

The Revelation of Righteous Judgment Series

PART 4

"JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE"

(CONTINUED)

I PETER 4:17-18... For the time is come that JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD: and if it begin with us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

In this brief passage of scripture, we have a concise but very definitive word concerning God's scope of dealings. It expresses the initiating point, while going on to declare the furthest parameters of His righteous judgments; from the center, all the way to the circumference of this awesome process. As those of us who have walked with Him on this side of the cross can attest, the work has long since **BEGUN** at the house of God (both individually and corporately), that He might purge, purify, and present a firstfruits company unto Himself; but we are likewise assured of the fact that He will not cease to perform it, until He has brought all through the fire. Beloved, **NONE SHALL ESCAPE**; we shall all, in our own time, "every man in his own order", stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ! It is one appointment that we **HAVE** to keep!

In very truth, we know that His judgment times are actually **OPPORTUNITY TIMES** for us; divinely-appointed and carefully monitored occasions, when God examines our hearts in various situations (many times, without our initially being aware of it)! The reason we call them "opportunity times" is because as we become sensitive to the Lord's Presence, He grants us a "window" of insight into our own hearts... and allows us to see ourselves as He does, at that particular stage of our life! (Quite obviously, our first "judgment time" began at the point of our conversion; and they will continue throughout the entirety of our spiritual development)! They signify the act of being "placed in the balances" (Dan. 5:27), revealing our true condition at that moment. Be it known, however, that the times of His judgments are not to show us what manner of men we are, just for the sake of our knowing; nay, there is a much greater purpose involved. He does so in order to observe how we will react to the truth, once we have been confronted with it! (Remember, truth may serve as a vindication, or a rebuke)! You see, after He has caused us to perceive reality, we then receive the opportunity to either maintain our already righteous conduct before the Lord (without developing a self-righteous attitude), or constructively deal with

those areas that might be out of harmony with the character of Christ. In the event of the latter, He supplies us with everything we might need to sufficiently subdue the workings of the flesh, and to "preserve us blameless unto the coming of the Lord". Either way, He provides us with the opportunity to make judgment work in our behalf, in our favor, to His glory! Praise God for these blessed occasions! It is how we respond to them that determines the outcome of our judgment! The scales can tip either direction!

In keeping with these thoughts, we would like to share further on certain of God's principles of executing judgment at the house, and touch upon the reason why this judgment is necessary (quite possibly, though, from a different perspective than some of our readers may be accustomed to). At the same time, we would like to shed some light on a very perplexing and mysterious character; one who has, over the years, generated a tremendous amount of controversy and speculation concerning both his identity and his whereabouts. As we shall see, this man is portrayed in scripture as the single greatest threat to the people of God (as well as to mankind in general! He is "public enemy #1)! In order to get a conviction on him, however, we must first clarify a few crucial points before we go to our text. We want to remove all doubts concerning the identity of this great pretender! Though the length of our opening arguments may initially seem unnecessary to some, please bear with us; we are building our case! They will later prove valuable to those who are just now considering the "evidence" for the first time. And although the Righteous Judge has already stated His findings and verdict on this matter, it is our desire that the "jury" be fully persuaded in their own minds, as well; quickened by the Word and the Spirit of Truth, that they might likewise judge the issue with righteous judgment! Now let us proceed with the examination)!

THE "HOUSE" OF GOD

For the record, just what do we mean when we speak of "the house of God"? How should we understand this term?

The first mention of it is found in Genesis 28:16-17. Here we read where Jacob, after awakening from his dream of a ladder extending into the heavens, with angels ascending and descending upon it, exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not... How dreadful is this place! This is none other than THE HOUSE OF GOD. and this is the gate of heaven"! Therefore, he built an altar, poured oil over the top of it, and called it Beth-el (meaning in Hebrew, "the house of God"). Not only was the place where he had the dream considered "holy ground" to him, but so was the altar. It marked the spot where he received a major visitation from the Lord; where he considered to be an access into the heavenlies; and where he offered supplications, sacrifices and offerings unto the Lord. It would always be a sacred spot to him, and to his generations thereafter.

After this, "the house of God" was acknowledged as being more of an enclosure-type design, according to the specifications God gave to those whom He had ordained to build them. For approximately fifteen hundred years of Old Testament history, we know that the central focus of the people of God was directed toward a natural tent, temple, or other physical structure. (The reason for this was because for a time, God chose to manifest

Himself in these types of abodes, to illustrate certain characteristics of His Person, which were interwoven into their construction). In the same way any individual's home exhibits various facets of their interests and tastes (such as their likes, their dislikes, etc.), and therefore, represents different aspects of their personality; we can understand why in God's house every detail was so important in the building. They declared His holy nature! First there was the Tabernacle of Moses, that "mobile home" in the wilderness, fraught with symbolism; then there was the Tabernacle of David, also a tent, pitched high atop Mt. Zion; then there was Solomon's Temple, the first permanent structure of it's kind, erected upon Mt. Moriah. Much could be said about each, but suffice us to simply say that these were the three main dwellingplaces of God recorded in the Old Testament. (After the Babylonian captivity, however, you recall that there was the Temple built during the time of Zerubbabel, which was built to replace Solomon's. Then there was the Temple that was present in the days of Christ, referred to as the Temple of Herod, which was actually only a restoration and enlargement of Zerubbabel's). These "holy places" were commonly known by the Israelites as the habitation of God, God's house, or the place where God took up residence.

You recall that after David had built himself a house of cedar, he desired to build a house for God. However, when Nathan the prophet inquired of the Lord concerning this matter, the Lord said for him to tell David, "Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt NOT build Me a house to dwell in... it shall come to pass, when thy days are expired... that I will raise up THY SEED AFTER THEE, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. HE SHALL BUILD ME A HOUSE, and I will stablish his throne forever... but I will settle him in My house and My kingdom forever" (I Chron. 17:4,11-12,14). Not only that, but the Lord promised David, "Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that THE LORD WILL BUILD THEE AN HOUSE" (verse 10)! Because of David's desire to prepare a place for God, God said He would prepare a place for him! Praise God!

Although David could not build the house himself, he spent the rest of his lifetime gathering precious materials for this massive building project. He was personally assured by the Lord that his son would complete the work he had purposed to perform. Just imagine what an awesome weight of responsibility this must have been upon his child!

Now, Solomon understood that naturally speaking, it was impossible for him to "house" the great God of glory in an earthly structure. He was much too wise for that. He knew that the temple which he built, no matter how elaborate and ornate he might make it, would merely serve as a focal point, both for the people of God to look to, and for God to manifest Himself through. His dedication speech clearly enunciates this: "And now, O God of Israel, let Thy word, I pray Thee, be verified, which Thou spakest unto Thy servant David my father. But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, THE HEAVEN AND HEAVEN OF HEAVENS CANNOT CONTAIN THEE; HOW MUCH LESS THIS HOUSE THAT I HAVE BUILDED? Yet have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken to the cry and to the prayer, which Thy servant prayeth before Thee this day: THAT THINE EYES MAY BE OPEN TOWARD THIS HOUSE NIGHT AND DAY, EVEN TOWARD THE PLACE OF

WHICH THOU HAST SAID, MY NAME SHALL BE THERE: that Thou mayest hearken to the prayer which Thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place" (I Kings 8:26-30). It came to pass that regardless of the need (deliverance from natural disaster, victory over enemies, forgiveness of sins, etc.), when prayer time arrived, the Israelites would instinctively turn their faces toward the temple, to offer their petitions to God. This became a time-honored and traditional practice, because God's presence was generally acknowledged as being there. (Even during the time when they were in exile, held captive in a foreign land, and the temple had literally been destroyed by the Babylonians, this custom was observed; Dan. 6:10; I Kings 8:44-50; Psa. 5:7). Therefore, the temple was recognized as the most important image in the material world. It represented the image of God in detailed symbolism.

THE TRUE TEMPLE

While Solomon fulfilled this God-given promise to David in a figure (II Chron. 6:15), there was One destined to perfectly satisfy it in a deeper and more spiritual way. This "Son of David" was "greater than Solomon", and "greater than the temple" (Matt. 12:6, 42)! You ask, just who was He? Why, as if you didn't already know, His name was JESUS! Though He was commonly recognized by the town folk as "the carpenter's son", He came to build on a higher order than Joseph ever dreamed of; for He came to frame a "house" for the Eternal Spirit to indwell! (Again, you may query, just how did He set out to do this? By fashioning a quality of life Father was pleased to abide with, of course! You might say the Father was "right at home" in Christ, perfectly suited and accommodated to express Himself in every way)!

That He was "greater than Solomon, and greater than the temple", is seen by the fact that not only did He BUILD the Temple... He also BECAME the Temple! Hallelujah! He did what Solomon could never do; He redefined the meaning of temple of God, by literally becoming the beginning of a new kind of habitation of God, "an House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"! Obviously, He did not become a house made from earthly materials, fashioned by craftsmen at a natural building site. Such thinking would indeed be ridiculous! Rather, He became a heavenly Structure, an eternal Edifice, One in whom dwelt "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Co!. 2:9)! Now this was what God had in mind all along! He was, in the fullest and most complete sense of the word, "the Father's House"! There should be no denying this!

This line of thinking appeared to be entirely new to those who heard Him (even though the prophets of old had often used it when describing the New Covenant). This is why His words were so often misunderstood. They went right over their heads! For example, when the Pharisees overheard Him say, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days", they called Him a blasphemer! In their carnal reasoning, all they could think of was the natural temple! They perceived not that He spake of the temple of His body; for they had never considered it on this wise!

It also became apparent that His views concerning the sacredness of natural worship sites differed greatly from those commonly held. To the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (who brought up this issue in order to find out what His position was on this long time debate), Jesus told her, "Woman, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father... but the hour cometh, AND NOW IS, when the TRUE WORSHIPERS shall worship the Father IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. GOD IS A SPIRIT: and they that worship Him MUST worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4: 21-24). The truth of the matter is, this was His public invitation to all who had "ears to hear", to settle their petty disputes, begin to turn their attention toward the TRUE Temple, and truly worship God in a way that He would be glorified. No wonder the religious leaders of His day were so incensed against Him! This kind of teaching could put them out of business!

JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE---TURNING POINT FOR GOOD

For sure, Jewish life revolved around the temple; it was the sacred hub of Jerusalem. In order for the people to keep the annual Feasts properly, and to offer sacrifices unto the Lord, the temple was a necessity. This is why so many were compelled to make regular pilgrimages to the holy city, sometimes traveling great distances from far away places. And yet, by the time of Christ, it had become desecrated and defiled beyond belief. Now, part of the problem was this: the Rabbis had passed a law stating that only Jewish money was "kosher" for tithe-paying or for the purchasing of sacrifices. This required foreigners to have to exchange their "filthy lucre" for the so-called "sanctified" currency of Jerusalem, before their offering would be considered acceptable unto God. So conveniently, the temple priests arranged for money-changing booths to be set up at the entrance of the temple, in the Court of the Gentiles... as well as pens full of sacrificial animals... oxen, sheep, and doves, to be purchased at excessive and exorbitant prices by the visitors! (Guess who was cashing in on this opportunity)!

Well... you can just imagine the scene that Jesus beheld when He entered into the temple. There, in what was supposed to be a sacred setting, the place from whence God was to rule among them, was the loud, irreverent commotion of man and beast; the sacrilegious sight of merciless merchandisers, taking unfair advantage of the sincere (while those who were supposed to be teaching the people the difference between the holy and profane looked on); and the repulsive stench of animal dung offending the nostrils. What a horrible violation this was! And what an absolutely BEASTLY atmosphere they had created! It was obvious from this picture that MAN ruled in the temple, and that God's authority had been disregarded; indeed, they had set themselves up as gods, and had judged for themselves which functions were good and proper, and which were evil! It is no wonder, therefore, that our Lord began overturning the tables of the money-changers, the dove-sellers, and the merchants, saying, "It is written, MY HOUSE shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13)! He was "eaten up with zeal", so to speak (Psa. 69:9; John 2:17); absolutely outraged by their blatant disrespect for the things of God! According to Him, they had literally "stolen" the honor and worship rightfully belonging to God, and defiled the temple through their self-serving schemes!

We should note that this was the last time Jesus publicly referred to the natural temple as "His house". When next He spake in allusion to it, He said, "Behold, *YOUR HOUSE* is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38)! He no longer affiliated Himself with the temple, He no longer identified with it. If they wanted it, they could have it! From henceforth, it was destined for destruction!

The first two verses of Matt. 24 tell us that after He had said this, He departed from the temple. As He was leaving, however, the disciples sought to show Him the impressive buildings belonging to the temple (obviously, they had not perceived the implications of His words). Without hesitation, Jesus said unto them, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"! There was no sadness in His voice now, no regrets for having said this. He meant what He said, and said what He meant. He was prophesying the end of that order, the day of proud edifices; for He was vacating the temples of man, never to return! Be it known, beloved, when He walked out of the temple that day, the glory of God (of which He was the physical embodiment and personification), was departing with Him!

Accordingly, that generation did not pass before all that He spake was fulfilled. In 70 A.D. (less than forty years later), the temple was completely destroyed, the people either scattered abroad or massacred, and the city burned with fire! There was not one stone left upon another, just as Jesus said. And there has not been another raised up since! He brought it down to stay!

THE EXPANSION OF THE TEMPLE

At best, the natural temple only served as "THE EXAMPLE AND SHADOW OF HEAVENLY THINGS, as Moses was admonished of God when He was about to make the Tabernacle: for, saith He, see that thou make all things according to THE PATTERN showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5)! It was never intended to continue forever, for it was only a temporary shadow. Once reality came, the shadow was no longer of use.

One of the most solemnizing truths Jesus ever endeavored to relate to His disciples during the days of His flesh was that even as He had become the fulfillment of "the Father's House", the living Temple of the Spirit of God, they, too, were to become an extension of that building. This is why He said, "IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-a) Now, we are aware that many regard this passage as a revelation of heaven, and as an invitation to someday dwell in some celestial manor somewhere "in the sweet bye and bye". However, we are convinced that this is not in keeping with His Word. We would ask: was He referring to heaven? If He was, there is absolutely nothing in the surrounding text to suggest it. As a matter of fact, heaven is not once mentioned in the entire fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel! How then should we understand what He meant? By determining what His main theme was, of course! Quite clearly, Jesus mentioned THE FATHER twenty-three times as His subject; far too many times to be overlooked or ignored. Therefore, we may safely conclude that

it is THE FATHER, not heaven, that is under consideration! Next, in light of what we have already established, it should not be difficult to understand what is implied by "the Father's House". It is Christ Himself! He was the original "House", covered with skin! "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and THE FATHER IS IN ME" (Jn. 14:11)! Finally, let us examine the word "mansions". The use of this English word is peculiar to the New Testament, the only time that the King James translators rendered it as such. In the Greek text, however, it is not so rare; it is the very same word that was more accurately translated in verse 23 of the same chapter: "If a man love me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and take our ABODE with him". It does not carry the distorted meaning of some luxurious estate in gloryland... but simply A PLACE OF ABODE. With this in mind, it should be evident to any spiritually minded person that what He was saying was to this effect: "I am preparing a place, an abode, a dwelling for you IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE... WHOSE HOUSE I AM! In doing so, I will be receiving you TO MYSELF! Then, as you enter in, and find your rest in Me, where I am, you will be also"! Is this not the obvious meaning? He was conveying to them the glorious truth that even as He was the residence and embodiment of the Father (for "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"), THEY were to find their "abodes" IN HIM, as well! And as they entered into the place He had prepared for them, they, in turn, would become a place prepared for Him! They would become His numerous "dwelling places", His many "mansions", if you will, that would corporately comprise THE FATHER'S HOUSE! "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I IN YOU" (verse 20)! Therefore, the issue was NOT a place within a place (i.e. a mansion in heaven); instead, it was A PEOPLE WITHIN A PERSON (Christ Jesus)! It takes no stretch of imagination to believe this!

If there were any among them who did not fully grasp the significance and vast implications of what He said then, we are sure they had no trouble afterward. Just as surely as the sun rises with the dawning of the new morn, "when the Day of Pentecost was fully come", the Lord came also (Acts 2:1)! This was done in accordance with Malachi's prophecy: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall SUDDENLY COME TO HIS TEMPLE, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold. He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 3:1)! Immediately with His appearing, the New Covenant was initiated, the "candles" were lit, and Christ began to record His laws within their hearts, just as He said He would (Jer. 23:33)! He came in all the blinding brilliance of the Great High Priest, passing beyond the veil of their human flesh! What a tremendous experience this was for them, as Christ entered into His newly expanded temple! "Moving day" had arrived!

As they departed from the upper room that day, they did so with a holy glow about them, and a brand new consciousness of His Presence. Christ had illumined their darkness! And from that day forward, the disciples boldly declared a NEW message to the world... not only of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ... but also of His change of address! It was true! He had come again, and taken up residence in A PEOPLE!

In Acts 7:48-49, Stephen's words dearly express the fact that Christ had abandoned the old, and relocated to the new, when he said, "Howbeit THE MOST HIGH DWELLETH

NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, the earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me, saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest"? And again, in the words of Paul from Mars Hill: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS; NEITHER IS HE WORSHIPED WITH MEN'S HANDS, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things..." (Acts 17:24-25)! Beloved, this vital, foundational truth was included as one of the main themes of their teaching. Wherever the Gospel was preached, this was at the very core of their message! GOD DWELLETH NOT IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS! HE OCCUPIES THE CENTER-MOST PLACE OF OUR HEARTS!

That the emphasis had been transferred from the natural temple to the spiritual was graphically illustrated at the Gate Beautiful. You recall that when the lame man sought alms from Peter and John, they did not direct his petitions toward the temple made with hands. Customarily, having no silver or gold to offer the man, they would have reminded him of Solomon's request to the Lord, to grant the prayers of his people when offered in the direction of the temple. They would have admonished him to have faith in the order God had traditionally honored, and chosen to bless His people through. Instead, they forthrightly instructed him, "LOOK ON US"! Though they had no monetary assistance to offer him, they had something of far greater value: they had the glory of God on the inside! Hallelujah! From the great inward storehouse of God's blessed provisions, they brought out healing sufficient to minister to this man's needs: and in doing so, granted him a revelation of "the TRUE sanctuary, and the TRUE temple, which the Lord pitched, and not man"!

This truth permeates the very fiber of New Testament writings. Over and over the apostles expressed it, until it became a common tenet of the faith. For example, take Peter's words: "...ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, YE ALSO, AS LIVELY STONES, ARE BUILT UP A SPIRITUAL HOUSE, AN HOLY PRIESTHOOD, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:-5)! Paul's writings are also expressive of this: "Now ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; AND ARE BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE; IN WHOM ALL THE BUILDING FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER GROWETH UNTO AN HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD: IN WHOM YE ALSO ARE BUILDED TOGETHER FOR AN HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT" (Eph. 19-22)! To the Corinthian church, our beloved brother wrote, "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING" (I Cor. 3:9); and again, in verse 16 of the same chapter, "KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU"? Later still, he wrote quite emphatically, "What? Know ye not that YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS IN YOU, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19-20)! (Paul, by saying it this way, revealed both the individual AND corporate senses in which we are

the temple. From one perspective, it is true that we are individual temples, by virtue of the fact that Christ has personally taken His abode within our earthen vessels; but in the greater sense, we are but PART of the corporate temple, that glorious "house not made with hands", composed of many "lively stones"! Both perspectives are accurate; for it is but ONE TEMPLE, with a two-fold definition)!

Furthermore, in the letter to the Hebrews, we are encouraged to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house... And Moses verily was faithful in all his house., as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after (that is, as "a foreshadowing of the truth that would be known later", Phillips translation); but Christ as a Son over His own house, *WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE*, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:1-6)! In the simplest of terms, therefore, we have the Spirit's own definition of the present-day temple of the Lord, the house of God, the true "holy of holies" where the High Priest now ministers! "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing (the Amplified gives this, "as long as the former tabernacle remains a recognized institution and is still standing"): which was a figure for the time then present...which stood...until the time of reformation: but CHRIST BEING COME AN HIGH PRIEST OF GOOD THINGS TO COME, BY A GREATER AND MORE PERFECT TABERNACLE, NOT MADE WITH HANDS, that is to say, of this building..." (Heb. 9:8-11)! Could anything be stated plainer than this?

We could go on, but we feel we have sufficiently made our point. In light of all we have considered so far, we would now boldly declare unto you that since the Day of Pentecost, whenever the Spirit speaks of the temple of God (either in present or future tense), He is referring to THE HOUSE WHICH WE ARE, THE TRUE TEMPLE, THE HABITATION OF GOD composed of the vast conglomeration of saints united in Christ, joined to Him by the Spirit! Furthermore, according to the divine Record, THERE IS BUT ONE TEMPLE, AND ONE HIGH PRIEST, WHO MINISTERS IN THE HOLIEST PLACE OF THAT TEMPLE. There is not one temple naturally built on earth (or to be built), and another mystically made up of believers. THERE IS BUT ONE TEMPLE; AND THAT TEMPLE IS THE BODY OF CHRIST! You may search the Scriptures from Romans to Revelation, and you may exhaust yourself with the most exhaustive concordances available, but you will fail to prove otherwise! WE ARE THE TEMPLE! THERE IS NONE OTHER!

MYSTERIES OF THE TEMPLE

Without doubt, this is a most glorious truth. And we are certainly a privileged people to embrace it. Paul, in referring to it, said that it was "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints... which is CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY" (Co!. 1:26-27)! Previous generations possessed the shadow, without comprehending the substance. But thanks be to God, WE HAVE THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS MYSTERY! The wonder of it all is that this

mystery is revealed TO us as He reveals Himself IN us! His manifest Presence gives us our hope of glory!

We should not be deceived in thinking, however, that just because Christ has entered into our hearts, and we have become the habitation of God through the Spirit, that this automatically suggests His approval of our inward condition. This is not necessarily the case! The truth is, even after our initial conversion experience, we still need His corrective, disciplinary judgments! HE CHASTENS (disciplines, teaches) US BECAUSE HE LOVES US! As a matter of fact, becoming God's house actually INCREASES the intensity of His judgments! That's when the "housecleaning" REALLY begins! He helps us do what we could not do by ourselves, that we might "grow up into Him"!

There is another "mystery" which is at work in the temple (in both the individual and corporate senses); a mystery which is diametrically opposed to the Mystery of God, and which makes this execution of judgment necessary. What is it, you may ask? Brother Paul called it, "THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY"! "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work..." (II Thess. 2:7)! And how exactly should we understand this term? Paul described it as "*THE MAN OF SIN...THE SON OF PERDITION, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that HE AS GOD SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, SHOWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD*"(verses 3-4)! Ah, beloved, herein lies a great key to comprehending spiritual truth!

Naturally, whenever "the man of sin" is mentioned, folks are inclined to think of some human mastermind, who is destined to take over the world. And every generation has had their own suspects! In our generation alone, He has borne the "aliases" of quite a few international characters: the Pope, Henry Kissinger, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and now Clinton; he has also been identified as Gorbachev, Saddam Hussein, Khomeini, Yeltsin, just to name a few others! And while we do not deny that many of these individuals have certainly moved under the spirit of antichrist, we quite frankly declare unto you that none of them have been, nor shall be the elusive MAN OF SIN! They just do not fit the description!

How is it we can be so sure? Because none of them can actually sit "in the temple of God"! Now again, we are aware of the teachings that since this "man of sin" is presumed to be an individual, there must of necessity be another temple erected in Jerusalem for him to sit in (this is further supposed to be the place from whence Jesus will, upon His return, rule the world). But this futuristic, literalistic theology has caused many to miss the present relevancy of Paul's admonition!

(We have not overlooked the fact that at the time of Paul's writing, Titus had not yet invaded Jerusalem, and destroyed the temple. But if this was the fulfillment of what he meant, again we reiterate, this letter would have no relevance to our present generation. There must be more to it)!

Paul made no mistake when he said that the man of sin would actually sit IN the temple of God. As you recall, ALL SCRIPTURE, including this one, was given *by inspiration of*

God (II Tim. 3:16). Therefore, we may safely conclude that this was an intentional reference by the Spirit of the Lord.

We don't want to belabor the issue, but for the sake of truth, let's consider the term, "temple OF God". If we were to speak of "the home of George Washington", you would gather from the statement that this was the residence and abode, owned by, and belonging to George Washington. Even if it were not presently occupied by George Washington, the reference to it being "of" him would naturally suggest that at one time, it had been in his possession. Agreed? Now, shall we say that just because someone might build a temple "in the name of God", in hopes that He might accept it as His dwellingplace, that this would constitute the temple OF GOD? Just because something might be dedicated TO God, does NOT mean that He claims it as His own!

Furthermore, do we really believe that God would put His endorsement and approval on something He has so emphatically denounced, disapproved of, and destroyed? Paul said, "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, *I make myself a transgressor?*" (*Gal. 2:18*)! Shall we accuse God of transgression, by laying to His charge the ownership of a natural building? GOD FORBID! Even if there was an earthly temple built in Jerusalem someday (though we are persuaded there never will), at best, it would only serve as a deceptive "smokescreen", to divert the attention from the main issue! We repeat: The Spirit of God will NEVER AGAIN dwell in a physical, earthly structure... He has made Himself clear on this point!

As we have carefully pointed out, there is but one true temple; and it alone bears the prestigious title, "THE TEMPLE OF GOD"! Therefore, any structure built *by men* may be referred to *by men* as being "OF GOD", but you may rest assured that the holy Spirit of Truth would NEVER!

WHO IS THE MAN OF SIN?

Considering the strength of these arguments, there is only one character capable of completely conforming to the profile... and his name is ADAM! Clearly stated, the man of sin is simply the personification of the sin of man--- in short, it is the Adamic nature dwelling within us! He reveals himself in the form of apostasy, both within the ranks of the Body of Christ in general, and in each member in particular! He is the main source of conflicts, the root cause of all our problems!

Seeing that the Mystery of God is "Christ in you, the hope of glory", the Mystery of Iniquity must be "Adam in you--- no hope of glory"! It is the expression of the old man in us, who causes us to come short of the glory of God! Fellow saint, when we finally come to this conclusion, we have found our man!

This is indeed mysterious... how Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith; and yet, at the same time, the Adamic nature still have room for expression within us! Of all the deep mysteries known to man, this must be the most perplexing one of all!

Paul's letter to the Romans expresses every believer's frustration over this great enigma, while providing the answer: "For I do not understand my own actions -- I am baffled, bewildered. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but do the very thing that I loathe... However, it is no longer I who does the deed, but THE SIN [principle] WHICH IS AT HOME IN ME AND HAS POSSESSION OF ME. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out... Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it -- it is not myself that acts -- but the sin [principle] WHICH DWELLS WITHIN ME [*fixed and operating in my soul*]. So I find it to be a law of my being] that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its inconsistent demands. For I endorse and delight in the Law of God *in my inmost self--with my new nature*. But I discern in my bodily members -- in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh -- a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason) and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs -- in the sensitive appetites of the flesh. O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? O THANK GOD! --HE WILL! THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, THE ANOINTED ONE, OUR LORD! So then indeed I of myself with the mind and heart serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:15,17-18, 20-25, Amplified). While at present, there may be two natures at war in the house, allow us to say that Christ will ultimately "evict" the "old tenant"! He will not forever reside in a "duplex"! Hallelujah!

We have more to say on this subject, and the principles by which the old man of sin is evicted from the temple. But we can know of an absolute certainty that the work WILL be accomplished! We have God's word on it!

Praise Him, O ye saints! His righteous judgments are unto VICTORY! Maranatha!

to be continued---

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