

God Comes to Dwell with His People

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Recorded on October 14, 2019

As Terry mentioned in his opening message, there has been a paradigm shift in our understanding of God and Christ in the record of scripture. That knowledge has changed many things for all of us. Regarding this time and what we're here to look forward to, we used to think that Christ would return to the earth by Himself, set up the Millennium, oversee and do everything, and after it was all over, He would turn it over to His Father.

In our previous understanding not much was said about what God would be doing during this time. If Christ is doing everything, is God away doing other things? Maybe we wondered about that but we didn't really address it. The Father was commonly portrayed, back in those days, as similar to the president of a huge corporation, and if you've worked for a large corporation or the military, the chief executive officer (or CEO) is far away in an executive suite on the top floor, and scarcely anyone ever sees him; he issues orders from on high and is so high and mighty that he never mingles with the common workers. They don't know him, they don't see him—he's just a name up there. God was somehow—I think in a lot of people's minds—viewed in that way. He was there, and He was somehow the boss but really wasn't involved, because His Son was going to do everything and then turn it over at some point to the Father.

Winston Churchill famously said, "My father was like God. He wasn't around much." ((laughs)) That's kind of the way God was portrayed back in the old days. The point is this common perception that we've had in the past was satanically inspired, in my view, because it was a well-thought-out perversion of our image of God, meant to get our understanding of God off-track and into what was not true. The understanding was that somehow God was too high and mighty to care about us as individuals. This perverted image of God borders on blasphemy, frankly, because just the opposite is true, as we're going to see today.

Frankly, in the past, that image of God being high and mighty and remote, and not rubbing elbows with His children, was translated into the ministry. I remember at Feast times there was a reserved ministerial parking lot and there was reserved ministerial seating, and in the latter days there were, at some Feasts, ministerial hospitality rooms; the ministers would go from their reserved parking, to their ministerial hospitality rooms, to their reserved seating, and then back to their reserved parking, after which they would leave and not rub elbows with the common folk. That was kind of the way people viewed God in that sense; they were just carrying on that image. The important fact is, though—and think about this—where God dwells tells us much about Him. I'll say it again. Where God dwells tells us much about Him.

God, who is a Spirit Being, can dwell wherever He wants to, can't He? He is not limited by time and space, and can exist in several places at once. For example, He's on His throne in heaven right now, but He and Christ reside inside each one of us, through the power of the Holy Spirit. So God is in two places at once, with each one of us, and on His throne, but if you take all of God's people, collectively, all over the world, God is in many places at the same time.

With that in mind, let's notice where God is at the beginning of the Millennium. You might ask, is He on His throne in heaven, or is there maybe something else we've missed? Let's go to Zechariah 14. We've been there only two or three times during this Feast, so let's go there again. Zechariah 14, verse 1. Notice this:

Zechariah 14:1 *Behold, the day of the LORD [all caps, YHVH, Yehovah] cometh ... (KJV)*

He is God Almighty, He is the Most High God, He is the living God, we know Him as God our Father, and if you'd like to review that information it can be found on our website, under "Sermon Archives" or "Written Material", and there is plenty to study there. We see here the day of Yehovah (or God Almighty) has arrived, it has come, and we look forward to that day on the Feast of Trumpets.

- 1 continued) *... and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*
- 2) *For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*
- 3) *Then shall the LORD go forth [God is not away in heaven, far off somewhere], and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.*
- 4) *And his [Yehovah's] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east ... (KJV)*

Wait a minute, wasn't He supposed to be far away somewhere? Wasn't this the exclusive domain of Jesus Christ? What does it say? What does the Bible plainly say? Going on in verse 4,

4 continued) *... and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof [we sing about that in a hymn] toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. (KJV)*

The Mount of Olives is going to split in two. Half is going to go north, half is going to move south, and there is going to be a large east-west valley in between. Going on in verse 5,

5) *And ye [the people who are there] shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye*

fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. (KJV)

It's interesting, we're told here there was an earthquake in the days of Uzziah. Just as an aside, I always like to search for ways to prove that God's word is true. An earthquake in the days of Uzziah—between 1873 and 1874, French archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau explored this area, and Biblical Archaeology Review says this: *There is evidence that Clermont-Ganneau's theory and Zechariah 14:5 are correct. In 1984, Israeli geologists Daniel Wachs and Dov Levitte identified the location of a large landslide on the Mount of Olives. Its Hebrew name is Nahal Atzal [a variation on "Azal", the name that Zechariah used], the area of the ancient kings' gardens, at the juncture of the Hinnom and Kidron Valleys. Wachs and Levitte's discovery validates Jewish historian Flavius Josephus's account that an earthquake caused a landslide during King Uzziah's reign, blocking up the king's garden in the valley. The mouth of the valley lies at the base of the southernmost summit of the Mount of Olives and lies several kilometers due east of the Mount of Olives.*

So we have here, just as an aside, archaeological evidence that confirms Zechariah's account; the feet of God Almighty are going to touch and stand upon this mountain. People are going to flee just as they fled in the days of Uzziah. Let's continue on in the latter part of verse 5.

5 continued) ... *and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. (KJV)*

Verse 6; I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

Zechariah 14:6 *On that day the sources of light will no longer shine, 7) yet there will be continuous day! Only the LORD knows how this could happen. There will be no normal day and night, for at evening time it will still be light. (NLT)*

Verse 8, going back to the King James.

8) *And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: [most likely referring to the Mediterranean and Dead Seas] in summer and in winter shall it be.*

9) *And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD [all caps, Yehovah], and his name one. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *one* means "first", and it can also mean "only"—only one Yehovah. Jumping to verse 16.

16) *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (KJV)*

Obviously this all occurs during the Millennium. This isn't way off after the Kingdom has been turned over to the Father. This is a millennial setting. Keep your finger here and go back a chapter to Zechariah 13, verse 7, and let's see who the LORD of Hosts is.

Zechariah 13:7 *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd [who could this be but Christ?—my shepherd], and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones ... (KJV)*

The LORD of Hosts calls Christ His Shepherd, therefore who could the LORD of Hosts be but God the Father? We see here that people come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast, and the LORD of Hosts is there—God the Father is there. Going on in verse 17 of chapter 14,

17) *And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.*

18) *And if the family of Egypt go not up ... (KJV)*

If they don't come and they decide they are going to do their own thing, then they aren't going to have any rain, and there's going to be a plague.

18 continued) *... and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

19) *This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. (KJV)*

What an incredible time this will be, because God Almighty is going to be there during the Feast of Tabernacles as the Millennium begins—not off in the distance somewhere. He is going to keep the Feast of Tabernacles with His children. Why? Because He loves them and He wants to be with them.

Rather than being some remote and inaccessible executive up in a penthouse somewhere, the Bible plainly tells us that we worship a God who wants to be with His children and wants to keep the Feast of Tabernacles with His children. What a concept. Think about that. God Almighty, who has all power, all might, all wisdom, and all knowledge, wants to rub elbows with His children and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. As we begin the Feast—this is all by way of introduction—let's realize that we're looking forward to a time (and this is the title of the sermon today) in which:

God Comes To Dwell With His People

We're going to look at five proofs from the Bible that show us God wants to dwell with His people, and then I'm going to make a couple of points after that, to apply these proofs to this day. As Jack joked about me on the Sabbath, yes, I do have points and today I'll offer you seven of them. Some people tire of this method but that's just the way my mind works.

First proof—the thing we have to consider first and foremost:

1. God is love.

That sets up everything. God is love; let's go to 1 John 4:8—you know where we're going. No matter what we think about God, this should be the first thing that comes to mind, that God is love. Love is caring about other people. In this case, God has a plan to make lots of children and He does so because He is love.

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 16.

16) *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love [he says it again, and repeats it twice for emphasis]; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (KJV)*

We want to be one with God, referring back to the Day of Atonement. What is the link? God's Spirit, which is love. If God is love, then it follows—wouldn't He love His own children, if God is love? If He loves His children, wouldn't He want to be with His children, as any loving father or mother would? Of course He would. Would He not want to be with His children for 1,000 years?

If you were a mom or dad, would you like to say, I'm going to set this 1,000 years apart, and I'm going to go off somewhere, and I'm not going to be with the children I love for 1,000 years. Would any of us give up 1,000 years with our children, with our kids? Of course not, and neither would our heavenly Father.

Let's go to John 3:16. When I came into the church, this verse was kind of off-limits because it was considered so Protestant. We talked about obedience, we talked about ruling with a rod of iron, we talked about force. We never went to this scripture—at least, sitting out in the audience, I never heard it much—because it smacked of Protestantism. But it's in the Bible and it's true.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

17) *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (KJV)*

The interesting thing is, the Greek word for “world” is *kosmos*. We get our English word “cosmos” from that same Greek word, and it means, quoting from Strong’s, *the world, including its inhabitants*. The people, children, human beings, whom God has created. Now let’s go to a last scripture under this first point, that God is love. Let’s turn to 1 John 4, verse 9. I’ll read out of the King James unless otherwise noted.

1 John 4:9 *In this was manifested the love of God toward us ... (KJV)*

How is the love of God manifested or displayed?

9 continued) ... *because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live* [this obviously is referring to an eternity but also to this physical life] *through him. (KJV)*

So this first point is that God is love, and the fact is, because He loves His children, He wants to be with His children. It shouldn’t be a mystery to anybody that God wants to be with His kids. Just like we want to—I just love the kids here. They love, they come up and give hugs and pats, they tell you what’s on their mind and they show you what they’re working on, and it’s just a joy. God wants to be with His children, which leads to this second proof, if you want to call it that. This is the evidence that God wants to be with His people:

2. God came to dwell in the tabernacle.

If God didn’t love His kids, He would be off doing something and wouldn’t come to a tent out in the desert. But He did so because He wanted to be with His children. Let’s go to Exodus 25:1. Verse 1 just sets the context.

Exodus 25:1 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying ... (KJV)*

Now let’s go to Exodus 25, verse 8.

8) [God is saying to Moses] *And let them make me a sanctuary; [why?] that I may dwell among them. (KJV)*

I want you to build Me this very special tent, a very beautiful, elaborate tent, and the reason I want you to build it is because I want to dwell with you. I want to come down and I want My presence to be with you. Let’s go to chapter 29, verses 45 and 46. It’s just amazing how we didn’t connect all the dots. I sure didn’t—I really didn’t.

Exodus 29:45 *And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. (KJV)*

Statement of fact.

46) *And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.* (KJV)

God wanted Ancient Israel to know this: I took you by the hand and I led you out, and I am here and I want to be with you. Now let's jump over to Leviticus 26, verse 11. There is proof after proof in the Old Testament that God wanted to be with His children.

Leviticus 26:11 [God says] *And I will set my tabernacle among you: [the King James says] and my soul [my life] shall not abhor you.*

12) *And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.*

13) *I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt ...* (KJV)

Think about this: If God came down and performed all the miracles to get them out of Egypt, and took them through the wilderness to begin the journey—they're wandering—would He not want to continue to dwell with them? Why would He perform all the miracles and go off and leave them? Now your kids are out in the desert and I'm just going to leave you there? Of course not. He would continue to be with them during the whole time. Let's go to Numbers 35, verse 34. Sometimes these verses just give you goose bumps when you read them. This is an instruction to Israel to take care of the land for a given reason.

Numbers 35:34 *Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, [why?] wherein I dwell:*

God says, My presence is in this land.

34 continued) *... for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.* (KJV)

This is stated in the Old Testament, over and over and over, and the fact is, God is not limited to being in one place at one time. Some people argue and say God has to be in heaven, therefore He couldn't be down on the earth, therefore it had to be Jesus Christ who was on the earth.

Is God so limited, is He so powerless, that He can't be in two places at once? Or 10,000 places at once? Or 50,000 places at once—inside us and wherever else He wants to be? His presence can be wherever He wants it to be, any time He wants it to be, in as many places as He wants it to be, all simultaneously. That is the power and the might of the God we serve.

So closing out this second point about God being in the tabernacle, are we kind of getting the image or maybe the picture that God loves His people and His kids, and He wants to be with His people? It's repeated over and over.

Let's go to the third proof.

3. God came to dwell in the temple.

After the temple was built, after His presence was in the tabernacle, now Solomon builds a temple to God and God says, I want to be there, so I'm going to tell you how to build it. I want you to build it. Let's go to 1 Kings 6 and verse 11.

1 Kings 6:11 *And the word of the LORD [Yehovah] came to Solomon, saying, 12) Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father: 13) And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. (KJV)*

God says if you will look to Me, if you will put Me first, if you will seek Me, I am here to dwell with you in this new building which you are about to consecrate. Now let's go to 2 Chronicles 7 and see the dedication of the temple, and see if God kept His promise about dwelling in or having His presence in the temple. After the building was finished and all the details were completed, Solomon and the nation were ready.

2 Chronicles 7:1 *Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, [the dedicatory prayer, look what happens] the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2) And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. (KJV)*

It's His house. So the important point here is, God wants to be with His children. Are we beginning to see a pattern here? Over and over—with Israel coming out of Egypt, in the tabernacle, in the temple—we have proof of God wanting to be with His children.

The fourth point, a fourth proof.

4. God will dwell with His people in the Millennium.

In the introduction we touched on a couple of scriptures that show this to be true. Let's go to Revelation 6 and begin in verse 9. We're going to see absolutely—and there is proof after proof; we could spend the rest of the day going over proofs—that God is going to be involved with His children in the Millennium. Let's look at events leading up to this time, when God comes to dwell with His children.

Revelation 6:9 *And when he [the Lamb, from verse 1] had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls [lives] of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

11) *And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

12) *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*

13) *And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

14) *And the heaven departed as a scroll [can you imagine that?] when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

15) *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, [guess what they did] hid themselves [from the power of God] in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;*

16) *And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: [referring to two Beings—the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb who sits at His right hand] (KJV)*

So the mighty men of the world are scared to death because of the wrath of Him who sits on the throne and His Son. God Almighty is there and He and Christ, as They have done since eternity, are working together to fulfill God's will.

17) *For the great day of his wrath [God's wrath] is come; and who shall be able to stand? (KJV)*

Chapter 7 and verse 1:

Revelation 7:1 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

2) *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: (KJV)*

The living God is God Almighty. We have papers that address this subject on our website, and various speakers have talked about it in the past.

2 continued) *... and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,*

3) *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

4) *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

(KJV)

Going on to verse 9.

9) *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne [this is God Almighty's throne], and before the Lamb ... (KJV)*

They're standing before God Almighty, the Lamb is at His right hand. How clear can that be?

9 continued) *... clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*
10) *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (KJV)*

This is a very clear picture. God is not off somewhere, like a chief executive of a corporation, aloof and remote. He is there, He is involved, and He is in charge.

11) *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God ... (KJV)*

God Almighty, the living God.

12) *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. (KJV)*

We get the picture; the whole host of heaven is down on their faces, worshipping God Almighty, with Jesus Christ at His right hand.

13) *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*
14) *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (KJV)*

Verse 15—it's amazing how one can just read over this for decades.

15) *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. (KJV)*

Can that be any more clear? The context is just after the tribulation. How much clearer can this be? The Being who sits on the throne will dwell right then with His children, starting right then.

16) *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

17) *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, [He's right there with His Father] and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (KJV)*

So once again, God and Christ are there together. God is showing His love to His children and Christ is showing His love to his younger siblings—His brothers and His sisters. Now let's go to Ezekiel 43, verse 5, which is speaking about a time yet future. We're going to see that Ezekiel was taken to a future temple—this is yet to come.

Ezekiel 43:5 *So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court;*

The context is of the temple and you can check that out in Chapter 41 and verse 1, where it starts talking about the temple; here we're in verse 5, talking about the court.

5 continued) *... and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, [notice this] the glory of the LORD filled the house.*

6) *And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.*

7) *And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. (KJV)*

This is a time yet future, of God being on earth in a temple. His glory is there and His presence is there. Now just move a few chapters to chapter 48, which is speaking of New Jerusalem. We'll just read one verse, verse 35, the last verse.

Ezekiel 48:35 [Speaking of New Jerusalem] *It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there. (KJV)*

Yehovah is there in Jerusalem during the Millennium. Then one final scripture, under this point about God dwelling with His children in the Millennium; let's go to Micah 4:1.

Micah 4:1 *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.*

2) *And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways [God will teach us personally], and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth [out] of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

3) *And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (KJV)*

Verse 7.

7) And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD [Yehovah] shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. (KJV)

For decades, God's church has taught that this was a millennial scripture. We have read it every Feast. We sing it every Feast and look who is there—God Almighty is there. He is there with His people because He loves His people. If God was with Adam and Eve—the Almighty was with Adam and Eve—in the garden and He was with Israel at the time of the Exodus and the time of the wandering, and He was with Israel in the tabernacle and the temple, would it not be logical to conclude that He would want to continue that pattern and be with His children during the Millennium? Of course!

God wants to be with His kids, and it's a theme throughout the Bible, because He loves us and He cares about us. We're going to have an eternity to get to know each other. What a joy that is going to be. He's not off in the penthouse. He wants to be right there rubbing elbows with His children.

Let's go to the fifth proof, and this is really, in a way, the most astonishing of all.

5. God not only wants to be with His people, He wants to be in His people.

God wants to dwell inside His people. Let's go to John 14, verse 16. Christ is speaking on His last night on this earth, and He's trying to convey the astounding fact of what He and His Father intend to do on behalf of human beings. It just blows the mind. Christ is saying to the disciples, who sort of absentmindedly didn't get it, didn't know what was going on yet, didn't know that He was going to be taken and brutalized and killed, that He has a lot of important information to get across.

John 14:16 *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that ... (KJV)*

The King James says "he", and we know the Comforter is not a being or a person. The word in the Greek can be translated "it".

16 continued) *... he may abide with you for ever;*

17) *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you [inside you].*

18) *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (KJV)*

Verse 23.

23) *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we [both of Us] will come unto him, and make*

our abode with him. [The Greek word “with” in the King James can mean “in”, and other scriptures prove that it’s referring to coming and living in them, after the day of Pentecost.] (KJV)

Let’s go to 2 Corinthians 6, verse 16. It contains another astounding fact that just boggles the mind. Paul is writing to an audience who understands what it is that the temple symbolizes.

2 Corinthians 6:16 *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*

And of course, everybody said, there’s no agreement at all.

16 continued) *... for ye are the temple of the living God;*

We know the living God is God Almighty, God the Father.

16 continued) *... as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* (KJV)

We see again that God started off with Adam and Eve, then He was with Israel in the wilderness at the time of the tabernacle, and later at the time of the temple, and now He is saying, I want to come and live inside each one of you. When the disciples first heard that they didn’t understand it. If we had been there we wouldn’t have understood it either, but we understand it now. The concept of God Almighty and His Son coming and living inside each one of us—how astounding and astonishing is that?

The fact is, God is inside of us—each one of us—right now. We’re told where two or three are gathered together in My name, Christ said, I’m there in the midst of you. He is there not only inside us but He is here in this room. We are God’s children because God and Christ are present with us. We can’t see Them but They are here. God and Christ are with us at the Feast, in us at the Feast, and here is the point, again: God wants to be with His children.

The sixth point is somewhat of a caution because we’re human:

6. Sometimes we behave like God is not with us, or God is not in us.

Sometimes we behave that way. We’ve all been there, we’ve all done it. After we have said it or done it, we look back and ask, God, how could I have done that? How could I have said that? Your Spirit is in me, I read Your word, I want to be close to You. How could I have done that?

Let’s go to Psalm 94 and verse 1. David was familiar with this concept. We intend well but sometimes we put our mouth or our brain in gear before we exercise God’s Holy Spirit.

Psalm 94:1 O LORD God [God Almighty, Yehovah], to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

2) Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

3) [Again he implores God Almighty, Yehovah] LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4) How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

5) They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6) They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7) [Notice what they say] Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. (KJV)

Thinking, we can get away with it; God is not watching; He's off doing something else.

8) Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?

9) He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10) He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? [Scary thoughts.] He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?

11) The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. (KJV)

So the fact is, if we're honest with ourselves, we're all guilty of sometimes acting or reacting as though God is not in us or God is not present. We're human, we sin, we make mistakes. Probably the best example of that was Peter. Let's turn to Matthew 26. We know Peter at this moment had God's Spirit with him but not inside him. Pentecost hadn't occurred yet. Peter had been with Christ more than three years. They had walked, talked, slept and eaten together, and Peter had witnessed all the miracles. Christ had been taken and Peter was sitting outside the palace, and a damsel—a young woman—came and spoke to him.

Matthew 26:69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. (KJV)

What was Peter's response? Oh yes, He's my master, He's the one who taught me everything I know. No.

70) But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71) And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. (KJV)

What is his reaction a second time?

72) And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73) And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee [you have a Galilean accent—we know where you're from; so his manner of speaking betrayed him].

74) *Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. [Wow!] And immediately the cock crew.*

75) *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. (KJV)*

How many times have we done something like this and in our private time, lying on our bed crying, have we wept bitterly, because, how could I have done this, how could I have said this, how could I have treated somebody like this, how could I have had these thoughts? The fact is, sometimes we behave as though God is not there with us and He is not there inside us.

This happened to Peter. The point is, after witnessing all of the miracles, all the talking and walking and eating and traveling together, and all they had been through, He denied His mentor. We can do the same. God knows what's in our hearts. Let's go to Psalm 44, verse 21, the last scripture under this sixth point, that we can slip and behave in a way that denies the fact that God is with us or in us. As the psalm reveals, God sees, God hears, God knows.

Psalm 44:21 *Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. (KJV)*

He knows our heart. Here's the good news; over the last several years, God has become more and more real to all of us. We understand who He is; what He has done; what His relationship is with His Son; what They have done together; what His titles are; and because God has become more and more real to each of us, it becomes easier for us to become closer to Him because we can get closer to somebody who is real, somebody who is not just some fuzzy image, or somebody who is remote or afar off, or is who knows where.

As we know God better and we understand His word better, we understand that He is always with us, He is inside us, and once we have that knowledge, once it's committed—once we know it to our very being—it becomes harder to deny God. It becomes harder to think evil thoughts. It becomes harder to treat people in evil ways. Therefore, we are more likely, because we've come to know God and Christ better over the last few years, to do the things that please Him because He is more real to each one of us. That's the good news.

Point number seven. This is the conclusion. Let's ask the question:

7. What lesson can we learn from the reality that God wants to be with us, spend time with us, live with us, and rub shoulders and elbows with us?

What lesson can we learn from that reality? What do we need to keep in mind here at the Feast? God's people are rubbing shoulders with each other, and if we believe these scriptures, God is here in Spirit but someday He is going to be with us. I don't know how it's going to work but we're going to watch Him and talk to Him and be with Him.

Because God wants to dwell with us, should we not want to dwell with Him? Look at all the examples of God saying, I want to be with My children. If we love this Being and we want to be like Him, would we not want to be with Him too? Wouldn't we want to be with Him in Spirit, wouldn't we want to be with Him in our mind, to be like Him every day, every moment of every day, and make Him a part of everything we do?

We won't turn there for time but Paul talks in Romans about being instant in prayer, and he says be patient in tribulation, rejoice in hope, but be instant in prayer. That Greek word "instant" can refer to a slave, in relationship to his master. It can mean to adhere closely to, as a servant. Or it can mean to give yourself continuously to someone as a servant would to his master.

I don't know exactly how many of you are fans of the television series "Downton Abbey", but many are, so if you remember the scenes in the great dining room, where they're all sitting around a long table, with the multitude of table settings arranged just perfectly—and you notice that the servants, if you look around the room, are against the back wall, standing at attention, staring straight forward, and the moment somebody needs something, they are right there. Somebody drops something, they are there to pick it up. Somebody needs another table linen, they are there to give it to them. They are there, attentively looking to their masters, in that sense; they're instant in their service and what they give.

Paul is talking about us being instant in prayer in the same manner. We are the servants of God our Father, and the connection we have is prayer and His Spirit. The lesson we learn from the fact that God wants to be with His children is that we want to be instantly with Him, we want to be attentive to Him, we want to do His will as a good servant wants to do the will of his master.

We need to follow God's own example. God says, I'm setting you an example—I want to be with you. I want to always be with you. I want to know you and communicate with you. I want to be close to you. If that's the case, shouldn't we respond and say, I want to be close to God, I want to be like God, I want to be with God, I want Him in my mind all the time. I don't want Satan in my mind, I don't want Satan to take up a residence in my head. I want God to take up a residence in my head. So we should just be absolutely striving with all our might to follow the example of Yehovah, God Almighty, the Most High God—to follow His example. He wants to be with us; we should reciprocate and want to be with Him.

What a joy that God is here in this room right now! He and His Son dwell in each one of us and we should behave accordingly, and, over time, become more and more like Him and His Son; more and more we should want to have God and Christ in our minds, in our hearts, and everything we do should be to please Him, to do His will, to make Him happy with us. I pray at the end of the day, God, I hope I've made You happy today, but in some cases I didn't, here and here and here, and I'm sorry and I repent, because I want to make You happy. I want to please You.

Let's go to one final scripture in Revelation 21:1. Mark Mickelson gave a sermon recently about the new heavens and the new earth; they are described right here.

Revelation 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

2) *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

3) *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (KJV)*

The point is, God is not some far-away chief executive who disappears for 1,000 years, so that we don't know what He is doing, or He's not personal to us, or He's not involved with us—that is what the church taught for decades and it just simply isn't true. I'm not saying that to bash anybody because I was right there believing the same thing. The point is, once you read the scriptures and understand them for what they say, God is not some far-off chief executive. He is not too high above us to want to talk to us, to get to know us, to be with us, to live inside of us, because the fact is, He loves us.

God loves each one of us. He has a plan and purpose for us, He has an abode for us, and He wants us to be His eternal children in His Kingdom. He is the opposite of what we believed years ago, and how sad that was.

During these eight days, let's rejoice, because God Almighty and His Son walk with us, They're here with us, They live inside us. So let's all strive and behave with the knowledge that we have God Almighty and His Son living inside us, and let's behave that way during the Feast, exhibiting the characteristics, the qualities, and the love of God Almighty.