

*DAY 1 BRIAN GIBBS*

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What comes to mind when you hear the word, “Sanctuary?” In centuries past, the landscape of nations, including America, have seen structures of magnificent workmanship, pristine architecture, beautiful art and décor that have created a space for worship and communion with God. Sanctuaries used to be known as a house of prayer and reverential worship.

Some have other ideas when they hear the word Sanctuary. Do you think of pews or chairs? Do you think of lights or candles? Do you think of marble and stone or of stained glass windows? Do you think of choirs of voices or the anthem of modern worship teams?

Unfortunately, most people no longer think of a sanctuary as a holy place of awe and devotion. In today’s world we have modern “campuses” with theater seating, large screens and light shows—where anyone can come in relaxed and chill with a cup of coffee in hand to experience a “worship service” or sit comfortably to listen to a message. In many places, today’s sanctuary is nothing opulent, but more like a community gathering hall for all ages. These are just a few observations.

Can I be candid? In more recent years, all across our country, we have seen the rainbow community parading debauchery and flaunting itself through main-line denominational sanctuaries mocking all things holy and sacred. Is there any place sacred anymore? Is there any place set apart for the resting and dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God among the people of God?

What sanctuary is God looking for? Can there be a place for the habitation of God in 2024? Can it really be found in a City with a physical address and zip code? Perhaps we should lift this to a higher elevation and perspective. God Himself asked in Isaiah 66:1, “Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?” (NKJV)

So where can God “rest”? Where is the “house” of God’s dwelling place on earth? Is it a sanctuary? Is it a chapel? Is it the building with the steeple? Is it the modern campus with an assembly hall?

The sanctuary that God longs for is the dwelling place of God’s abiding presence within the human heart/spirit. God has jealously desired his resting place to be within His own special creation—sons and daughters.

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Wow, what a magnificent revelation. We are the house of God—a temple for his holy presence. How loved are we that God Almighty would choose us as his own dwelling? Can it really be true—we are a house for the Spirit of God? The habitation that is fit for the glory of God in the earth is the life of each “new creation” in Christ Jesus. We have “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”(See Ephesian 4:24 NKJV).

I want to draw our attention to what God is actively doing to build his house even now. God is building a habitation for his manifest presence in his church. Look at these words: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22 NKJV).

This is packed full of super revelation and impact for us all. We are no longer alienated from God as foreigners. We have become citizens of His eternal Kingdom and members of the household of God. If we belong to His household, we belong to His family. We are not orphans, we are sons and daughters. And look at what God is actively doing—we are being fitted together. We are not in isolation, but together. God is the master builder and He is “fitting us together” to “grow into the temple of the Lord.” Let that really sink in deeply. God places us together (brothers and sisters in Christ) and fit us together to create a temple of His habitation. And then Paul says under the inspiration and anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are “being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” God is creative and so perfect in every way. His plan is awesome. God desires a living sanctuary created for His dwelling place through His very own people.

Wherever the sons and daughters of the living God come together to worship, seek and honor Him, there, in that sacred space, He dwells among us. How awesome is that? The King of eternal glory is truly among us and he is building us .

The buildings aren't holy, but the gathering of His people is holy, because He is in our midst. Jesus is the centerpiece of our living sanctuary together, and we are being built as a holy dwelling place for Him.

Can there really be a physical address in a city with a zip code where God has a real sanctuary, a living sanctuary and habitation? The real answer is, yes. It has nothing to do with the buildings, the steeple, the parking lots and the curb appeal of the campus. It has everything to do with the sons and daughters of God that rally as one in The Spirit to create the habitation for hosting His presence.

You and I are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And because of this profound honor, we steward the house of his presence recognizing in the fear of the Lord that His presence is our most sacred gift. We must aim to honor the Holy Spirit with our whole heart, soul and bodies, because we are his dwelling place. We do not want to do anything to grieve nor dishonor the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 4:30-32).

We want to live in such a way that our lives become a radiant living sanctuary of his manifest presence—where God rests heavily upon and within us. And from his temple, his river of life flows freely—touching, healing and bringing life to all.

In this fast, I pray earnestly for each of us, just as the Apostle Paul prayed over each of our lives, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...” (Ephesians 1:17-18 NKJV).

May this be a revelatory week in our fast unto the Lord. May you see yourself as God sees you. May you understand this highest calling as His sons and daughters. You and I are God’s living sanctuary. Because of the greatness and glory of our God—we have become the very ark of His dwelling presence. Hallelujah!

Amen.