

Take care to honor God's spiritual dwelling place!

"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).

The King James Version translates the latter part of this verse as a "habitation of God through the Spirit." It refers back to the "holy temple in the Lord" (v. 21). The temple of the Lord consists of those whom Paul had earlier described as "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," (v. 19). So the temple of the Lord today is spiritual, made up of saved people rather than bricks or stones.

Secondly, Paul says that these citizens are to be "fitted together" as they grow "into a holy temple in the Lord" (v. 21). The Greek word (naos) translated "temple" here refers specifically to the temple in which was housed the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in ancient Israel. This was God's habitation during the Old Testament period, where only the priests and high priests could enter. It foreshadowed the spiritual temple (church) today because only "priests" (Christians) and the "high priest" (Christ) can enter now. They alone make up the true temple of God.

Just as the high priest entered into the Most Holy Place once every year to make atonement for the people, so Christ as our high priest entered once forever into heaven to make eternal redemption for us with His blood! It is this blood that made us "priests" to our God (Rev. 1:5-6) and permitted us to be sufficiently cleansed in order to enter into the temple.

Now as we look again to God's "habitation" (spiritual temple, the church), we are reminded that it is holy because of God's presence there. It is our job as part of that holy temple to keep it pure, unspotted and in order. This responsibility begins with each of the priests as each maintains his/her purity. We are to remain pure and unspotted from the world, and we are to see that all other parts of the temple remain pure likewise. It is a grave responsibility to keep holy and sanctified that which has been hallowed by the blood of Jesus Christ. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" Romans 12:1.

Also implied in the word "habitation" is that it is a permanent dwelling or settled habitation [Vincent, Word Studies in the NT, vol. 1:186]. We use the phrase "settled down" to refer to those who have chosen to stop wandering around and have become fixed in their lifestyle or location. Certainly this concept states emphatically that the church is God's permanent dwelling place and that all who would come to the Lord will find Him there. The worship of the saints is unto a God Who resides within them spiritually and they in Him as well. Peter explained this interrelationship with these words: "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 2:5.

Beloved brethren and saints, do you revere God's habitation as you should? Do you strive to keep yourself pure? Do you strive to keep pure the church in its worship, work, organization, name, and membership? It is a holy calling to be a child of God, a priest unto God, a part of the habitation of God through the Spirit! Respect God, His temple, and everything pertaining to it.