You can read the specifics in 1 Chronicles 23.

- The Priests (sons of Aaron) were divided into groups and each had the duty of serving in the Temple for one day. They were chosen by lot and numbered 24. You can read more about their duties in 1 Chronicles 24.
- 4,000 Israelites were involved in Temple worship as singers. 288 were musicians ministering to God with a variety of instruments, including harps, stringed instruments, cymbals and horns. They were divided into 24 groups. You can read more about them in 1 Chronicles 25.
- 4,000 Israelites served as gatekeepers to guard the four gates to the Temple. More on that in 1 Chronicles 26. We also read about officials and judges over Israel outside of Jerusalem, the structure of Israel's army, the 12 monthly captains, the chief officers of the 12 tribes and the special officials and counselors to the king in 1 Chronicles 26 and 27.

We learn much about God's intentions in building the Temple in the Book of 2 Chronicles. The first 4 chapters are details of exactly how God wanted His Temple to look and the amazing work that went into building it to the Lord's specifications. Chapter 5 shows King Solomon meeting with the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes for the purpose of bringing up the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle of

Meeting, and all the holy furnishings to the Temple.

What a scene it was! As you read this stunning account, imagine what it would have been like to be there that day. See it, hear it, feel it, smell it, taste it – experience the Glory of God as He moved from the Tabernacle into His Temple.

“So all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. Then they brought up the ark, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that *were* in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy *Place*, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. The poles extended so that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen from *the holy place*, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put *there* at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they had come out of Egypt. And it came to pass when the priests came out of the *Most Holy Place* (for all the priests who *were* present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), and the Levites *who were* the singers, all those of

Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets— indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying: ‘For He is good, For His mercy endures forever,’* that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.” 2 Chronicles 5:4-14

What happened next gives us great insight into the Purpose God had for His Temple in Jerusalem.

“Then Solomon spoke: ‘The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever.’ Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. And he said: ‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has fulfilled with His hands what He spoke with His mouth to my father David, saying, ‘Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a ruler

over My people Israel. Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.’ Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well in that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.’ So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke, and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built the temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And there I have put the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD which He made with the children of Israel.” 2 Chronicles 6:1-11

The Temple of God has an amazing history – sometimes glorious – sometimes tragic. King Solomon, who loved God so much, gave in to the passions of his flesh and allowed the worship of other gods in Israel. The nation fell into great sin against God and the Lord allowed the Temple to be destroyed by invading armies – the people of Israel taken into captivity. God returned some of His people to the land of Israel and they rebuilt the Temple. That was the Temple we read about in the Gospels – the Temple of Jesus’ time on earth. However, Israel sinned greatly against God by rejecting Jesus as their Messiah and the armies of Rome destroyed the Temple and led most of Israel’s population into captivity. The Temple has not been rebuilt to this day – but it will be.

So, what were the Tabernacle and Temple all about? They were about the worship of the Holy God of Heaven. God “dwelled” with His people day and night, in their sight. He was their Covenant God. The Tabernacle and Temple were a constant reminder of God’s saving Israel from slavery in Egypt and providing for them in the Promised Land. They were also prophetic of the coming of God’s Son to be the Sacrifice for the sins of Israel and the world and to be Glorified above every name that is named in Heaven or on earth. The Tabernacle, and each of the two Temples, looked “forward” to the coming of Christ to save His people from their sins.

## Chapter Six

### *The Church of the Living God*

We've seen the amazing legacy of worship on earth demonstrated through the Tabernacle and Temple of God. We've seen the great detail and care that went into the construction of both. God gave Moses, David and Solomon Heavenly insight into how God's people should worship Him. That worship included a "forward" look at the coming of the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Jesus is the Lamb of God and He was crucified for our sins. Now, God's people look "back" at what Jesus accomplished for them on the Cross.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not

only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Romans 5:6-11

Israel worshiped God in a Tabernacle or Temple over a period of about 1,500 years. The Roman Army destroyed the Temple of Jesus' time toward the end of the 1st Century A.D., and it has not been rebuilt to this date. That's a period of almost 2,000 years. How have God's people worshiped Him during that time without the Temple or Tabernacle?

God introduced a new system of worship during the 1st Century A.D. We know it as the **Church - the Body of Christ**. The Old Testament system of worship, with the Temple and its sacrifices, is gone – but something new has come.

God no longer inhabits a building as He did with the Tabernacle and Temple. God now **inhabits His people!** That is a stunning picture – the great Cloud of God's Glory that led the people of Israel and filled Solomon's Temple for hundreds of years now **lives in you!**

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” 1 Corinthians 6:19

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one

member but many.” 1 Corinthians 12:13-14

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” 1 Corinthians 12:27

“And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:22-23

The Apostle Paul’s letters make it abundantly clear that God is working with His people differently today. For one thing, there is now no difference between Jew and Gentile. There was a big difference before God called Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9), showed Peter the vision of the great sheet (Acts 10), and convinced the apostles that God was spiritually working with Gentiles in a new way (Acts 11 & 15).

“But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that

we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

Galatians 2:6-9

This idea that God would work in the lives of Gentiles (non-Jews) the same way He worked with Jews was revolutionary to the apostles. It took a lot of discussion, Peter’s impassioned plea and Paul’s powerful testimony to convince the apostles that God was doing something brand new – something they had never experienced before. Gentiles who converted to Judaism were treated differently than Jews born into the faith. Gentile proselytes did not have the same access to the Temple that Jews did.

God introduced a new day in the life of His people. He made them all one in Jesus Christ – Gentiles became members of the same spiritual Body as their brother Jews.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26-28

Can you imagine how revolutionary that was in the 1st Century A.D.? It had been almost 2,000 years since God singled out Abraham to become father of God’s chosen nation, Israel. God had spent centuries reminding Israel about the differences He wanted between them and all the other nations of the world. But when Jesus Christ came to earth, preached the coming Kingdom and sacrificed His life

for Israel, the leaders rejected Him as their Messiah. That's when Jesus introduced something new.

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For *‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’*”

Romans 10:12-13

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief

cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:11-22

This message from God was unexpected. Jews were shocked – Gentiles were overjoyed. The new way God was working with Jews and Gentiles in the same spiritual Body was both a mystery and a revelation.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Ephesians 3:1-7

What did all this change in the way God worked with Jew and Gentile mean to the way the Church would corporately worship God? Jews knew the worship of the One True God in synagogue and Temple.

Gentiles knew the worship of false gods in their heathen temples. Would God continue synagogue and Temple worship, but give Gentiles a new standing in the community of Jewish believers? He certainly wouldn't allow any of the ways of worshiping false gods to enter into the way His people worshiped Him. No, God introduced something new. We know it as **Christian worship**.

“Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Acts 11:25-26

That was the beginning of the use of the name **Christian** – a name we are proud to bear. It also gives us an important insight into this new way of worshiping God. Christians of the 1st Century were given spiritual gifts for their service to God. They met in homes, were served by deacons, and led by elders. They no longer looked to the Temple for their worship of God. The believing Jews left the synagogues and joined with their Gentile brothers and sisters to worship God, often in the homes of Gentiles – a place a Law-abiding Jew would never enter.

Christians worshiped the same God the people of Israel worshiped – and the Lord accepted their worship! It was not the elaborate worship of Tabernacle and Temple. Christian worship is much different than Jewish worship. The primary differences? 1) God once inhabited the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple, but now lives “in”

Christians who worship Him in spirit and in truth. 2) Jews look forward to the day when they again can offer sacrifices to God at the new Temple in Jerusalem and see their high priest carry their offering to God — Christians look to Jesus Christ, their Sacrifice and High Priest, Who intercedes for them day and night with the Father in Heaven. 3) Jews look forward to the day of their personal and national salvation — Christians remember it.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

As Christians, we should embrace what God is doing in us, for us, and through us – and that should lead to sincere worship. We are now able to enter into the Presence of God boldly and reverently. God allows us an access to Him that the people of Israel never had. Why? Think about the Tabernacle and Temple. How did Jews approach God? Through sacrifice. They brought their sacrifices to God as He directed them in His Law. But did their sacrifices give them bold entrance into the Presence of God? No. Only the high

priest was allowed to enter into the Presence of God – and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement. No one can approach God with their own sacrifices. It is only through Jesus Christ that human beings are given access to God. It was Christ's death on the Cross that made the way for the close, loving relationship we experience with God. Jesus is the Sacrifice and the High Priest Who brought the Blood of the Sacrifice to God.

“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:11-14

“Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*’ But now

*He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” Hebrews 8:1-6*

So, what does that mean for Christian worship? Our worship should be deeper, more meaningful and more exciting than the worship of the people of Israel. Each one of us has direct access to God because of what Jesus accomplished for us through His Crucifixion and Resurrection. We are now at peace with our God.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2

I'll close this study with one other important aspect of corporate Christian worship – the spiritual impact it has on unsaved people.

“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” 1 Corinthians 14:23-25

The context of 1 Corinthians 13 & 14 is the **absolute necessity of love in everything we do** and the **difference between private and corporate worship** based on that love.

“What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” 1 Corinthians 14:15-19

Paul’s message is clear – when Christians worship together, the love they have for God and others should manifest itself in spiritual maturity, self-control and concern for the spiritual wellbeing of others. May it be so in the worship of our church. May God’s people be edified and may the unsaved be redeemed to the glory of God.

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