

John 14:1–7 (ESV)

14 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

God Will Make His Home with Believers

You've heard the expression: "There's no place like home." At home we are most ourselves. And, if we like our home we can relax there.

Jesus told us that for an eternity of time in the past, before the creation of our world, He and the Heavenly Father, enjoyed a relationship of love for each other (John 17:24). Apparently, the desire of God the Father and God the Son was to spread the boundaries of their love when they created human beings. Jesus prayed, in John 17:4 that those who believed in Him might “be with me where I am.” Jesus also told His disciples that when He left them, He would prepare a place for them in His Father’s house (John 14:1). Jesus made it very clear that He wanted to make His home a home for believers, so that they might be with Him forever.

Even in the Old Testament we see that God the Father wanted to be with His people. In Exodus 29:45, God says, “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.” God uses the tabernacle to accomplish this: “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The sanctuary God mentions here is the tabernacle.

In both the Old and the New Testament, we see that God desired to dwell with His people.

This week we will study:

- 1) God's fellowship with Adam and Eve in Eden.
- 2) How the New Jerusalem from Heaven will function as a global Holy of Holies.
- 3) God's desire for fellowship with His people.

1. God Fellowshiped with Adam and Eve in Eden

It may seem strange to refer to Eden as a temple. As far as we know there were no buildings in Eden. But I will list reasons that we might consider that Eden functioned as a kind of temple made by God as a place to have fellowship with the people He created. I admit this is a different way of looking at things than what is familiar to most people who have read the Bible. But try to keep your mind open to these ideas because I think you will find them helpful in understanding God's desire to dwell with the people He created.



First, God met with Adam and Eve in Eden. It was a place where God had fellowship with the people He had created, and in that way, it fulfilled the function of a temple. We can see this because, apparently, Adam and Eve were familiar with meeting God in the garden. After they sinned, Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden ... and ... hid themselves” (Genesis 3:9). I think that Adam understood that God was coming to judge Adam and Eve for their disobedience. Adam knew they had disobeyed God and wanted to avoid God’s judgment. So, they hid. God asked them why they hid from him. They said it was because after they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realized that they were naked (Genesis 3:10). But notice that Adam says, “I heard the sound of you in the garden.” Adam correctly recognized the sound of God walking in the garden. This indicates that Adam was familiar with meeting God in the garden, and knew what

God sounded like when He walked in the garden. Eden was a place where Adam and Eve had fellowship with God.

Second, Adam was told to “cultivate” and “keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15 – “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it”). In other places in the Old Testament the same two words are used to describe the duties of the priests in the temple and tabernacle. The priests were required to keep anything unclean from entering the tabernacle or the temple (Numbers 3:5-8). If Adam had done what God had commanded him to do (using these two words) he would have stopped the serpent from entering the Garden of Eden, or at least driven it out of the Garden when he saw it was there. Adam was supposed to do the same things priests did when they worked in the tabernacle or temple if we translate these words the same way they are translated at other times.

Third, the entrance to Eden faced east and the entrance to the Temple in Jerusalem faced east. When Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, we read that they exited “at the east of the garden” (Genesis 3:24). In his prophecies about the temple, Ezekiel says it will have a “gateway facing east” (Ezekiel 40:6).

Fourth, a river flowed out of Eden (Genesis 2:10), and a river will flow out of the temple Ezekiel prophesied about (Ezekiel 47:1).

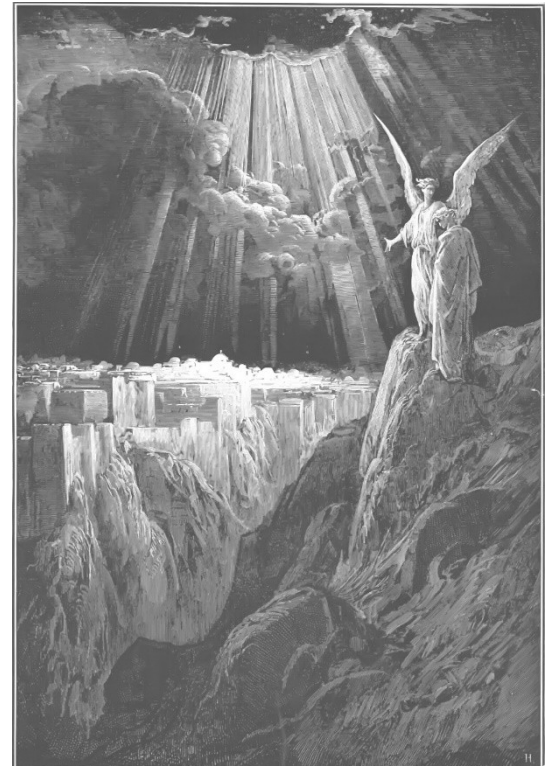
Fifth, the prophet, Ezekiel, called Eden the “garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13) and “the holy mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:14&16). The Temple in Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion, also called “the mountain of God” (Psalm 68:15).

As I said earlier, it may take some getting used to, in order to think of Eden as a temple. Focus on the function of a temple to be a place where God’s people come to meet God and be in the presence of God. Also notice that God’s determination to dwell with His people did not change, even after they sinned against Him.

2. The New Jerusalem Will Function as a Global Holy of Holies

We read that in the New Jerusalem there will be no temple. Instead the lamb and God will be the temple. The “lamb” is another name for Jesus. The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to Earth (Revelation 21:22). In other words, there will be no need for a building where people will come to see God because God’s presence will fill the entire city.

The city of New Jerusalem, though, is in the shape of a perfect cube (Revelation 21:16). The Holy of Holies in both the tabernacle and the temple were also the shape of a cube (the tabernacle - Exodus 26:16 & 31-33; the temple - 2Chronicles 3:8). The city of Jerusalem then could be understood as serving the function of being the Holy of Holies, where God and the lamb will dwell. In Revelation 21:3 we



read, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (ESV). The Holy of Holies is the place where God’s presence would dwell in the tabernacle and the temple. In this sense the city of New Jerusalem functions as the Holy of Holies in the New Heaven and Earth. To be honest, I’m not sure if the measurements of the New Jerusalem are literal or only symbolic, but I am sure that they indicate that the New Jerusalem is the Holy of Holies where God dwells.

Like the Holy of Holies nothing unclean or evil will enter the New City of Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27 - “nothing unclean will ever enter”). So, where will those who are evil or unclean be? If they aren’t allowed into the City then are outside the city. But exactly where are they outside the city? At the beginning of the chapter, John told us that there is a New Heaven and Earth. So, the unclean are located somewhere outside the city limits. But where is the boundary of the city limits? We know that wherever that boundary is, the “evildoer will still do evil” (Revelation 22:11). Where can an evildoer in this New Heaven and Earth do evil? The evildoers will be put in “the lake that burns with fire and sulfur” (Revelation 21:8). They won’t be on planet earth. From this we conclude that the New Jerusalem is world-wide in terms of its area of control. The city limit is the New Earth. This would also fit with the idea that Jesus will rule over the whole world (Revelation 11:15 - “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”)

During the time of the tabernacle, God’s presence was in the Holy of Holies. During the time of the Temple built by Solomon God’s presence was in the Holy of Holies. The presence of God is in Jesus, and those who are in Jesus are also filled with God’s presence. But in the New Earth, God’s presence will be over the whole earth. Wherever a believer goes, God will be with each believer, in His full presence.

3. What we learn about God’s desire for fellowship with His people

There are times when we feel lonely, but Jesus tells us that He is always with us. He said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, ESV). In the new creation, after Jesus returns, His presence will fill the earth. Now His presence fills our hearts.

There are many places in the New Testament where we can find this image of Jesus Christ abiding in the hearts of believers. Paul writes, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Moses couldn’t look at the face of God, or he would have died (Exodus 33:18-20). Yet, every believer has been made new by Christ, and now not only can a believer look into the face of Christ, but in every believer’s heart the face of Christ is found.

A great sense of joy is expressed when we read that in the New Heavens and Earth God will dwell with His people (Revelation 21:3). This is how God feels about it. How do you feel about it?

Do you think of God dwelling in your heart as one of the most exciting and exhilarating things in life, or are you bored by it? If you don’t find yourself very excited about the thought of spending eternity with God, then some things in your thinking need adjustment. He is the creator of life. He is the source of every good thing. He is the source of all true joy. It is only because of human sin that the experience of His love and joy are hindered in our lives.

What about the fact that when sin entered the world God didn’t give up on the idea of dwelling among His people? Repeatedly human beings let God down and betrayed Him. But God never gave up on His plan to dwell among His people.

What we read about in the Garden of Eden sounds perfect. But Eden was just a starting point. The New Heavens and Earth will be better than Eden was. Think of the difference between a seed and the plant it grows into. Eden was the seed. The New Heaven and New Earth are the fully grown plant.

In this world there is always a possibility that a believer will stumble and fall into sin. In fact, if we’re honest, every believer does this again and again. But the coming kingdom will be a place where believers will not be capable of sin. There will be no temptation. There will be no sinful desire coming from a human body born in sin. Thus, there will be no sin there, because we will have a new body, similar to the body Jesus had after He rose from the tomb. Everything that currently interrupts our experience of God’s wonderful grace and love will pass away. Only the wonderful blessings of God will remain. And, God’s full presence will always be with us. We will never know loneliness.

Are you ready? Christ can make you ready if you believe and put your trust in Him. A wonderful, eternal home is waiting for those who believe in Jesus. In that home they will become the person God has always intended them to be, without sin, pure and holy. In the meantime, believers are to let the “peace of Christ rule in their hearts” (Colossians 3:15, ESV).

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“Let not your **hearts** be troubled. **Believe** in God; **believe also** in me. In my **Father’s house** are **many rooms**. If it were not so, would I have **told** you that I go to **prepare a place** for you? And if I go and **prepare a place** for you, I will **come again** and will **take** you to myself, that where I am you may be **also**. And you **know** the way to where I am going.” **Thomas said** to him, “**Lord**, we do not **know** where you are going. How can we **know** the way?” **Jesus said** to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the **life**. No one **comes** to the **Father** except through me. If you had **known** me, you would have **known** my **Father also**. From now on you do **know** him and have **seen** him.”

([ESV](#))