

GATECITY CHURCH
CARRY THE ARK, PT. 3
SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2024 – BILLY HUMPHREY

I. Review

- A. The Church must wrestle with Jesus' words in Matthew 21:12-13, "My house shall be called a house of prayer."
- B. The Church is meant to be a house of prayer, a family of prayer.
- C. The House of Prayer is for everyone, because even though all of us aren't singers and musicians, all of us are priests unto God.
- D. The entire Church is meant to operate in a priestly identity, ministering to the Lord as our first work of ministry. This doesn't take away from any of the other components of church life and family, it simply prioritizes ministry to the Lord first.
- E. It is critical that we consider the chief themes in the Scriptures and align our practice to what we see emphasized and practiced. With that idea in mind, let's consider God's initial calling for His people to be a kingdom of priests.

II. Israel's Calling to be a Kingdom of Priests

- A. The Garden of Eden was the first sanctuary the Lord created on earth. It was a place specifically designed by God, for God and man to dwell together. When Adam and Eve sinned, they no longer had access to the garden and forfeited the honor of being able to meet with God.
- B. From that point on, God began a plan to re-establish humanity as a kingdom of priests. This was evidenced when He raised up Abraham and subsequently called Israel to be a kingdom of priests.
- C. This calling to be a kingdom of priests, which eventually included Jews and gentiles alike, is reflective of God's desire to dwell with His people. He called His people to be priests and instructed them to build sanctuaries, all because He desires to dwell with His people.

Exodus 19:6-8 – "6 '...And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.' 7 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. 8 Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD."

- D. After the Lord delivered Israel from captivity in Egypt, He brought them to Sinai to enter into a covenant with them there.

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- E. At Sinai, God offered Israel the opportunity to be an entire nation of priests without any barriers between Himself and the people. Israel immediately agreed, not knowing the depth of what this would actually mean.

Exodus 20:18-21 – “¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’ ²⁰ And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.’ ²¹ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.”

- F. Upon hearing the voice of the Lord audibly, they immediately turned to Moses and asked him to be God’s minister, speaking to them on behalf of God, instead of God speaking to them Himself. Israel, in effect, rejected God’s invitation to be a kingdom of priests and asked that Moses would stand between them.
- G. It’s unclear what the worship environment of Israel would have been like if Israel had accepted God’s invitation. What is clear is that the establishment of the Levites as the only tribe that were called out as priests to tend the sanctuary was a result of Israel’s rejection of God’s invitation for them all to be a kingdom of priests (Numbers 1:49-53).
- H. Ultimately, it was because of God’s mercy that He set apart the tribe of Levi so that the nation of Israel wouldn’t be destroyed by His glory dwelling in their midst.

Numbers 1:52-53 – “⁵² The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; ⁵³ but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.”

- I. Despite Israel’s rejection, God’s desire to dwell in the midst of His people and for all of His people to operate as a kingdom of priests never changed.

III. God’s Old Testament Sanctuaries

- A. There are four Old Testament sanctuaries, each of them built drawing upon the pattern of its predecessor. The tabernacle of Moses was given to him by God, and He literally showed Moses the pattern for His Tabernacle when Moses came up to Him on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9).

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1. Moses' Tabernacle (Exodus 25-31, 35-40).
 2. David's Tabernacle (2 Samuel 5-7; 1 Chronicles 16-17, 23-25)
 3. Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 5-7)
 4. Zerubbabel's Temple (Ezra 5-6; Haggai 1-2)
- B. The temple in Jerusalem in Jesus' day was known as Herod's Temple. Herod's temple was the temple that Zerubbabel originally built with some expansion added to it by Herod the Great.
- C. The key issues to understand, however, about each of these sanctuaries are the following:
1. God designed them as a place to meet with His people.
 2. Each of these sanctuaries mirror the throne room in Heaven.
 3. Each of these sanctuaries prophetically point to Jesus.
 4. Each of these sanctuaries prophetically point to the new birth.
 5. Each of these sanctuaries point to the fullness of intimacy God intends to share with His people eternally.

IV. God Tabernacling Among Men

- A. With the understanding that each of the sanctuaries of the Old Testament speak of the incarnation, let's consider again some of the details of the incarnation.
- John 1:14** – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- B. The word translated “*dwelt*” in English is a Greek word, “*skenoo*”. The word literally means:
1. *to tent or encamp*, that is, (figuratively) *to occupy* (as a mansion) or (specifically) *to reside* (as God did in the Tabernacle of old)
 2. *to fix one's tabernacle, have one's tabernacle, abide* (or live) *in a tabernacle* (or tent), tabernacle
- C. Jesus Himself was a living sanctuary of the Glory of God. He came to dwell among us because God wanted to be with us.
- D. His name, “*Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) speaks of His great desire to dwell with us.
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V. The Reality of the Indwelling Spirit

- A. Let's consider once again what the Scriptures say about the people of God being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

1 Corinthians 6:19 – “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

- B. Just as the glory of God dwelt in the Old Testament sanctuaries, the Glory of God is now dwelling on the inside of the people of God, through the Holy Spirit.
- C. Paul elaborated on this theme in 2 Corinthians 3:7-4:7, ending with the glorious declaration: “⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7).
- D. How does it impact you to know that the sanctuaries of the Old Testament were archetypes of God's plan to put His spirit within believers and make you His Temple?

VI. Built Together as a Dwelling Place for God

- A. Now consider God's intention for the Church as a whole to be a temple of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 2:19-22 – “¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

1 Peter 2:5 – “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

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- B. The Church is called to operate as a dwelling place for God! It is called to be a living, breathing, temple in the spirit, a tabernacle of God's glory. The Church is called to be a people who are indwelt by His Spirit but who are also built together as a place for His Spirit to dwell and manifest!
- C. I see God's activity in Acts chapter 5 with the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira as the high point of glory in the New Testament. No where else do we see the glory of God so powerfully manifested that unrepentant sin is instantaneously judged. It was as if Ananias and Sapphira had walked into the Holy of Holies in the temple and lied to the Holy Spirit.
- D. What are the possibilities for the Church now? If what we see in Acts chapter 5 was the first days of the Church, what will the possibilities be for the Church that operates in this same spirit before the Lord returns?

VII. God Will Dwell with His People Forever

- A. The eternal outcome of all these truths is that God will once and for all dwell in unfettered intimacy with His people.
- B. The eternal reality we all will share is ultimately God's original design for humanity. He will dwell with us forever!

Revelation 21:1-4 – “¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’”