

THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES →  
THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID →  
THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

We worship today in many different ways. We have the standard methods of worship in many forms through the denominational worship styles as presented by and through the many churches that there are. We also have many of the non-denominational churches that abound at this time.

As I have mentioned in previous essays, the number of different “denominations” has grown worldwide to somewhere between 35,000 - 40,000. It is hard to keep track of them all. New ones start up and old ones fade away. So what is the story with all of these denominations and how are we to truly worship our God?

Well, I think the first thing we need to look into is the actual church today and how it came to be. We all believe that today’s churches are founded on the original way that the disciples established when they started out after Jesus’ death and resurrection. We know that it began with the Jewish believers who established the first “church” in Jerusalem. However, as we know and as we read in the Book of Acts, something peculiar happened that actually was beginning to cause a “rift” in the initial Body of Christ.

What was happening was that the Good News of salvation was also being brought to and received with hearts that were open to the truth concerning Jesus by the Gentiles. We know that Peter had established the Gentiles being able to enter into the Body when Cornelius was sent by God to Him. While Cornelius was on his way to Peter’s house, Peter began, as we see in Acts 10:11-16, to have visions given to him by God.

God showed Peter all the many animals that were considered “unclean” now being able to be “clean.” This vision really had not so much to do with the animals that were now “clean” to eat as much as it was truly about people who were considered to be “unclean” (the Gentiles) who would now be considered “clean” if they would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior – God’s Son, the Son of God.

We know that Peter did finally receive the message that God was giving to Him. The gentiles were entering into faith and believing Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. We know that Paul then was used by God to speak to the Jew first but then to the Gentiles, as well. Many Gentiles believed the Good News and received Jesus as the Lord and Savior. We know that this did not sit well with many of the Jewish Christians.

They held a “council” in Jerusalem as we see in Acts 15. Peter and Paul both declared that the Gentiles were receiving Jesus and being both born again and also being filled with the Holy Spirit. Let’s get this straight. The problem was not that the Gentiles were receiving Jesus but rather the belief was that these Gentile believers needed to then become Jewish converts. This meant that they would need to be circumcised and go through all the rituals to become Jewish in order to then be considered a true believer in Christ.

This is where we see James step up and receive and speak a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom and speak prophetically to all those who were present. Remember, this was James, Jesus’ younger brother who at first did not believe anything that Jesus had said or was doing during His life. He felt that way towards Jesus as did all of his other brothers and sisters. But... here he was now, a true believer in Jesus. Not only was he a true believer but he was considered the chief elder of the church in Jerusalem.

Let’s read what he said from Acts 15:13-19, *“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: <sup>14</sup> Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup> And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, <sup>16</sup> After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: <sup>17</sup> That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,*

*and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. <sup>18</sup> Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. <sup>19</sup> Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: <sup>20</sup> But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*

James was actually quoting Amos 9:11. He was stating that what was happening was the fulfillment of Amos' prophetic word and that the Gentiles were now "coming home" to the house of the Lord and entering into His place of worship. This "place of worship" would be the heart of every true believer in Christ. This is what James was referring to. James was not referring to a literal, actual place known as the "Tabernacle of David" but rather he was referring to it now in its true spiritual context.

The "Tabernacle of David" that he was referring to was not the literal place of worship that was found in the scriptures but rather he was referring to any and all true believers. They would all now be the "Tabernacle of David." They were to be the true house of the Lord. God would refer to these true believers a little differently, as we will see.

First however, we need to take a quick review of the "Tabernacle of David" as it is found in the scriptures. As we know, the Ark of the Covenant was originally crafted by the children of Israel under Moses' direction. He had received the "plans" for the Ark as well as the entire Tabernacle of Moses from God while the children of Israel were in the desert.

If we "fast forward" we come to the times of David and the Ark as well as the Tabernacle of Moses when it was now at Shiloh in Israel. The Israelites were at war with the Philistines and things were not going well. They decided, on their own and not consulting with God, to take the Ark from the Tabernacle of Moses and bring it to the battlefield. To make a long story short, the children of Israel lost their battle with the Philistines and the Philistines captured the Ark and brought it back to their own land – Philistia.

While there, the Philistines had tremendous problems wherever they had placed the Ark. The people got terrible boils all over them and many other things happened. They placed the Ark in the Temple of their highest god, Dagon. The first night Dagon fell and the second night Dagon not only fell from the pedestal he was on but his image was smashed into pieces. That was enough for the Philistines.

They decided to send the Ark back to the Israelites. The Ark made a few stops but when David had found out that it was back in Israel, He decided to not put it back into the Tabernacle of Moses at Shiloh. He rather decided to bring it into Jerusalem. On its way into Jerusalem we see the people rejoicing and David took off his kingly garments and simply worshiped in song and dance with all the rest of the people before the Ark. He decided to place it on Mount Zion and there he simple put up an open ended tent and placed the Ark of the Covenant in it. All the people rejoiced and sang and worshipped before the Ark – before God.

It was a different type of worship. It was not just the priests who worshipped before the Ark. It was not just the High Priest who was able to go into the Holy of Holy before the Ark of the Covenant just once a year. No, the Ark, the presence of God, was available to be worshipped by everyone - Jew and the Gentile. David had instituted a new worship – it was a worship of rejoicing as well as solemn times of prayer by everyone – not just the priesthood.

This is where we see that David had instituted new instruments to play and worship before the Lord. There were new songs of worship and praise being sung before the presence of the Lord. God loved it. He delighted in all that was going on now at what became known as the "Tabernacle of David."

As mentioned previously, God delighted in it. He loved that the people freely and openly, both Jew and Gentile, worshipped before Him. He loved it so much that He allowed David to give food and provisions from the Ark of the Covenant. It was simply a time of worshipping God and then God supplying the needs of the people. It was all because of the true worship that was happening.

Unfortunately, as usual people could not leave well enough alone. David then “got the idea” to build God a Temple to be worshipped in. If we read the conversation that God had with David, when David told God what he wanted to do, we see the God did not want a Temple. The Tabernacle of David with its worship, praise and prayer was what delighted the heart of God.

However, we see that David had insisted that he wanted to build God a Temple. God relented to David’s desire. David could plan the Temple but he could not be a part of the actual building of it because his “hands were bloodied” from all the battles he was in. Solomon ultimately built the Temple.

I know the Temple is of great importance to the Jewish people and many Christians. However, if we look closely at the scriptures we will see that the Temple was actually “plan B” in God’s eyes. He had delighted in the “Tabernacle of David.” Actually it was the precursor to the true “Tabernacle of God.” Also, we must realize that the Tabernacle was just that – a tabernacle. The term “tabernacle” refers to a temporary dwelling place; a temporary place of worship that could move with the people and be with the people.

Actually, the whole concept of the Tabernacles of both Moses and David was that they were not to be permanent structures. They were literally, temporary places of worship for the children of Israel and then anyone else who would believe in the Living God to go and worship Him. They were to be a “precursor” to the true “Tabernacle of God” – anyone who would believe and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

As mentioned, they were both “precursors” to what God ultimately desired for His true believers, His true people. Each one of us has now become the “dwelling place” of and for our God. He now dwells within each one of us. That is the very essence of our relationship with our God. He, through the blood of Jesus, has made every believer a “tabernacle” unto Him. That is what James was referring to in Acts 15. We was stating, not that there would be a physical structure or building that would house God on this earth but rather he was declaring that every believer, Jew and Gentile, would now become the dwelling place of God upon this earth.

That is so very significant. The scriptures are very clear when it states that the dwelling place of God is no longer to be any physical structure but rather it is to be within the heart and life of every true believer in Jesus. Yes, each and every believer has now become a “tabernacle” of the Living God. That was ultimately God’s desire from the very beginning.

Yes, there was a Tabernacle of Moses that was established first so that God would be able to dwell in the midst of His people and the people could now begin to know their God. However, they would only be able to worship through the blood sacrifices. Also, it was only through the priests and then the High Priest only once a year. Then, we see that David’s Tabernacle was established where we see that now the presence of God was open and available to anyone who would believe – Jew and Gentile.

However, there still was one great caveat in the mix. Everyone was still set apart from God because their spirit was dead because of sin. They could only worship God “so far.” God was pleased but He ultimately desired for the true believer to be able to allow His Spirit to come and dwell, not simply at an altar, but rather within their hearts and lives of those that truly wanted and believed in Him. That is why Jesus needed to come; to die on that cross and take our full punishment in hell.

But... He rose again and went to the Father and presented to Him that final sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. That is the key for any and all true believers. It was not only that Jesus died on the cross and took our punishment but that He also rose from that place of hell and defeated the devil and He is now alive and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

That is what gives us not only salvation but it now gives us eternal life. Because Jesus is alive, all true believers in Jesus are now “alive” and have been brought back to the heart of the Father. We no longer need to worship God in a tabernacle or any temple or any church. We now can worship our God freely, every moment of our lives because now He has made each one of us His own “tabernacle.”

Oh yes, collectively we all make up and are a part of “the Temple of the living God.” However, each one of us, separately are His “tabernacle” as we live upon this earth. As we worship God, just as David and the people did at the Tabernacle of David, all our needs will be met. God, through David, had given provisions to all those who came to the Tabernacle. The people’ needs were met. They never wanted for anything.

However, we see that it all had stopped when they moved the Ark into the Temple. God did take care of His people but we see that the tendency of man crept in and ultimately the Temple was attacked, pillaged and then torn down. Interestingly, we know through the scriptures that the Ark of the Covenant was never taken by the Babylonians or anyone. It was never found. Jeremiah had taken it from the Temple and we have no idea where it may be to this very day.

Yes, the Temple was rebuilt by Herod and the Jews but all the while the Ark of the Covenant was never in the Holy of Holies. Only when Jesus came did the presence of God return to the Temple. However, Jesus never stayed in the Temple. He was always “with the people.” Hmm... Isn’t that what God is all about – being with and in the lives of His true believers and not just stationed in some Temple or some church building today.

As we read Acts 15:15-17 again, we see that James declares God’s word given to Amos that, *“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: <sup>17</sup> That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”* Yes, James was declaring that then and even to this day, for the Jew and the Gentile, for every believer in Jesus, the time has come for the figurative “Tabernacle of David” has now been restored through everything that Jesus had done. However, it is not called the “Tabernacle of David” anymore but it is now to be known by every believer as the “Tabernacle of God.”

Collectively, as bricks of the Temple, we all will one day make up the true “Tabernacle of God.” In Revelation Chapter 21 we see that the “New Jerusalem” will come from God. Heaven and earth will all pass away. Only the believers and all the saints will be in that “New Jerusalem.” We will all be the “bricks of the Temple.” The gates will be open but no one will ever desire to leave. The believers will be simply worshipping and glorifying their God. There will be no walls, no drapes, nothing that will separate us from our God. We all be surrounding Him and worshipping Him forever and ever.

Notice what Revelation 21:3 tells us, *“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the **tabernacle of God** is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”* It doesn’t call it a Temple but rather the “voice” declares that now it will be the “Tabernacle of God” that will be with the true believers. The true believers shall be His people and *“God Himself will dwell with them”* and He *“shall be with them”* and He will *“be their God.”*

We must never forget that the true church, the true “Tabernacle of God” is each and every one of the true believers. It is not the buildings that we worship in. That is where collectively as believers we gather together to worship our God. Never forget that as far as God is concerned every true believer is now **His tabernacle**. We are to worship Him freely as we saw the people did in the “Tabernacle of David.”

However, we are to now worship our God as the “Tabernacle of God” with “*spiritual sacrifices*” – the “*sacrifice of righteousness*” (Deuteronomy 33:19); the “*sacrifice of joy*” (Psalm 27:6); the “*sacrifice of thanksgiving*” (Psalms 107:22; 116:17); the “*sacrifice of praise*” (Hebrews 13:15).

Please, understand what I am saying in this essay. I am not saying that we are not to go to our local church or not to be a part of a good spiritual Body of Christ. What I am saying is that every true believer is the “tabernacle of God.” You are to worship Him everyday – not just in song or music but with every aspect of your life. We see in the New Testament great lessons in being a child of God. We do not hear much about singing and music.

No, our true worship primarily is our lifestyle that follows after Jesus’ lifestyle. It is a lifestyle of truly loving God and loving others and thereby living your life as such. There are many different ways that each of us can do this. The most important thing to remember is that you are the living “Tabernacle of God” everywhere you go and to whomever you are in contact with – every day. I pray that we all would be the “Tabernacle of God” upon this earth.