

Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28



Volume VIII
Issue 190

The Dwelling Place of God

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

We are going to take a look at the dwelling place of God. We will briefly be working our way through the chronology of the Bible to see where on earth God is. These insights will lead us to a most amazing truth – God’s great truth for today – so let’s get started. We will begin “In the beginning ...”



And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day ... (Genesis 3:8).

Think of it! Adam lived in a beautiful garden located in a place called Eden, which means *pleasure*. It was a place of breathless wonder. He lived there with a counterpart prepared especially for him by his Creator, but more importantly *GOD* was with him in the garden!

Take that in. Can you even imagine that? Adam lived in a garden of *pleasure* and *GOD* was there; God was walking on the planet. God was in Adam’s “neck of the woods.” Could we find adequate words to describe such a wonderfully blessed situation?

Nevertheless, with one action there was a “disastrous” *turn of events*. Adam and Eve sinned against God their Creator. The very next portion of this passage reads:

And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden (3:8b).

The presence of God was on the Earth and Adam and Eve “*hid themselves*” from Him. Sadly the presence of the Lord God had become a *fearful* thing. How “disastrous” sin is – how fearful and alienating!

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, “Where art thou?” And he said, “I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid my self” (3:9).

The end result of this sad account is that God,

... drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life (3:24).

Life in the presence of God was over!

GOD’S DWELLING IN THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE

And let them make Me a sanctuary: that I may dwell among them (Exodus 25:8).

Many years after the fall, God came to *dwell among* man once again. He came to live among His chosen nation, Israel. He instructed them to

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Dear Saints,

Greetings in the glorious grace of our Father, and in the wonderful name of His Son, our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

This is our 20th Anniversary issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook*. We published our first issue in May, 1989. It started out as an occasional periodical, before becoming a weekly in December, 2007.

For two decades I have counted it a great joy to be able to serve you through these pages. It has always been my prayer that these small efforts will be used of God to strengthen His dear saints, and bring glory to Him.

I have been actively involved in publishing biblical periodicals for over 30 years. I was the editor of four publications prior to the *BSN* – *The Biblical Standard* (1976-1980), *The Old Paths* (1981-1985), *Forgotten Truths* (1986-1989), and *Grace Testimony* (1986-1995).

Sharing the truth that I have learned from my personal studies truly has been a lifelong passion. The topics that I have dealt with in the *BSN* have certainly not been mainstream. It has always been my desire to try to keep an open mind regarding truth. I have always sought to encourage our readers to be like the Bereans, who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11), and to “prove all things” (I Thessalonians 5:21). This spirit has personally led me through a lifetime of transition – correcting and adjusting my doctrinal views.

I certainly do not claim infallibility for the contents of the *BSN*. It is simply a platform whereby I can share, with those who have an interest, things that I currently see. A close look at the past issues of *BSN* will reveal the many changes in my understanding over the years.

In the very first issue of the *BSN* I wrote in the editorial a section called *Attitude*, which still reflects the passion of my heart:

We have no corner on truth, nor does anyone else. None possesses “all truth” infallibly. Therefore we seek to fellowship with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and take pleasure in His precious word. We agree with the words of George Whitefield when he said,

I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the Book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think that they are united to our
(see **EDITORIAL**, page 1852)

Bible Student's Notebook[™]

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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DWELLING (continued from page 1845)

build a dwelling place for Him, which was called the *tabernacle* in its temporary form, and the *temple* in its more permanent version (I Kings 8:12-13). The tabernacle and temple were distinctly known as “*the house of the Lord*,” “*the Lord’s house*,” “*the house of God*” (II Chronicles 7:1-2, 5), because that’s where God dwelled. It was His “*sanctuary*” from the world that was at enmity with Him.

Imagine it! The children of Israel had the *True* and *Living* God, the God of the universe as one of their national residents, one of their neighbors. They were able to boast that God dwelled among them! When folks visited Jerusalem, they could be taken over by *God’s house* to see where the Eternal God lived. What a wonder! Can you imagine that? Could any sightseeing attraction of the world rival that? God was in Israel’s “*neck of the woods*.” What a blessed circumstance!

However, once again, through a “*disastrous*” *turn of events* – the many spiritual whoredoms of the children of Israel – this house became “*Ichabod ... the glory is departed from Israel*” (I Samuel 4:21-22).

Life in *the presence* of God was over – again!

WHERE ON EARTH IS GOD?

When it comes to a study of the dwelling place of God, there comes an amazing turn of events when we get to Paul, the Apostle. By taking the important *dispensational* principles and *identification* truths which he revealed, we not only see *WHO* we are in Christ, but *WHAT* we are as well!

After the fall of Israel (Romans 11:11-12) God, through His chosen instrument Paul (Romans 11:13), turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:28). In so doing, God carried out His *mystery* plan which He had “*kept secret since the world began*” (Romans 16:25). The result of Christ’s finished work at Calvary is that “*the riches of His grace*” are now manifested. We are thus “*accepted*” (Ephesians 1:6), “*complete*” (Colossians 2:10), and blessed with “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*” (Ephesians 1:3).

These wonderful truths are multifaceted. One of the many benefits of being “*in Christ*,” and there are many, is that we – those who were once “*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*” (Ephesians 2:12) – are “*now*” (2:13) “*an holy temple in the Lord*” (2:21), “*built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (2:22).

None of us could have even imagined such an astounding turn of events: those who were strangers – without hope and without God – would become God’s *dwelling place*!

Truly, what we have been given in His “*abundant grace*” is,

... *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think ...* (Ephesians 3:20).

He does more in “*the riches of His grace*” than we could ever “*ask or think*.”

Honestly, we would never have dared to “*ask*” God for such an honor and privilege as having Him – the Sovereign of the Universe – actually live in us; nor would we ever have even been able to “*think*” up such a thing of magnificent grandeur.

“*But the God of all grace*” thought of it – and He did it!

We **are** now the *dwelling place* of God. It was His design, His choice, His doing; “*even a marvelous work and a wonder*.”

HABITAT FOR DIVINITY

... *Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God ...* (Ephesians 2:22).

What a statement!

WE are the temple, the habitation of God. Think of this! God not just dwelling in a building somewhere, but **in us!** That is truly something to get really excited about, I’d say!

There is an honorable movement in our country that builds homes for the underprivileged called *Habitat for Humanity*; but there is a far greater housing project underway today! It began some millennia ago. It is *Habitat for Divinity*. God is actively building a house for His own dwelling. A temple, *not* of bricks and mortar *made by hand*, but of people.

*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, **dwelleth not in temples made with hands*** (Acts 17:24).

*Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God**, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (I Corinthians 3:16).

*What? Know ye not that your body is the **temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* (I Corinthians 6:19).

*For ye are the **temple of the living God*** (II Corinthians 6:16).

*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a **habitation of God through the Spirit*** (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Those of us who have now trusted Christ – the *first-trusters* – are the dwelling place of God! This is *much more* than walking with God in a garden; *much more* than having God as a neighbor; *much more* than having God in our “neck of the woods.” We have the life of God *IN US* (“*manifest in the flesh*”)! He has taken up residence in us.

Habitat for Divinity; what a wonder!

What amazing grace!

A STOLEN IDENTITY

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that **the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**?* (I Corinthians 3:16).

For most of us, our true identity as the *temple of God*, the *house of God*, has been stolen from us, years before we were ever born. Human organizations and institutions, along with their brick and mortar structures, have taken for themselves *our identity in Christ*. These religious agencies for too long have been pawned off as having the identity of the church, the Body of Christ.

The “Reformation” never did free the members of Christ’s body from this type of religious bondage and tyranny. Centuries later, in spite of all the truth that the Body of Christ has been exposed to, it is still the common practice to surrender our true identity to the religious system:

“Where do you go to church?”

“Remember that this is the Lord’s House.”

“Welcome to the House of God.”

“Be reverent when entering the sanctuary.”

Identity Theft

When will we wake up and realize that our identity has been taken from us? When will we reclaim our *true identity* and live in the fullness of who and what we are “*in Christ*?” What does all this mean – to be the church, the temple, the sanctuary, the house of God? It means...

Living the Temple Life

The Old Testament will reveal the many aspects of *temple life*. Paul, our Apostle under grace, will show us how these aspects, once true of Israel’s temple, are *now* true of us as members of Christ’s Body.

Worship

Old Testament Temple: Psalm 5:7; Isaiah 66:23; Acts 7:48; Revelation 11:1

Grace Temple: Philippians 3:3

Singing

Old Testament Temple: Psalms 100:2; Amos 8:3

Grace Temple: Ephesians 5:19

Teaching

Old Testament Temple: Matthew 21:23

Grace Temple: II Timothy 2:15

Glory

Old Testament Temple: II Chronicles 7:1-2

Grace Temple: I Corinthians 2:6-7; II Corinthians 3:17-18; 4:6-7; Ephesians 3:19; Romans 8:18

Giving

Old Testament Temple: Malachi 3:10; Nehemiah 13:4-5

Grace Temple: I Corinthians 16:1

Sacrifice

Old Testament Temple: II Chronicles 7:4-5

Grace Temple: Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:17

Sweet Incense

Old Testament Temple: Exodus 30:7

Grace Temple: Ephesians 5:2

We have taken neither the time nor space to compare and contrast these points. Instead, they are given as an abridged concordance for our own personal study.

These truths should remind us that we are to *live* the temple life.

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

One God and Father of all, Who is above all,

*and through all, **and in you all*** (Ephesians 4:6).

So, where on earth is God?

God is *in us!* The God of the universe lives in you and me. We are His dwelling place on earth today, and we take Him with us *everywhere* we go, making every act of ours an act of worship. What a blessed privilege that is. If folks are going to meet God, they are going to meet Him *in us*.

Jim Palmer wonderfully brought this truth to focus for us when he wrote,

God is in our neighborhood because I carry His divine life within me. I put God ... in close proximity to others. With God in me, simply being present and available is “ministry.” ...

I’ve come to see the significance of my encounters with people as not pointing them to God as much as actually being an expression of God. The “Body of Christ” metaphor has grown in significance for me – that Christ continues His presence and ministry on earth in, through and as us ...

God is not somewhere up in the sky; He’s living His life in and through us, the Body of Christ, in the *neighborhoods where we live*, the places we work and play, and the people we come across each day. – *Wide Open Spaces* (2007), pages 34-35, 43

What a glorious mystery revealed to us by our Apostle, Paul; one that he calls, “*the great mystery;*” “*the mystery of godliness.*”

*This is a **great mystery:** but I speak concerning Christ and the church* (Ephesians 5:32).

*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).

And without controversy great is the ►

mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (I Timothy 3:16).*

Godliness is not some moral or religious code followed; rather it is “**God manifest in the flesh.**” God is the only meaning and definition of godliness. Christ is the only one who can live the godly life. We are God’s dwelling place, and the Father seeks the manifestation of the life of His Son in our mortal flesh,

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (II Corinthians 4:10-11).

BEHAVE THYSELF

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to **behave thyself in the house of God,** which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh ... (I Timothy 3:15-16).*

We often hear parents tell their children to “*Behave!*” Yet the fact is that all children *behave*, though sometimes they just behave badly.

We may even hear religious parents say to their children, “Now I want you to behave yourself today in church.” This is *NOT* the meaning of the verse above, “*behave thyself in the house of God.*” This is *NOT* an admonition about appropriate behavior in religious buildings. Rather, it is about the behavior of believers in their lives.

How are we as believers to behave? Paul teaches us to behave as who we are! We are in the Body of Christ, God’s *living church*. We are to behave accordingly!

Christ Manifest!

This way, the God who lives within us can be manifested out through our flesh (i.e., His temple).

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us ... Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the **life** also of Jesus might be **manifest in our body.** ... that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (II Corinthians 4:7, 10-11).*

Christ Magnified!

Paul did not stop there – with Christ being *manifest*. His desire was for something even greater: that Christ would be *magnified*.

*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also **Christ shall he magnified in my body,** whether it be by life, or by death (Philippians 1:20).*

We behave ourselves as members of Christ’s Body when *He* is manifested and magnified in God’s holy temple, “**which temple ye are.**”

What does the behavior of the believer look like? What does the manifestation and magnification of God’s life through Christ look like?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22-23).

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men (II Timothy 2:24).

To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men (Titus 3:2).

Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye

*(See **DWELLING**, last page)*

Israel's New Covenant

Jeremiah 31 – Hebrews 8

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The New Covenant (or New Testament) is a subject which has caused much confusion when it comes to Bible doctrine, because many members of the Body of Christ have erroneously mistaken it as belonging to them. The New Testament is not a set of books making up the last part of the Bible (*i.e.*, the Greek Scripture). Instead, it is a “contract” which God will make exclusively with the nation Israel.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31; c.f. Hebrews 8:8; Ezekiel 20:37; Isaiah 59:21).

Israel is God's covenant people (Romans 9:4; Ephesians 2:12). They were the “Old Testament” saints, and they will be the “New Testament” saints. Often we hear “New Testament Church” or “New Testament Believers” used in relation to what God is doing today; yet in doing so we neglect the great duty of “*rightly dividing the Word of truth*” (II Timothy 2:15). How is it that saints of our day can take a “contract” to be made between God and Israel and make it theirs? This is simply another case of spiritual larceny, which is a common crime against Scripture.

It is God's objective to carry out all of His purposes, laid forth under the Old Covenant, with the New. The failure of the Old Covenant was not with the covenant itself, or with God; rather it was with the Nation of Israel itself. Israel did not fulfill her responsibilities and therefore “defaulted” on the contract. Yet God will perfect this nation with the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-8; *c.f.* Romans 8:3). He will give them Divine enablement, by His Spirit, to accomplish all that He requires of them (Ezekiel 36:27). This is a *better* covenant with *better* promises (Hebrews 8:6). When God establishes this New Covenant with Israel, He will:

1. Gather Israel to their own land (Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 11:17; 36:24).
2. Purge Israel's sins (Ezekiel 11:18; 20:38; 36:25, 29; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17); and as a result, all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26-27).
3. Put the law in Israel's inward parts (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16). In this we see the primary difference is between the two Covenants: the Old was written on stone, the New on their hearts. Therefore Israel will not need to “*teach every man his neighbor*” in those days (Hebrews 8:11), but shall then be the witnesses to the Gentiles of which Matthew 28:19-20 speaks (*c.f.* Isaiah 60:3).

This New “Everlasting Covenant” (Jeremiah 32:40) will fulfill the Old, thus making the Old obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). The Old was a shadow and figure of the New (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). Israel shall regain her holy days as well as other ceremonial practices provided for under the Old (Ezekiel chapters 40-46).

The death of Israel's Messiah (Ephesians 2:12; Romans 9:4-5; 15:8; Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 53:8) is the basis of her New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15-17; Matthew 26:28). It is at this point that many make their mistake: since God made this Covenant with the blood of Christ (the same blood which paid for the sin of the *world*), many assume that this Covenant must belong to us also; but Israel's New Covenant was only a portion of the great work of Christ's atonement. There was a hidden purpose, which Paul calls the *mystery* of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19), and the *mystery* of Christ (Colossians 4:3). The common ground between the Body of Christ and Israel is the blood of Christ, not Israel's special benefit (*i.e.*, the New Covenant, with its distinctively Jewish characteristics).

(see **COVENANT**, next page)

DWELLING (continued from page 1850)

are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:12-14).

Be kindly affectioned one to another with

COVENANT (continued from previous page)

Peter, James, John and Jude all wrote their epistles in harmony with Israel's New Covenant. The blessings of this New Covenant began to be sampled ("tasted" – Hebrews 6:4-5) on the Jewish feast-day of Pentecost, and in the early chapters of the Book of Acts. This was set aside though, until God's present purpose is accomplished (Romans 11:25). Paul wrote progressively concerning this new program – "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2). In God's present purpose all covenant and national distinctions between Jew and Gentile have been set aside (Ephesians

EDITORIAL (continued from page 1846)

common Head.

We desire to avoid destructive "uniformity" and allow for differences of opinion. We don't expect our readers to agree with everything that will appear within the pages of this publication. But we do trust that you will study out the information and that it will stimulate further Bible study. As one editor has so well said,

I hope anyone following after me will go farther than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the Word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found.

And do not be surprised if, from time to time, you read articles which reflect *change* from previous things which we have said or written. This is *progress*.

brotherly love; in honor preferring one another (Romans 12:10).

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

God lives in you. You are His temple. You are the **"the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."**

Behave yourself accordingly! ■

2:14-15), and all can now enjoy the "fellowship of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9).

In our study of the Scripture we must learn to make right division (II Timothy 2:15), leaving distinctive doctrines where we find them (i.e., where God has placed them), lest we diminish the glorious high calling of the Body of Christ by mixing teaching from other dispensational workings of God. The New Covenant (New Testament) is one of those distinctive doctrines that we must leave where we find it – with Israel. ■

We simply ask that you keep an open Bible and an open mind.

I could never have imagined where this attitude would have led in the ensuing two decades. What a great adventure is the life of faith! I must say that I eagerly look forward to the rest of my journey, and am thankful for those that the Father has provided to mutually share in this divine quest.

For God, and His truth,
My love to each of you!
Your fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.