

Temples Made With Hands

In Acts 7:48 and 17:24, Stephen and Paul tell us that God “dwells not in temples made with hands.” In John 4:21, 23, Jesus tells a Samaritan woman that worshipping God would no longer be in the temple or anywhere else, and that true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: so why do so many Christians believe that they need to be in church on Sunday in order to be with God? Is this the purpose of being at church? Our pagan ancestors worshipped at specific locations. Have we carried this forward into Christianity? If the Holy Spirit dwells within us, our physical location is irrelevant when worshipping God.

I believe that many Christians have bought into a very shallow version of Christianity. The Reformation did not improve on this for the most part. Catholics go to Mass on Sunday to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Others go to church believing that they will find the presence of God there in some way. In both cases, many are unaware of any presence of God within themselves apart from going to church. The earliest Christians brought Christ with them to church in order to encourage others with their gifts, manifestations of the Spirit, or to participate in the Lord’s Supper as shown in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 and 11:20-34. The New Testament is about Christ dwelling and internalizing Himself within us, which is taught in Colossians 1:27. Apart from this, there is no Christianity for us. So, how do we receive and carry Jesus wherever we go, instead of looking for Him in temples made with hands?

My spiritual journey probably started when I was born; but I got my first glimpse of Biblical spirituality when I was about 19 years old while I was reading the Matthew 6:25-34 account of the lilies of the field. I got the impression from reading it that God didn’t want me to worry about anything at all, even though I had never heard of non-worry to this extreme in my Catholic upbringing. I wasn’t sure if this was wishful

thinking on my part, or whether I was reading it correctly. I was a worry-wart to begin with, so I found this very appealing; but I didn't follow through with it at that point because there was no support for this in the Catholic Church that I knew of: but I never forgot it.

Shortly after this, I started to look for love in all the wrong places; but I eventually found that this didn't produce the fulfillment that I had expected. Instead of greater contentment, I started to experience greater frustration: but I didn't understand why. An Eastern philosophy that I got into for a few years in my late twenties explained that desires are never fulfilled because we will always want more of what we desire. The Bible calls them deceitful lusts. This made perfect sense to me because of my personal experience; so my interest in inner peace began in earnest. After a few years, I wondered if Christianity had any teaching on this; but I didn't know where to look for answers.

A quasi-Christian group conducted a conference that I attended, which emphasized the study of the Bible. While I remained with this group for a period of time, they taught me how to research the Bible. I got my first lexicon, and looked up the word 'peace.' As a result, I found verses that supported my initial understanding of the passage in Matthew, for example, Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:5-7; and James 4:6-10. I finally arrived at the point that if I didn't follow through with casting all of my care on God, the remainder of Christianity was meaningless. The location was irrelevant because I didn't know of any Church that taught this.

I totally rested my mind on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit after drinking two glasses of beer at a bar and walking home. I immediately had the most transforming experience in my whole life out on a street. I was not only filled with God's peace, but also His strength. It was a shock to me that this could happen without any formal religious ceremony in a church: and how simple it was. I moved forward with this, not knowing

where it would take me. I looked for churches that might understand what had happened to me: but with little success. I finally stopped seriously looking, and settled into my own private ministry. This is what I now preach, regardless of location.

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