

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 380
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 7:44-50
Topic: Stephen's Sermon Part 5 – No Temple Necessary
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Acts 7:44-50 MKJV The tabernacle of witness was among our fathers in the wilderness, as commanded by God, speaking to Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen. (45) Which also having received it by inheritance with Joshua, our fathers, with Joshua, in taking possession of the nations whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, (46) who found favor with God and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; (47) but Solomon built Him a house. (48) But, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says, (49) "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. What house will you build Me, says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest? (50) Has not My hand made all these things?"

Yesterday we saw that astrology had all of Israel's secular leadership in bondage at the time of Christ (hence all the commotion over the star of Bethlehem – which was probably Jupiter –see www.bethlehemstar.com for a wonderful faith-filled explanation). Astrology reverences the Creation rather than the Creator. In stark contrast to this was the tabernacle with its complete lack of graven images. The tabernacle was made according to God's heavenly pattern. The tabernacle did not contain God, but merely witnessed to Him and His Presence.

The Tabernacle was in a tent and communicated "God is in the midst of Israel". Wherever Israel went – God went. He simply always turned up in the midst of His people. The Temple communicated something else – that God was in a certain place and that we had to "go up to the mountain of the Lord". The temple says "God is out there and we must go to Him". For many people God was many days walk away. Now John's gospel says that Jesus "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14)– that is Jesus turns up in the midst of His people and wherever His people are, there He is in the midst of them (Matthew 18:19,20).

The tabernacle of witness was just a communication link with God, a satellite phone to glory, that worked even in the Wilderness. It was where Moses went to talk with God and get instructions, but it was not where God dwelt. As Isaiah 66:1, 2 says: Isaiah 66:1-2 MKJV So says Jehovah, Heaven is My throne, and earth My footstool. Where, then, is the house that you build for Me? And where is the place of My rest? (2) For all those My hand has made, and all those exist, says Jehovah. But to this one I will look, to the afflicted and contrite spirit, and the one who trembles at My Word.

Indeed the dwelling place of God is with the humble and contrite of heart: Isaiah 57:15-16 MKJV For so says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity; whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, even with the contrite and

humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (16) For I will not contend forever, nor will I be always angry; for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls I have made.

So when Stephen says: “But, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands,” he is just quoting Scripture – but does so to the Sanhedrin who were highly committed to God being physically within the perimeter of the Temple that they controlled. This notion was very powerful and when the Temple was demolished in 70 AD so that no stone was left on top of another, it was astonishing to the Jews.

Instead of that Temple, there were three other Temples – the body of Christ Himself (John 2:21), the Church which is the body of Christ and the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16,17, 1 Peter 2:5) and the body of the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19).

God is way too big to dwell in a building. That is for ghosts and demons. God’s Presence may fill a church or a home but God Himself is so vast that Heaven is His throne and Earth is His footstool.

In verse 50 above Stephen quotes Isaiah as saying: “Has not My hand made all these things?” The direct implication is that we do not need to make a house for God. God is quite capable of building His own house! The creative power is His not ours.

Thus God does not need our building to live in or the sacrifices of bulls and goats for food. God is the maker of all things and can supply all His own needs. The Temple and its sacrifices were just symbols, and such symbols can be temporary. In fact they were fulfilled in Christ, the prophet “like Moses” who was to come – and who in fact came. They had served their purpose and would soon be destroyed.

Some bible verses depend for their meaning on the smallest of words and verses 46 and 47 revolve around the word “but”: “until the days of David, (46) who found favor with God and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; (47) but Solomon built Him a house.” The small “de’ particle, often omitted indicates that Solomon did something here that was different. It wasn’t a tabernacle – it was a house! Remember Solomon introduced idolatry to Israel, in the end he was the Grand Idolater. Solomon had a pagan mindset and built temples to the gods of his hundreds of wives as well. While God honored the First Temple because of David its architect, in the end it became filled with pagan idols and was destroyed in 586BC. Solomon introduced a theological shift from “tabernacle” to “house” that was deeply pagan.

Stephen was saying that it was pagan and idolatrous to regard YHWH as anything but “tabernacling’ among us. God does not permanently dwell in any human building even in great cathedrals – and many such cathedrals have very few true worshippers. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman :

John 4:21-24 MKJV Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you shall neither worship the Father in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem. (22) You worship what you do not know, we know what we worship, for salvation is

of the Jews. (23) But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him. (24) God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

A final word – I am not opposed to church buildings per se – just to the idea that they somehow “contain God” and that He is only available at such church locations. The biblical understanding is that God is available to believers anywhere in the world, even on a hillside in Galilee or on a boat at sea.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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