

The Church *as the Dwelling Place of God in Ephesians*

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The church is the dwelling place of God. A person's body is his dwelling place. Strictly speaking, we do not live in a house; we live in our body. This is why the Scriptures liken our physical body to a dwelling place. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Paul calls our fallen body an earthly tabernacle dwelling, a temporary dwelling, in contrast to a dwelling not made with hands, which will be our resurrected body in the future. Just as our body is the place in which we exist, our habitation, so the church is the Body of Christ to contain Christ and to express Him. Hence, it is the dwelling place, the habitation, of the Triune God.

The church as the new man is a matter of life, the church as the Body of Christ is a matter of expression, and the church as the bride of Christ is a counterpart. To speak of the church as the dwelling place of God, however, conveys the central thought of building. We need to be built up; this thought is very much revealed in Ephesians, as in 2:20-22 and 4:12 and 16. The church is the temple of God because it is God's habitation, God's dwelling place.

Christ Being the Cornerstone of the Dwelling of God

In Ephesians 2:20-22 Paul says, "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone; in whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." These verses reveal that Christ Himself becomes the cornerstone of God's dwelling place in our spirit.

The foundation of the church is Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). Because the mystery of Christ was revealed to the apostles (Eph. 3:4-5), the revelation they received is considered the foundation on which the church is built. This corresponds with the rock in Matthew 16:18, which is not only Christ but also the revelation concerning Christ, on which Christ will build His church. Therefore, the foundation of the apostles and prophets is the revelation that they received for the building of the church.

In Ephesians 2:20 Christ is referred to not as the foundation (Isa. 28:16) but as the cornerstone, because the main concern here is not the foundation but the cornerstone that joins together the two walls, one wall being the Jewish believers, and the other, the Gentile believers. Here, not Christ but the apostles and prophets who received the revelation concerning Christ are stressed as the foundation. When the Jewish builders rejected Christ, they rejected Him as the cornerstone (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7), the One who would join the Gentiles to them for the building of God's house.

In Matthew 21 the Lord Jesus indicated, in a figurative way, that the Pharisees would