

YOU ARE A TEMPLE **Chronicles**

Living God's Word—A Walk Through The Bible
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As we continue our journey through the Old Testament, we now focus on the story of building the Temple in Jerusalem. It was King David who had the vision and the plan of what this temple should be like. Yet it was David's son, King Solomon, who actually had it constructed.

What a magnificent structure it was. Solomon used the efforts of 153,000 workers to fashion tons of gold and silver, bronze and cedar, into a breathtaking abode for God who, as 2 Chronicles 2:5 proclaims, "*is greater than all other gods.*" The belief was that God's glory filled this temple with tremendous radiance.

Solomon, of course, built this temple to be the spiritual center of the nation. He built it to fulfill his father David's wish. Yet he also saw it as the way to keep people loyal to God and to his rule as king. But even with this magnificent temple the years following Solomon were filled with many evil kings, and their downward spiral as a nation was filled with idolatry and chaos.

The temple, with all its glory, was not a guarantee that the people would keep their worship and focus on God. Rather, the people made idols out of their own wealth, prestige, self-fulfillment and worshipping God often became only lip service. Even with a magnificent temple filled with gold and silver, it is easy to forget about God and his word.

It is interesting that with the coming of Jesus, and with the message of his gospel, that Jesus himself and his body is often referred to as the temple. In Jesus' body, the church, Jesus is the cornerstone. In other words, Jesus is the foundation upon which God's kingdom is built. Jesus is the center of our faith, our worship, our lives.

You may remember how Jesus told the Jewish leaders in John 2:19, "*Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.*" Yet these religious authorities responded, "*It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?*"

The temple that Jesus is referring to, of course, is his own body. His promise is that as they will try to destroy him and his body on the cross, that in his resurrection on the third day the true temple will be restored. Only Jesus is the true temple that can never be destroyed; only Jesus is to be the focus of our worship and faith.

Then the Bible teaches that as Jesus is the living temple, you and I are also temples of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.*"

The significance of Jesus being the living temple, and of you and I being temples of the Holy Spirit, is two-fold. One has to do with the nature of who Jesus is. In the time of Jesus there was a strong belief and philosophy among many that everything in this world—that everything in human flesh was evil.

The idea was that if Jesus was truly God and without sin that he could then not be human. It was this belief system that taught that if Jesus was truly God's Son, he was then completely a spirit who simply looked like a man. In being a spirit he would then only look like he was dying on the cross since spirits do not die.

That is why the Scriptures are so plain about the fact that Jesus got hungry and tired, that he cried real tears and suffered real pain. The truth is that Jesus was a true human being who suffered and died in terrible pain for our sins. His atoning sacrifice paid the price for our sin. Jesus rose up in a new body in his resurrection from the dead. He is true God and true man.

As this belief system at Jesus' time taught that all human flesh is evil, there were many people who then thought that whatever we want to do with our bodies is okay. The philosophy that we are to "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The result was lots of immoral and very shameful behavior.

However the focus of Jesus' bodily death and resurrection, and the truth of him being true God and true man, is that Jesus loves and cares about us completely--body, mind and spirit. Jesus is not just concerned about our soul or our good ideas. He is also concerned about our actions, our lifestyle, our words, the complete way we live our lives.

The Apostle Paul says, "*Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.*" The Psalmist says in Psalm 139:14, "*for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" The message is that you are God's creation, that he created you to be you. He has given you special talents, gifts, abilities.

My friends, this body is a pretty incredible temple. It is more intricate and valuable than all the gold and jewels in Solomon's temple. In fact, do you realize that in a 24-hour day your heart beats 103,689 times? Your blood travels 168,000,000 miles? You breathe 23,040 times? You exercise 7,000,000 brain cells? Your body is amazing!

Yet there are certainly many today who are abusing their own bodies. Our weight and eating habits are now a national agenda in America as is the emphasis on heart disease, cholesterol, getting lots of exercise, and getting enough sleep and rest. Our out-of-control lifestyles are often abusing and hurting our bodies.

Then there is the issue of what we do with our minds. There are now millions of pornographic websites, with millions of U.S. adults visiting these websites. It was estimated a few years ago that some 65 million people living in the U.S. have sexually transmitted diseases. It is sad what many are doing to their own minds and bodies, as well as to others.

Now I know there are many who have the attitude, “It’s my body and I can do whatever I want with it.” There are many who actually have the attitude that as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone else it is okay to do whatever you want. If you want to risk your own life, or do things that will pollute your mind and attitudes, that’s okay.

Yet that is not God’s message to us. The Apostle Paul reminds us that not only are we temples of the Holy Spirit, but that we are not even our own for we were bought with a price. In other words, Jesus died and rose again to claim and redeem us body, mind and spirit. He suffered and died so, as Martin Luther said in his Small Catechism we “*may live under him in his kingdom and serve him in righteousness.*”

Rick Warren reminds us in his *Purpose Driven Life* book that “it’s not about you.” That is a difficult thing in our “me centered” society. We so easily think everything is about us—about my needs, my wants, my pet peeves, my opinions, my freedom to choose, my likes and dislikes, my perceptions about things.

Yet it’s not about us. God created you and me. He created us in his image. He created us with certain gifts and abilities, and thereby a certain purpose to do his will. We are not here by accident. Jesus died for each one of us; he rose again on Easter so we might live for him completely—body, mind and spirit. To know and believe this changes everything.

Some years ago I worked very closely with a family who had a daughter who was struggling with an eating disorder. This young girl, even though she was very beautiful with a very petite body, saw herself as ugly and fat. When she looked in the mirror, the image she saw was distorted in her mind by the images of models in magazines.

This girl’s self-image and eating disorder nearly killed her. It was only as she received expert medical help; only as she was hospitalized in a treatment program; and only as she came to know Jesus in a real and personal way that she was healed. As her body and mind were treated by professionals she also began to see that she is God’s very special creation.

She began to see that Jesus loves her as she is and that he has a purpose for her. With her life centered in Jesus she now sees her body, her mind, her whole life as something she is to use for God’s glory. Her worship, her actions, her mission in life now centers on Jesus and on following his will and his word. I had the privilege of presiding at her wedding—and celebrating that she is now a Physicians’ Assistant helping others who are sick.

My friends, I hate to tell you but it’s not about you. God created you; Jesus died for you so that you might be and live as a temple of the Holy Spirit. He created you and calls you each day to live for him and his purposes. He calls you to worship him, live for him and serve him in your body—in your whole being.

If you here today are living your life simply for you, only for your purposes, may this truth of God touch your heart. Just as Solomon built this majestic temple of old God has called you and me to be his living temple today. Remember, you are not your own; you were bought with a price; so glorify God in your body.