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Ephesians 3:8 - 10  
Temple Of God pt. 4

We have spent the last three weeks looking in Ephesians at the reality of salvation where God has created in Christ's resurrection an eternal dwelling place for Himself in the spirit. The dwelling place of God is not really a what or a where, it is a who. It is a people who have been included into the death of Christ, and come forth from the dead as a body joined to a head. Christ the first fruits, and then those who are His. Christ the firstborn among many brethren.

In just three days, Christ did exactly what the Pharisees said was impossible – he raised out of the earth a temple for the living God. He fulfilled what was written “the glory of the latter house will excel the glory of the former”. He put away the mystery that was testified to in a natural building, by fulfilling it in a finished spiritual reality – the body of Christ. The true temple of God. What was a mystery, veiled in so many types and shadows, had finally come to be realized in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's where we ended up last week. We looked at the mystery of the habitation of God, the mystery of the resurrected One New Man. We found this to be the eternal purpose of God, predestined before the foundation of the world, and now finished, fully realized, completed in Christ. In fact, if you'll skip down just a couple verses to verse 11, you will read this sentence:

**Eph 3:11** according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

And this is what Paul proclaimed. The eternal purpose of God, eternally known in the heart of God, previously testified of in countless types and shadows in the Old Creation and Old Covenant, now fully accomplished and fulfilled and realized in Christ. And not just Christ the Nazarene, but Christ the resurrected head of a corporate body. Christ the living habitation, where God and man have been reconciled. Man comes out from the dead in the resurrection of Christ and then is joined to Christ as His fullness. And this is just as it was in the shadows in the first man where you see the woman first come out from the man, and then be joined to him as his fullness.

I might say this, just by way of clarification...this sanctuary, this habitation, this dwelling place is actually even a bigger reality than God living in you. And although we've not scratched the surface of even this in the last three weeks, the Lord would have us comprehend an even greater realization of salvation. Someone might ask -how anything could possibly be a bigger deal than Christ dwelling in man, but this is really only a third – if you'll allow me quantify spiritual reality for the sake of communication – a third of God's view of this finished plan and purpose. You might say that we have really been focusing on only one side of a what is a three-sided house of God.

If we would come to know the reality of this eternal habitation, this uniting of man with God, when we need to understand that salvation is at least three realities – Jesus says 1) I am in my Father. 2) You are in Me. And 3) I am in you. We've been focusing on number three – Christ in us. And that is appropriate because that is generally the first thing that the soul can comprehend by the Spirit of God – Christ lives in me. I have no life but Christ. I am the vessel of His occupation. I am His Body and so exist to give Him expression. And that is a tremendous thing, and a reality accepted but ignored by so many.

But even beyond the fact that we have become His house, the vehicle for His increase, is the reality that we have come to dwell in Him. We have come to purpose, and rest, and inheritance, and all of these Old Covenant promises by coming to live in Him. He is in us. We are in Him. One person in one of our weekly groups recently compared it to a fish in water. The water is in the fish giving it life and oxygen and movement. The fish is in the water, finding its habitation and home. That analogy, like all analogies, has its weaknesses, but at least you can see that the two go hand in hand. Jesus always mentions them both. I am in you, AND you are in me. Paul does the same thing. Over and over again he proclaims to the church that both Christ is in them, and they are in Christ. Why mention them both? Well, because though they are related, they are not the same thing. They are two facets of the soul's encounter and union with the living God.

And it is this way all throughout the types and shadows of the testimony as well. You will find many things in the Old Covenant that speak of salvation in more than one way. Take for example the testimony of salvation found in the natural land of Israel. I remember once becoming a bit confused and concerned about this. The Lord had been dealing with my heart along the lines of the promised land as the place of rest and promise for the soul. We cross the Jordan and come to rest in Him – the Land. I actually did a message or two on that from the book of Joshua. But then, maybe a few months later, I felt like the Lord was demonstrating that rather than Christ being the land, WE were the land, and Christ was like David conquering and subduing and judging this hostile territory. And this confused me for a time because, for some reason, I assumed that the Land had to speak of one or the other. How could God use it to speak of two or more realities? Well, the answer was realizing that our one salvation, this one eternal purpose, this habitation of God in the spirit as Ephesians 2:22 says, is much bigger than I could have imagined. It involves both Christ inhabiting a people, and a people coming to live in Christ.

And so you have two enormous and detailed testimonies of both things right here in the Land of Israel. First you have an amazing picture through Joshua of the new Israel (because the Old would not enter in because of unbelief) passing by faith through the Jordan. And there is so much just right there. You have the ark of God carried on the shoulders of the High Priests, and God saying "make sure to follow the ark, because you have not passed this way before". That is such a tremendous thing to say, because where we follow that ark NO MAN has or could ever go except He open and become the way. Well, then you have a people pass over into a land and finally come to purpose. Here we have the very purpose for which God had brought them out of Egypt. In fact, the moment that they are all on the other side, God speaks to Joshua and says "NOW...I have rolled away the reproach from Egypt from you.". I can picture Joshua saying "God, didn't you do that 40 years ago when we got out of there?" God would say "Joshua, my salvation isn't measured by what you come out of. It is measured by who you come into".

And so there they are, having just followed the ark into this land flowing with milk and honey. A land that clearly speaks of Christ. And no sooner than they set up their tents, and Joshua is calling all of the males together for a special meeting. The very first thing that God orders in this land of milk and honey is for them all to cut off the foreskin of the flesh. That's a strange thing to do after just crossing the Jordan. You'd think that God could have had them do that before moving into the Land. It would have been more convenient to recuperate from that minor surgery a few weeks before the big moving day. But, you see in the heart of God it didn't really matter that they had flesh while they were in the wilderness. But that flesh DID NOT BELONG in this land called Christ. Can you see? Its fabulous to see what was on God's heart in this story. In this land the flesh profits nothing. In this land flesh is left behind. In this land that is a picture of my Son, your flesh is crucified at the door, left behind at the river Jordan, cut off and meaningless immediately upon entrance. Joshua, call together the sons of Israel and circumcise every single male. "Yes Lord, but I don't get it". "Well...you will".

And then they dwell in this land. And what does God say about this land. He says, more or less, that Christ is the provision and preparation and inheritance of this land. He says "you will drink from wells that you did not dig. You will live in cities that you did not build. You will reap harvests that you did not plant. You will win wars that I will fight for you. Not by might, not by power in this Land...but by my Spirit, says the Lord. And Joshua, as far as you can see...I have given it to you. Now get up and possess what I have given to you." Do you see? It's a fabulous picture of a people coming to live in Christ. Its almost too perfect. But that makes sense because it was planned before God ever called Abraham and promised it to him. It was planned, Ephesians 1 says before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4 – before the foundation of the world God predestined to have a people living in His Son.

Some of you were there when I taught that series years ago. Well, then I began looking at the story of David. And here I saw the same land clearly used by God to testify of another side of this three-sided house. I saw a land that was filled with seven heathen nations. A land full of abominations, idols, witchcraft and violence. I knew that here we had a picture of my soul. This land was, by nature, in need of judgment, in need of a righteous king. And so the type and shadow turns upside-down and now we see a nation that is inhabited by a king who is the Seed of Abraham. Galatians chapter three picks up this picture. Christ, the true Seed of Abraham. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 10, the story of David is brought over into the New Covenant by Paul the apostle.

David lived his life bringing an end to the uncircumcised flesh that filled this land. David captured strongholds, tore down high places, destroyed idols, and exalted his kingdom throughout the entire land of Israel. So much so, that Solomon inherits a kingdom of peace. A kingdom with borders fully extended, and nations streaming in to see the glory of Israel. Well, Paul brings that right into the New Covenant and declares a king, the true Seed of Abraham, in His Land. Christ in you, the hope of glory. And now this king is reigning with purpose. Fulfilling everything foreshadowed by David, the man after God's heart. Christ in you bringing an end to all uncircumcised flesh. Christ, as it says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, using weapons that are

"...not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **10:5** casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,

bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, **6** and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

How could we miss the exact parallels in Paul’s language? How could we doubt that the land, in this story of David, is the soul of man being invaded and subdued by the life of Christ, who Philipians says

**Php 3:21** who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

How perfectly the land of Israel, just this one Old Covenant type and shadow, demonstrates the reality and purpose of the habitation of God that Paul here describes. And here are only two of the three sides of this house. I’ve purposely left alone what must be the greatest reality of them all...if you can even say such a thing. That Christ has brought us, in Himself, back to the Father. Colossians 3 “you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ IN GOD”.

The whole plan has come full circle. A Son proceeded out from the Father and brought a people into His death. That Son is raised as the resurrection and the life of His body, a people who are both His temple, and who dwell in Him. And in that Son, who said of Himself that He was the way, the truth, and the life, we have all come to the eternal Father’s House. And here we see the Father’s inheritance. It’s tremendous. We have what Ephesians 1:19 calls “the Father’s inheritance in the saints”.

Here we have Abraham’s relationship to the same land. Abraham the father. His Seed goes into the land, fills the land with a kingdom, fills the land with Glory. And, just as God promised to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and 15 and 17, the increase of the Seed, the greatness of the Seed is Abraham’s inheritance. The Father’s inheritance is in the greatness of the Seed.

Sure, right there in God’s first dealing with Abraham, the increase of Abraham’s Seed is Abraham’s greatness and inheritance.

**Gen 17:2** And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ...**4** "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. **7** And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you...Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Can you see just a bit of how immense and significant all of this is. We are trying to come to know nothing less than the purpose and reality for everything. We’re talking about what God foreknew and desired and had hidden in Himself, what He then spoke of and testified to throughout century after century, and now... it is come. Now it is realized in Christ. Now we have become the dwelling place of God in Spirit. Now we have died and our life is hidden with God in Christ. Now the Spirit is revealing that which has been freely given to us by God. And here we are in the church so often “waiting around to go to a better place so that we can finally meet God!”. How ludicrous.

Here we have the very reality of God's eternal habitation, formerly hidden in Him, now to be manifested by the church. And I'm going out of order here because I haven't talked about Ephesians chapter 3 verse 8 yet, but we'll get to that in just a minute. Let me just draw your attention quickly to verses 9 and 10 since I keep referencing them.

**Eph 3:9** and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **10** to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places,*

Here we have Paul telling us that, not only are we supposed to know the mystery of God which was hidden in Him, but now is revealed in Christ...we're supposed to be manifesting it, making it known, becoming the very witness of it working in a people to all principalities and powers. How unfortunate that so many think this mystery is hidden. – "I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you". Sadder still is that this reality and relationship, though finished by God in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, is not what we are making known.

And so this relationship with God that we have come to in Christ, this reality that Jesus describes by saying "I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you", or that Paul describes by saying "you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"...this reality, to say that it deserves all of our attention is to weak a statement. It has all of God's attention, it always has and always will...it's a pretty safe thing to say that knowing this should truly be our perpetual obsession. I mean...what else is life except for the spiritual discovery, experience, and manifestation of this reality?

What else is Christianity other than an inward encounter and conformity to this truth? Do we really think that there is anything else to know? Is there anything you can add? Christianity is knowing Christ in this way, and becoming the fragrance of such a knowing. Christianity is the Spirit of Truth causing you to know that you are in Him, He is in you, and you dwell with Him in the Father. Until that salvation – and that is God's definition of salvation, regardless of what ours is – becomes the experience of your soul, and the source and life of all that we do and say...there is nothing to say, nothing to do, and nothing to preach. Paul is so careful to define ministry as the effectual outworking of His life by faith. And Paul is so careful to define preaching as the declaration of the revelation of this mystery in Christ. And we read many of those Scriptures last week.

But though we can say, and hopefully agree, that this reality deserves all the time in the world, yet all the time in the world cannot make this salvation real to your soul. Teaching or preaching can make it interesting to your mind, even exciting to your heart. But it must become so much more than exciting for it to profit you. It has to become the reality and experience of what life is to your soul or it is only ideas, words, opinions, theories, dogma.

Now we rewind a bit to verse 8. Paul says:

**Eph 3:8** To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, but not as church doctrine, not as true theology, but as his personal encounter with the Person of Life. Sure, Paul's preaching was the gathering up of the fragments, the types and shadows of the Old Covenant and showing them to be fulfilled in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but never just as fact. Never as true information. But always as a personal, deep, profound, confrontation and encounter with that death working in Him, that burial putting away all things natural, and that resurrection being the life working in Him by which all things are done.

Let me read you a quote from our friend JW Luman.

"Now we must understand that The Truth is a Person, and that Person, is Christ, and that Person is Christ related to The Cross. Consequently The Truth is Christ revealed in His death, His burial and His resurrection. Therefore it is at The Cross, in The Person of Christ crucified that you and I are brought face to face with The Truth. And if you and I are brought face to face with Christ crucified; that is face to face with Him in a relationship with Him in His death, burial and resurrection; if we are brought face to face with The Truth, then we will begin to bring all things into The Truth. That is, we will begin to comprehend all things from the standpoint of our relationship with The Truth. All things will be brought to The Truth - IN OUR HEARTS. They will be judged there, measured there, and one will be divided from another there. For if you and I have come to The Truth, and The Truth is reigning in us, then all things will be judged in the Light of that Truth. And there, the living - in our hearts, shall be separated from the dead."

This is how we know Him. Knowing Christ is an experience of His death, burial, and resurrection revealed in you. It is nothing less, and you cannot know Him any other way. And the reason I say that right now is because this is what Paul the apostle preached. I know what we've made it into, but this is what he preached. Its so difficult to describe, and absolutely impossible to comprehend without the very mind of God working in the soul. The Lord knows how much even I agonize over words, I can only imagine what it was like for Paul to take his view of the unsearchable riches of Christ and put them in the pathetic package called words.

But he tried, and this is called preaching Christ. Paul preached something unsearchable, and yet he experienced it. It was unknowable to the mind of man, and yet it was being revealed in Him. I'm afraid there is very little "unsearchable" about much of what we proclaim to the world.

Yes, we preach...but so often we just preach words. I know we believe the words, or we wouldn't be preaching them. I know they give rise to certain emotions. But that doesn't make them more than words. We're told to go out and witness to our neighbor. Witness what? Witness words? Witness ideas, platitudes, creeds? Four spiritual laws? I'm not saying that the Spirit of God cannot use such things, but why do we try to convert people to things that are just words to us? I know what I'm talking about. I preached my favorite Christian words in the church, house groups, in Bible studies, in jails, homeless shelters, and on the streets.

Are we preaching things to people trying to take what is in our mind and cause it to reside in theirs? If so, we have accomplished nothing. Knowing Christ will never be words in the mind. What is it that we think preaching is supposed to accomplish?

The purpose of preaching is not to persuade you of anything, but to give the Spirit an opportunity to implant and increase the living Word of God. Words are very simply a knock on the door. If you learn what it means to open that door to that knocking, you get a heck of a lot more than words. You get the Word Himself...defining all things in His Light, and conforming all things to His death.

Revelation 3 – “behold I stand at the door and knock”. There He is, the Word of God knocking on the human soul. That’s not a book standing there knocking. That’s the very person of God’s understanding, God’s reality, God’s heart, mind, life, nature... seeking to pervade your soul.

I know this will sound strange to our carnal minds, but we are not to read or listen to words in order to apply them to our life. Please...the sooner you dispel with that notion the better. You don’t apply the Bible to your life. The words of the Bible tell of what God has already done to your life through the cross in hopes that you will bow low and allow the Spirit to show you what is real.

And then you find understanding. But when you gain spiritual understanding, what you are gaining is not an improvement in your understanding of spiritual things. What you are gaining is the Spirit’s understanding. The Spirit of God working in you according to His understanding. And that understanding working in you is a miracle. A miracle that is so completely separate and other than anything of this creation that, to me, it is the greatest miracle of all.

And so we learn through the preaching of Christ, but what is learning? Learning is not you acquiring the truth. Learning is the Truth Himself that lives in your soul through new birth defining all that you know and see. Learning is not you correcting yourself where you were wrong. Learning is where the Light of the Truth shows you that everything you’ve ever thought was not the truth even if it was right.

All of preaching is towards one goal. I am running out of time, but I’d like to leave you with this thought. Preaching is the proclaiming of what God has done in Christ, so that the Spirit can finish in you what is finished in Him. Preaching is the proclamation of the cross of Christ with the hopes that what is read and proclaimed will be applied by the Spirit of God to the soul, NOT applied by the natural man to your behavior.

If preaching has its work in you, then you will have an encounter with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ so that the soul of his listeners could allow the application of the Spirit. And when I say “the application of the Spirit” I mean He shows you the inescapable reality that stands finished in the view of God, but which we stand in ignorance of and contradiction to.