

INTRODUCTION

This message is really the basis of my Christian experience. It comes from some things I've read, particularly from Ian Thomas, Jack Taylor, and others like that. It's the idea of Christ in you, the hope of glory. To me, it is really the secret of how to live the victorious Christian life. I told some people this would be the best sermon I've ever preached. Well, I hope they're not like the little lady who left church one Sunday and got a little mixed up when she said, "Oh, Brother David, every sermon you preach is better than the next one." I heard about another lady who told her preacher, "You'll never know how much your sermons mean to my husband since he lost his mind"!

If you were going to send God a letter, where would you address it? Where does he live? Where is his house? God has been moving in and out of a lot of houses throughout the history of mankind. God will not live in a dirty house. Now you may live in a dirty house, but God won't. It reminds me of the college boys who wanted to keep the school mascot (a goat) in their dorm room. The administrators said, "What about the smell?" And the boys replied, "The goat will have to just get used to it."

Fraternity boys may live in a dirty house, but God won't live in a dirty house.

I. GOD'S PREVIOUS HOUSES

Where has God lived in the past?

1. Adam

The first house that God moved into was Adam. God literally inhabited Adam. Genesis chapter two, verse seven, talks about when God literally came to take up residence within the first man he created. And I think what we see in Adam is what God originally intended for all of us. "God formed him from the dust of the ground. And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a living being." This is what God did. He took the ground, and he formed the body of a man. And then Bible says he breathed into him. The word "breath" is the word "spirit" in the Hebrew language. And in the Greek language, the words for spirit, breath, and wind are all the same. All that God had was a clay dummy until he breathed his Spirit into Adam. And it was more than just giving him breath to breathe in and breathe out. He was putting his Spirit in Adam. And so God came to live, first of all in Adam and then of course into Eve. But then God moved out of those houses to move into his second house.

2. The temple

Or you could say the tabernacle before the temple. First Kings chapter eight talks about how God moved into a house that we call the tabernacle, which was a tent. And then he moved into the permanent temple after Solomon built it. And that's really where God lived. When they built this amazing temple in Jerusalem, it was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This passage talks about the day they dedicated it and God moved in. Verse 10 says when the priest withdrew from the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled his temple. God moved in. Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud....I have indeed built a magnificent place for you, God, to live forever."

If you'd have been there that day, you'd have seen an amazing sight. You'd have seen this beautiful gleaming temple, and then you would have seen a cloud descend upon it as the glory of the Lord entered into the Holy of Holies. And that was God moving in.

In verse 27 in his prayer of dedication, Solomon makes a very profound theological statement. "Will God dwell in here? The heavens even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less the temple I have built." And that's true. You cannot confine the greatness and the omnipresence of God, and yet the glory of God dwelt in Adam and the glory of God dwelt in the temple. But God moved out of that house too. And he moved into a third house.

3. Jesus

John chapter two verses 19 and 20 says when Jesus was standing in front of the temple building, he said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken 46 years to build this temple..." they thought he was talking about the building, "...and you're going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. Did you know that when Jesus was on planet earth, the Bible says in Colossians chapter one that in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? Did you know that when you saw Jesus of Nazareth walking down the street, you saw God in the flesh? John 1:14 says that the word [God] became flesh and "tabernacled"/dwelt within us, among us. And so God moved into Jesus, but God moved out of Jesus.

Why did God move in and out of all these houses? I want you to learn something about the nature of these houses that also will teach you something about the nature of God. All three of these previous houses have something in common. In fact, they have four things in common.

A. A house designed by God

Each house was specially designed by God. God designed Adam like himself. Remember it says in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our own image..." Why those plural pronouns? We believe that God is God the Father, God the Son, and

God the Holy Spirit. Now the Jews accused Christians of being polytheists. They said, "You folks have three gods." No, we don't. We have one God, but he expresses himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God was saying, "I'm going to make man as a house with three rooms." And he did. He designed Adam to have a body (dust), a spirit (breath), and a living soul.

We know the world beneath us with our body. We know the world around us with our soul. We know the world above us with our spirit. So Adam was specially designed.

So was the temple. The temple was a house of three rooms. The temple was a big object lesson about God that he never intended to be permanent. You see the temple had three different parts. You had the outer court, you had the holy place and you had the most holy place, the Holy of Holies.

The Lord Jesus was designed unlike any other person who ever lived. You know what made Jesus different than anybody else who ever walked on planet earth? He was born of a virgin. The Bible also says in Adam, we all die; but in Christ, we're all made alive. Adam brought sin into the world, and because we're all born like Adam, it took somebody born totally different to save us from our sin.

B. A house desecrated

It means "dirtied" because each one of these houses became dirty, and God won't live in a dirty house. God dwelt in Adam through his Spirit. He breathed into him the Spirit of life, and he told Adam he could eat of all the fruit of the garden, except one tree. But Adam and Eve ate the fruit. They sinned. You know what happened? They became dirty. God said, "Adam, the day that you eat of that fruit, you shall surely die." Eve ate the fruit first. Did she drop over dead? No. Adam ate the fruit. Did he drop over dead? But remember we're a house with three rooms. Adam and Eve died immediately in their spirit. They died progressively in their soul, and they died ultimately in their body. And so they became dirty by sin.

What about the temple? This beautiful temple that Solomon created became dirty. What did Jesus say? He walked up to that temple and said, "My house shall be a house of prayer, but you've made it a den of thieves." It had been 400 years since the Jews had had any word from God because at least 400 years earlier, God had moved out. The prophet Ezekiel said he saw a vision and it was the Spirit of God leaving the temple. And for over four centuries, the Jews kept on sacrificing, kept on worshiping, kept on acting like God was in that house. But he wasn't there.

What about Jesus? He never sinned. He was tempted in every way, like we are, but he never sinned. However, he became sin. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. The Bible says he became sin for us. And so all three of these houses became dirty.

C. A house desolated

It means “deserted.” God moved out of each house. God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden. He said, “No longer will I walk with you, and no longer will I have that fellowship with you. I have to withdraw from you because of sin.” What did Jesus say about the temple in Jerusalem? He said, “Behold, your house... [he didn't even call it God's house]... is left unto you desolate.” It's empty. God moved out. And what happened to the Lord Jesus? God moved out when Jesus was hanging on the cross. And he said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” You know what happened in that moment? God the Father and God the Son were separated. God moved out because that house had become dirty, and God won't live in a dirty house.

D. A house destroyed

The fourth characteristic of all four of these houses is all four of them were destroyed. I mean, all three of these houses were destroyed. Of course, Adam and Eve pay died immediately in spirit. Ultimately they died. That house died. What about the temple? Solomon's temple was destroyed. Jesus spoke these words in Matthew 24 when he predicted a time when not one stone would be left on another. The Jews thought the temple will never be destroyed. You could sooner climb into heaven to see God than you could destroy this temple. And Jesus said, “No, you're wrong. This temple has been desolated by God, and it's going to be destroyed.” And sure enough, in 70 AD the Roman general Titus came in and destroyed it. And what happened to that third house? The Lord Jesus, the Bible says, hung on the cross and he said, “It is finished.” And he died.

II. GOD'S PRESENT HOUSE

And so you see friends throughout history. God has been moving in and out of houses because God won't live in a dirty house. Those are God's previous houses. Where does God live right now? Where has he moved into right now? If you wanted to send a letter to God, what is his current address? With that background, I want you to understand the importance of where God lives right now, according to 1 Corinthians chapter six. Now a lot of people misunderstand this passage because it talks about sexual immorality, and they miss the truth theological teaching about it. Paul is only using the sin of sexual immorality to demonstrate the importance of your body being a temple of the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 6:12-20 says:

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a

prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Notice how many times he talks about the body. We're not talking about souls and spirits here. We're talking about your physical body. Paul says that's why you don't abuse your body. That's why you don't participate in sexual immorality because it's a part of the body of Christ.

When you became a Christian God's Spirit and your spirit became one. You became one with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Where is your spirit? Your spirit is not out there floating around somewhere. Your spirit is in your body. Your spirit and your soul are invisible, but they're contained in your body. And when you become a Christian, your body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. So you know where God is living right now? He lives inside of you by his Holy Spirit. If you can catch on to the glorious truth of the fact that Jesus lives in you, that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, it'll change your understanding of every part of the Christian life. I just want to give you four areas that this principle applies to in your Christian life. When you totally understand what it means to have Christ in you, it affects the following:

1. Salvation

Sometimes we think that salvation is getting man out of earth, into heaven. You know what salvation is? Salvation is getting God out of heaven and into man.

Some people think that all there is to salvation is going to heaven. No, that's just one of the bonuses of it. No, the whole point of salvation is to get the living Lord Jesus Christ living inside of you. That's what salvation is. He comes inside of you. He forgives your sins. He dwells in you. He lives in you. It's Christ in me, the hope of glory, as it says in Colossians 1:27. So it changes what you think about salvation. I heard one preacher put it this way. Man doesn't need a boost from below. He needs a birth from above. That's what salvation is.

2. Security

It also affects what you think about security. Now, you know, as Baptists, we believe in what we call “once saved, always saved.” right? But if God moved out of those other houses because they were dirty, what about you and me? Christians sin. It says in 1 John 2 that if you say you have no sin, the truth is not in you. But I've got good news! God is not moving in and out of houses anymore. It's not like a hotel he's checking in and out of. He has come to live inside of you. And he says,

“I will never ever leave you.” The difference is that Jesus comes to live inside of us, and the first thing he does when he comes inside of us is he fixes our SIN problem.

Now we still have “sins.” But as far as the guilt and the penalty and the punishment for SIN, the Bible says he removes that. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Every time you sin as a Christian, the Holy Spirit of God convicts you from within, and God looks at you and he doesn't say, “Oh, you're dirty. I'm moving out.” You know what he says? He says, “You better get straight. I'm going to let the Spirit of Jesus clean you out and convict you.” He may take you to the woodshed and punish you. He may scrub you until it hurts. And sometimes it's painful, but he doesn't move out. Instead he stays in.

We believe once saved always saved, but a lot of times Christians who believe that have a hard time trying to find a scripture to substantiate it. In John 14, Jesus is talking about sending the Holy Spirit, the paraclete. He says, “When I go back to heaven, I'm going to ask the Father and he's going to send the Holy Spirit.” The word is “paraclete,” which means “one called alongside.” And he starts teaching some things about salvation. Verse 20 talks about the security of the believer, the security of salvation. “On that day [that means the day that he sends the Holy Spirit to live in us] you will realize that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you.”

Now, those are some pretty important prepositions. Jesus lives in you now. That's what we're talking about. But then Jesus says you are in him. Picture a cup, and you're in Jesus. And you put a lid on that cup. But then Jesus said he is in the Father. I want you to picture that cup being put in a barrel and the top being put on the barrel. The only way that anyone could ever get Jesus out of you, are you out of Jesus is to get Jesus out of his Father. There is no way on heaven or earth that anybody can ever get Jesus out of his Father.

Isn't that great to know? You can never ever lose your salvation because Jesus is in you. You're in Jesus. And Jesus is in the Father.

3. Spirituality

Spirituality is really misunderstood by a lot of people. Have you ever heard somebody say, “Don't act so spiritual”? And a lot of times people think spirituality is the way you act, and that's not true. You know what spirituality is? It is something you are when you realize that Jesus is in you. Now here's the problem. A lot of people act spiritual when they walk in the doors of this church. They think this is the temple of God, but this is not the temple of God. And you don't act spiritual. You are spiritual. Did you know that? You don't have to “act” that way. You're supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural. That's true. You don't have to act spiritual. Have you ever noticed some people go outside the church and they'll use certain language they wouldn't use inside the church? Why is that? We

would be terribly offended if somebody set up a table in church and started playing poker, drinking beer, and smoking. Wouldn't you say, "How dare you do that in the house of God?" But wait a minute. You are the house of God.

We tell kids not to misbehave in God's house. I don't know what it is about this building. Somebody will come in and they talk normal. But when they get in the church building, they use a formal kind of language they wouldn't use outside. This is a building that's been dedicated to worship in the service of God. But God doesn't live in this house. He lives in you! When you leave the church building, you're still the temple of God.

4. Service

The secret to true Christian service is: Jesus Christ lives inside of me. He wants to live his life through me. Now I can do one of two things. I can try my best to live the Christian life. Or I can surrender to his Lordship, and I can let him live his life through me.

Many are trying to live the Christian life in the strength of their own flesh. They say, "I'm going to love that person if it kills me." And it usually does. They feel, "I've got to witness today. I must read my Bible today" But when you surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and you let him live through you, you can't help but be a witness. It's not something you do. It's something you are.

You'll have a desire to pray, a desire to read the Bible. The secret to Christian service is just letting Jesus live through you and flow through you. There's only one person who ever lived who could live a Christian life. I cannot live the Christian life. You cannot live the Christian life. Only one person who ever lived can live the Christian life. And what's his name? Jesus.

And he never intended you to try to imitate him. He wants you to contain him and then release him to live his life through you. You can't love that person. Jesus can love him or her through you. You can't forgive that person. Jesus can forgive through you. Do you know what service is? Just letting Jesus be Jesus in you.

CONCLUSION

That's the secret to all these things in the Christian life. It is Jesus in you. So what is God's address? Where does God live now? He's lived in a series of houses. He's moved in and he's moved out, but he's moved into you to stay. He says he will never leave you or forsake you.

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