

# The Dwelling Place of God Is With Man by Tim Conwa

by Tim Conway

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*The church is the new temple, where God's presence dwells, and where worship and fellowship take place, but now among God's people.*

**Duration:** 1:14:47

**Scripture:** Exodus 25:8, 1 Kings 8:13, Ephesians 2:19-22, Colossians 3:12

**Topics:** "Church Community", "Trinitarian Theology"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Ephesians 2:19-22, exploring the imagery of believers as a holy temple being built together for God's dwelling place. It emphasizes the significance of the church as the new temple where God's presence resides, contrasting the Old Testament temple with the New Testament reality of God dwelling among His people. The sermon highlights the Trinitarian involvement in constructing this spiritual temple and the profound implications of believers being living stones fitted together by the Spirit.

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## Transcript

Ephesians 2, verse 19, so then you're no longer strangers and aliens, this is Ephesians 2, verse 19, so then you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Now, citizenship, member of a household. Household.

And then what happens here is his picture changes. It morphs. Right here at verse 20.

Built on the foundation. So our third illustration, he gives us the illustration of citizenship in a kingdom or in a country. He gives us this picture that we developed last time.

On a family member. And here, his picture changes. Verse 20, built.

This third illustration is that of a building. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Father, I ask for Your help once again in seeking to unfold the mysteries of Christ that are talked about right here in these very chapters. The mystery of Christ. The Gentiles, our fellow heirs, that were included.

We're a room full of Gentiles. And we haven't been left far off. We haven't been left on the outside.

You've brought us in. And here we see, Lord, I pray You'll help us somehow with these verses. Help us in a practical way.

Help us to see the glory. I pray. Please, Lord.

Amen. So what happens is this. Paul says, you want to know about the church? Okay.

Church. I know a lot of us here are familiar with this. The term church.

It's misused today. We're talking about the people. And what Paul says is you want to know about the people of God.

Not the building, the church, the called-out ones. He says if you want to know about them, well then, think temple. Think citizen.

Think family member. Think temple. And you know, we don't think temple today.

Oh, we know about it. If you've been a Christian long enough, you read your Bible and you find out. But we don't know.

It's not something that is that familiar to us and that common to us like it was in Paul's day. And you remember who he's speaking to. He's speaking to these Ephesians.

And you know what, even as Gentiles, who may have not known a whole lot about the temple that was found in Jerusalem, they had the temple of Diana there. The idea of a temple and religious activity and worship, that was strong religious connotations when Paul would bring this up. To us, not so much.

Okay, Paul, you want us to get the imagery of temple. Let's do temple 101. Okay, we need to think about two terms.

Tabernacle. Temple. The tabernacle was first.

The tabernacle was a tent. You remember that. The tent of meeting.

It came first. The temple on the other hand, that was a permanent structure. It came next.

The tabernacle worked well in the beginning. Do you remember why? Yeah, they were moving. The tent's portable.

And you remember what they did? God gave instruction on how that thing should be built. And it was basically brought together and assembled and put together. Anybody remember the two guys that were primarily involved in developing everything? Aholiab? What's the other guy's name? Bezalel.

That's good. There at the foot of Sinai, that's where that thing... You know what? Think about this. It took six days to create the universe.

Moses was up there on that mountain. Specifically, I think it's Exodus 24. He was up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights receiving instruction about the tabernacle.

And what's interesting is this. One chapter basically is given in the book of Genesis concerning creation. Six chapters are given to the construction and the details concerning the tabernacle.

Another five are given to the construction and the details about the temple in 1 Kings. And another six chapters are given in 2 Chronicles. And there's a lot of detail.

There's a lot of attention given to this. And then what happened was approximately 500 years after the tabernacle was first constructed, and they moved around and all over the wilderness for 40 years, and they came in and you went through the times of the judges and you went through Saul and you went through David, and then what happened? Solomon, the son of David, came on the scene. David had it in his mind to build this temple.

God told him, it's going to be your son. And Solomon built the Solomon's Temple. That's what happened.

The tabernacle was created 3,500 years ago. About 500 years after that, Solomon's Temple. Do you remember where Solomon's Temple was built? Anybody remember? Something happened.

David numbered the people. Do you remember that? And then God came along and through the prophet said, David, you did wrong, and now you're either going to have real difficulties for three years, three months, or three days. And he said in the end, just leave me in the hands of God.

And so it was a three-day pestilence. And this thing came to an end at a threshing floor. Do you remember that? A threshing floor of Arunah the Jebusite.

And David bought that thing from him. And God told him to build an altar there. And that is exactly the place where Solomon's Temple was built.

In fact, do you know what it says? It says Solomon's Temple was built on Mount Moriah. Anybody remember the significance of Mount Moriah? What happened there? Abraham took Isaac there to sacrifice and of course, God provided a lamb. But this is the place.

The temple mount. And so, what happened? About 400 years after this temple's built, remember what happened? It was destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar came in and he leveled that thing.

Seventy years later, Jews are exiled. They come back. And under a decree by Cyrus, you see this in Ezra.

Zerubbabel, you remember that name? And Joshua was the high priest. And Zerubbabel started this foundation. Now, there was difficulty and the thing was put on hold, but then the construction was resumed.

And you had the second temple built. Now, that temple, Zerubbabel's temple, something interesting. You come down to about 20 B.C. Approximately 500 years later.

And Herod the Great comes along and it's somewhat disputed. I don't think that they're exactly clear on what happened. Did he take Zerubbabel's temple and totally level it? And start over? Or did he take the basic construction and build out from it? Or do renovations? Maybe it's not even exactly known.

But what happened in 20 B.C. is Herod came along. He expanded this thing into 35 acres. Just a massive thing.

And Herod's temple is the one that Jesus cleansed. It's the one that the devil wanted Jesus to cast Himself off of. And it's also the very one that Jesus said to His own disciples when they were saying one day and they were walking away from this thing.

You remember they said to Jesus, this thing has been being built for... anybody remember how long? Like 43 years or something? The temple was in construction. And they're saying, are you going to destroy it and raise it up in three days? But Herod had been pouring all these resources into this thing for decades. And here's His disciples and they're looking at this thing and they're saying, Lord, isn't this great? And He said, yeah, look at that.

Not one stone's going to be left upon another. That's that temple. And what happened in 70 A.D. is Titus, the Roman general, came in and he leveled that thing.

It's gone. And there hasn't been a temple since then. And what they have over there now is the Wailing Wall.

They call it the Western Wall. It's the only thing that's left from Herod's temple. It's one section of the wall.

And in 691 A.D., Muslims built the Islamic shrine known as the Dome of the Rock there. There's no temple. And there has been no temple since 70 A.D. And that's basically the record of it.

That's the historical aspect of it. But here's what we need to ask. What's the significance? Look, we don't want to beat around the bush here.

It's kind of like the author of Hebrews. He says, you know, there was lots of furniture in there and there's much that we could say about all of it. And we could say much about it too.

There's much about the sacrifices and much about the blood. And you had the altar out front and you had the table for showbread and you had an altar on the insides for incense and then you had the veil and you go through the veil and there was the Ark of the Covenant and the cherubim and the mercy seat. And you had all this.

And we could get into all this and explain it. But listen, if you would know what is significant about the temple more than anything else, here it is. Brethren, listen to me.

If your hearts pant after God at all, I know Craig was talking about in the first hour, which one of us is going to say we've lived v. 12 of Colossians 3 to perfection with the compassion and the kindness? Brethren, with all of our failures, but I'll tell you this, if you have anything in your heart that has ever panted after God, you want Him more, you want the glory, then you want to listen to this. It is said in Exodus 25.8, brethren, we are the temple. So you want to hear this.

When you get to the New Testament, Paul specifically tells us those things in your Old Testament are written for our sake. So you listen to this. Exodus 25.8. Don't turn there.

Just listen to this. I'm going to go through a number of verses right now. Let them make me a sanctuary.

This is speaking about the tabernacle. The tabernacle became the temple. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.

If you have any panting in your soul after God, that ought to send some kind of reverberation. Because when we start talking temple, build it that I may dwell in your presence. Listen to this.

Listen to what God told Moses to tell Aaron. Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the holy place inside the veil before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. Listen to this.

For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. I will appear there. The infinite God says, I will appear at that place.

Right there. But did you hear what He said? But you cannot come there! Think about this. The Shekinah glory.

The manifestation of God. And it's at the mercy seat. That's what we want.

We want to draw close to God. And we want there to be mercy. You can't come there.

The glory is there. But man can't get close. King Solomon declared this.

Now this is when Solomon builds the first temple. They basically took the furniture out of the tabernacle, done with the tent, but they brought the furniture over and they put it in the temple. And many new things are created there.

But this is what Solomon said, 1 Kings 8.13, I have indeed built you, he's talking to God, I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell forever. You see, temple 101, it's the place where God dwells. And the Lord answered Solomon with these words, I have heard your prayer and your plea which you have made before Me.

I have consecrated this house that you have built by putting My name there forever. Now listen to these words. My eyes and My heart will be there for all time.

We're talking about the temple. My eyes and My heart will be there for all time. Again, I say this, if the heart of God, His heart, what does that mean? For God to say My heart is going to be there.

My heart. I don't know, maybe perhaps if I would have looked that word up in the Septuagint, I would have found the same thing that Craig found. Maybe it's the word bowels.

His compassions, His tender mercies are going to be there. His heart. The heart is the place of feeling.

The eyes are the place of seeing. It's the knowledge. My eyes.

My eyes are there. The infinite God says My eyes are in the temple. My heart is in the temple.

What kind of words are these? There's something attractive to the Christian here. Because this is all moving somewhere. It's moving to us.

It's an analogy. This temple was created for us to teach us something. You remember what happened there in 1 Chronicles 7? As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. You know what the temple is? The Lord's house. What do people do in a house? They live there.

The infinite God has a place where He lives. Brethren, when you start talking temple, you start thinking the sacred place. Why do people go to the temple? People went to that ancient temple for one reason.

I mean, the true people of God. They went there to meet God. They went there because that's where the Presence... Have you ever seen that in Scripture? The Presence.

Capital P. That's where the Presence was. And God's people panted after it. You remember how David spoke? One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after.

What was David panting after? Where did he want to go? What did his heart long for? Do you remember when Absalom came and took the throne from him and he was pushed out? I mean, the thing that made that so traumatic to a true child of God is being driven away from the temple. From the tabernacle. From the ark.

From Jerusalem. From the place. I mean, I know in David's day, the temple hadn't been built yet, but that ark, the tabernacle, the place where God's Presence was, David's longing for this.

One thing have I desired of the Lord. What is it? What was it that he wanted? That he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life to behold the beauty of the Lord, to inquire in His temple. Now look.

Look with me. Ephesians 2. Notice v. 21. Here's the Apostle Paul.

"...In whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord." Well, Paul, what's the most important thing about it? If you were going to call it by another name, what would you call it? Which is exactly what he does in v. 22. "...In Him you also are being built together..." Do you see it? "...into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." You see, brethren, the practical implication of all this for us is that Paul is teaching us that God is no longer dwelling in houses made out of bricks and stones and cedar and lumber. He dwells... He dwells... These four walls don't do it.

Brethren, we could be meeting out in the middle of a field. We are living stones. That's what Peter says.

The people of God are living stones and they are being fit together and they are being crafted by the Spirit of God into a holy temple. The dwelling place of God is with man. It's what Scripture says.

The dwelling place of God is with man. You find at the end of Revelation, that's what's happening. He is creating a temple.

And all that in the Old Testament, its type and its shadow and its directing and its pointing, you see it here. Verse 22, in Him, in Christ, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God. You know, as I was sitting at my desk yesterday, it's like a little light bulb went on.

Think about what it would have been to have been there when Solomon was dedicating the temple. And you remember what happened? Fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the glory of God filled the temple and the priests were driven away. They couldn't stay there.

And I was thinking about that picture. And it's like the light went on. Think of Nadab and Abihu.

They were struck dead in the tabernacle. Or you think about Uzzah. He touched the ark.

This is the primary piece of furniture in the tabernacle, in the temple. He touched it and he died. But today, you come to the New Testament era, Ananias and Sapphira are struck dead.

Where were they? Ask yourself that. Were they in the temple? Were they in the tabernacle? Were they touching the ark? They were among God's people. They were where the Spirit was working among God's people.

And they were struck dead. In the days of old, the priests fled from the temple. But do you know what it says about the church after Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead? I'm thinking the King James says, no man durst join themselves to them.

Doesn't it say it like that? You see, the priests fled from the temple in the Old Testament. People fled from the church in the New. Why? Because in the Old, they saw, wow, fire fell on.

But in the New Testament, you'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. Who? You! You see where the fire is now? That pillar of fire was above the tabernacle. But you come to the New Testament, tongues of fire are above God's people.

It's like, as I was thinking about it, I'm seeing these parallels. It's like, where's the power of God in the Old Testament? Where does the fire fall in the Old Testament? Where is the pillar of fire in the Old Testament? Where do people drop dead in the Old Testament? And then you come to the New Testament. Where's it there? You start thinking.

There was that temple, Herod's temple. And the place shook. And the temple was rent in two.

Or the veil was rent in two. You travel out into the book of Acts. And where's the shaking taken place? In Acts 4, it's in the prayer meeting.

It's where God's people are. Brethren, do you realize this? We're not talking buildings anymore. You don't have to go to Jerusalem.

Isn't that what Jesus said? He said to the Samaritan woman, He's talking to a Gentile. And He's saying, oh, it's not on this mountain and it's not in Jerusalem. That's not what God's seeking.

God's seeking true worshipers. God's seeking these living stones. Brethren, do you realize this? The place where we should expect to see the glory of God and the fire fall now is not in a building over in Jerusalem.

It's among God's people. And that's exactly what you see happening in the book of Acts. Exactly.

In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. You! You! A dwelling place for God. Not somebody else.

Not some building. It's us. We're being placed in and we're being fitted.

And we're being constructed. We're being built together so that God... You know, if you think, my eyes are there. My heart is there.

I will dwell among them. We're the temple. And one of the things is, you remember when we were back in v. 18 of Ephesians 2? I brought out the reality of the Trinity.

Look there at v. 18. For through Him, Christ, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. And I brought out the Trinitarian glory of that verse.

We saw all three Persons back there. But Paul, he so naturally sets the Trinity forth. And I want you to see this again.

Look at v. 22. In Him, Christ, there's the second Person of the Godhead. You also are being built together into a dwelling place for God.

And the term God is used when Christ and the Spirit are already referred to. That obviously is the Father. And it all happens by the Spirit.

And brethren, again, we're in a place to bow to this doctrine. The Trinitarian reality. Humble ourselves before the glory of it.

Such a Being is our God. Brethren, this is so critical. What Paul shows us is that every one of the Persons of the Trinity need to be recognized by us.

We need to be caught up with all three Persons and the glory of each of the three Persons. And it's not that they're all doing the same thing in this construction of this temple. They all have a part to play.

When I was talking about v. 18, I was talking about this triune momentum that leads us to access to God. Here, the picture's different. It's not so much us approaching God as much as God working in us and building us together into this dwelling place for Him.

But again, you see this Trinitarian momentum. How is it pushing? What is it working? What's it producing? It's towards this place for God to live. The infinite God.

Brethren, if you walk out in a field, God is there. When you lived in the Old Testament, if you walked out in a field, if you walked out in the wilderness, God was there. But if you came to the tabernacle, God was there in a different way.

If you came to a place where there was a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, if you came to a place that you were strongly forbidden to go because the presence of God was so real, what we're talking about, it's one thing to talk about the presence of God. It's another thing to talk about the manifest presence. And I'm talking about where God reveals Himself.

And what we're talking about here is that God is building the church in order to be the place of manifestation above all other places in the universe. That's the idea. And you've got this trinity that's working together.

They're engaged in this. Christian, do you ever stop and just think? Do you realize these things about yourself? Do you look at other Christians and just recognize? Wow! Do you know what God's doing? I mean, when you feel cold, when you feel dry, when you feel alone, do you realize that the most wondrous, the most amazing, the most marvelous thing that could ever happen to any person on the face of this earth is that they'd be laid hold on by God and forgiven of all their sins? But more than that, they're being brought into a place. What is it going to mean for God to dwell there? You know what Scripture says? We're going to see Him face to face.

And the reality that He dwells there means He's not going away. You know how it is in this life? If you're a child of God, you've had seasons, you've been close. You've had seasons where it's marvelous.

Seasons where, like Brother Don Johnson talked about, you just think life is going to be one continuous baptism of the Holy Spirit. We have seasons like that. And then we have seasons like we sung about in the song.

Where we say, Lord, give us holiness. And we think, yes, what we really hope is a season of baptism and glory and joy, and we feel like we're coming out of our skins and it somehow makes us... But brethren, on your hardest day, remember the reality about where God is taking us. What He's crafting us into.

Who you are. What this whole structure is becoming. This is the most glorious thing that can ever happen to anybody.

You become these objects of God's love and attention and care, being fitted, joined together with each other. What I want to do is I want to look individually. How does each member of the Trinity play into this temple reality? Look at v. 22.

Notice those first two words. In Christ. Well, here's the second person.

I kind of want to go second person, third person, first person as we deal with the persons of the Trinity. But you see Christ. In Christ.

That we're built together into a dwelling place for God. Paul is always saying that. You know, I very quickly counted, and my numbers might not be exactly right.

I came up with roughly 20 times in the first two chapters where in Christ, in Him, in the Beloved, something like that is said. Now, if you do it, there's 45 verses and 20 times. That's a little over once for every two verses that he keeps hitting this.

Now, if we were talking to each other and we kept saying the same thing over and over and over and over and over, just imagine the time that it would take to speak the first two chapters of Ephesians. If we were just in conversation and you spoke as many words as what Paul speaks here, it wouldn't be that long. And if you said the same thing 20 times, he'd be like, brother, you are being redundant.

Paul, what's with this?

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