

Are YOU God's "House of PRAYER"?

Part 1 of 2 on prayer

Philip W. Shields

www.LightontheRock.com

Jesus cleansed the temple, proclaiming it should be the House of Prayer. WE are now the temple of God's spirit but are we God's House of Prayer – or a "temple" that has closed its door and fallen into disrepair? Consecration and rededication of our "temple" may be in order if we want our lives – "God's House of Prayer" – to be to His glory.

.....

A few weeks ago we titled our message: "Worship God!" Good day, everyone, this is Philip with an entirely new message that takes off from the last one.

Remember you can get **transcripts**, as well as the audio, of these messages off the website as I won't be able to turn to every scripture I cite. We're also working on upgrading the audio quality of the messages on the website and so by January 2006 we hope you'll see an improvement. If you find these messages help you, let others know about this website. One more thing: we're going to be able soon to **offer all the messages on the website on one MP3 cd** for any of you who ask for it, as long as funds permit.

Please be turning to Mark 11:15-17.

Last time we talked about our *lives* being lives of worship, even dedicated to worship. *A couple times Jesus came to Jerusalem, He went to the temple and noticed what He did:*

Mark 11:15-17

"So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple [God's house] and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, '***My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations***'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" (Jesus quoting from **Isaiah 56:7**).

Do you realize you are also a *house* of worship – and a House of Prayer? In fact, you are, or should be, "God's House of Prayer". *Do you think of being a "house of Prayer", God's house of prayer?*

REMEMBER this: the *temple* became known as "God's House", or "the house of God" especially when David had offered to build a real house, instead of having God dwell in a tabernacle, a tent. Once Solomon, David's son, had completed the building, it was called "the House of the LORD" (**2 Chronicles 5:1; 7:5**). So the "House of God" is the *temple* to the true God. THIS was supposed to be a place of worship, of sacrifice, of praise – and yes, a place of, a *house* of, PRAYER.

Interestingly to me is that when Jesus cleansed the temple, He called *that* building the "House of God" **though it was HEROD's temple**. The Jews at that time didn't even recognize Jesus as the Messiah or as the Son of God, and yet Jesus still referred to *that* temple as *God's House* of Prayer. Some of us are so quick to write off worshipers who don't worship as we worship, or don't believe as we believe, as people worshipping a false god. But Jesus called that house, "God's house" when He quoted **Isaiah 56:7**.

This same Jesus also told the Jews – interestingly enough -- that they were of their father the devil (**John 8:44, 47**) and that they were "not of God". Jesus had earlier told the Samaritan woman "you Samaritans

worship what you don't know" – **John 4:22**. He's saying, "You claim to worship God, but you don't know Him". Some think He's saying, "You're not worshipping the God you think you are". Jesus also said to Matthew 7 to those who claimed to do good things in His name, that He never knew them. So, that's food for thought. Where do we find the balance on this?

I guess I'm just not so quick to jump to the conclusion that everyone *outside* of my set of fellow believers who believe exactly as I do, is worshipping a false god, or worse yet – Satan. Satan IS the 'god of this world' (**2 Cor. 4:4; Eph 2:2; John 12:31**), but is everyone not of your faith *necessarily* praying to Satan? Does the One True God really not hear any of the prayers of those not of your faith or denomination? I just can't and won't believe that, for the evidence is strong that God *is* hearing the prayers of so many outside of my "group". We have to be careful not to ascribe to Satan what may be a working of God's spirit in a way different from what we imagined. It's even prophesied of Jesus that the time would come when He would unite into one body all His scattered sheep (**John 11:52**).

If you're praying, if you're worshipping, remember God wants and needs to be worshiped "in spirit and in truth" (**John 4:24-25**). So it's important we study, learn, and get to know the truth. Jesus is the truth (**John 14:6**) and the Way. He is also the one Door that leads us into His sheepfold and into this House of God. (**John 10:7, 9**) We can enter this House *only* through this one door – Jesus Christ (**Acts 4:12**).

Remember in the last sermon, Jesus says in **John 4:24-25**, the time is coming, and now is here when people won't have to worship God from or in a *place* – like a mountain, city, or temple – but anywhere, in spirit, and in truth. *Please be turning now to 1 Timothy 3:14-15*.

So it can sound like the *physical* building, the temple, became unimportant after Jesus' resurrection. But not so quick. **God still has a house, but it's not physical. He still has a temple – but it's alive.**

1 Timothy 3:14-15 "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth."

So it's real clear here that the "House of God" is now no longer a physical building – but **the lives of the church brethren**, the *ekklesia* in the Greek, meaning "the assembly", or those "called out" from the world. **The "House of God" is the group of believers, not the physical structure.** Other verses you can read that explain this concept are Hebrews 3:6; 10:21; 1 Peter 4:17. Some which explain we are now the *temple* of the Holy Spirit are 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19.

So back to the PREMISE and POINT of this SERMON today: Jesus cleansed the temple of the "stuff" that distracted from its real purpose of being a house of prayer. ***Since WE are now the House of God, since WE are now the temple of God's spirit, my question for us today is simple: Would Jesus recognize our lives as HIS House of Prayer – or would Jesus say our lives are more a den of thieves, a den of commotion, of making money, of distractions from prayer?*** Would Jesus recognize us and our lives as a place of constant prayer, always open for the business of prayer – or would Master feel like your life and mine need cleansing and repair!?

Today we'll analyze some parallels with the physical temple and see if we measure up as a recognizable House of God, a house of Prayer. **This is PART 1 of at least a 2 part sermon series on prayer.** In part 2 we will discuss some tips on helping our praying come back to life and have some real impact.

Would Jesus today recognize YOU, and the church you attend, as His Father's "HOUSE OF PRAYER"?

If you were God, looking at His church today, would you say we're His "house of prayer"? Let's look at the fruits and evidence:

- Laodecians **Rev. 3** – God says they're (we're?) wretched, poor, blind, miserable and naked; smug, think they're fine, think they're rich when they're really spiritually poor.
- Jesus asked the question when He returns will He find the faith on the earth, implying the faithful will be in short supply (**Luke 18:8**). [check out the sermons on Living by Faith]
- Jesus had also said in the end time the love of many grows cold (**Matt. 24:12**). Plus He says "all ten virgins slumbered and slept" (**Matt. 25:5**) while the Bridegroom *delays* His coming!
- **Rev. 2-3** also describes church members who are spiritually dead or dying, involved in the world, having lost their first love and zeal.

VERDICT: I BELIEVE that just as the physical temple needed cleansing when Jesus came the first time, so the temple – the church – needs cleansing once more as Jesus is about to return to the earth. The evidence is clear: we have become an ineffective "House of Prayer" for the Great God.

So back to our question:

Are you God's House of prayer? Do we pray absolutely every single day – on our knees – before God? DO we go to Him throughout the day? IS our temple – our life – open for the business of prayer, and focusing on that core business of prayer? That's why you are here: to have that relationship with God and to help bring others into relationship with Him.

When people spend time with us today, do they leave feeling they've been in "the house of God". Do they leave feeling inspired, wanting to be more like you, whom they see as a man or woman of God? I know we can grow to that point, myself included, if we consecrate our lives to God. I'm hoping we can change our prayer life forever.

DAVID'S CONCERN FOR GOD – AND HIS HOUSE

The first time the phrase "house of God" is used in all the Bible is when Jacob had a dream – the "stairway to heaven", with angels going up and down upon it. Jacob called the place BETH-EL – House of God. Later, the term "House of God" was used to refer to the temple. *It was where prayer, worship and sacrifices were offered.* There's a verse in Judges 18 where "house of God" also is applied to the tabernacle.

2 Samuel 7:1-3 "Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, 2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, *I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.*" 3 Then Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."

David felt badly that he lived in a beautiful cedar house but God lived in a TENT. He felt bad for GOD! **God was SO MOVED that someone – David – cared enough about HIM to wonder how God could live in a tent while the rest of us live in fine houses** -- that, watch what happens. Do you ever care about what God feels and thinks? *Do you ever ask God how HE is or how He's feeling? I do now.*

Have you thought of that before? We think of God as being so perfect, so holy, so balanced – and God *is* all of that and more – that we probably don't often wonder how God's feeling or doing! I've come to know a God who has deep, deep feelings – who gets angry, who gets touched deeply in His deepest feelings, a God who cares and has a passion for life and people. I've also come to know a God whom I've hurt – even saddened and discouraged. I've come to know my God in such a way that I even ask sometimes now, "Father, how ARE you today?" I care! God has feelings, as you'll see. And you'll see that we can touch God by our prayers. He loves hearing from us, as I love hearing from my children. Anyway, David felt badly for God – and wanted something better.

God replies:

2 Samuel 7:4-16 "But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 5 "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build **a house for Me** to dwell in? 6 *For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.* 7 Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" 8 Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth."

Jump to v12

12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed [Solomon] after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 **He shall build a house for My name**, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.16 And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.""

So you see how moved the Eternal God was when someone took time to think about His house.

CONTRAST David's concerns with those of THE TIME OF HAGGAI/ZERUBBABEL – A TYPE OF THE END TIME

By the time of the 2nd temple – after the first one had been destroyed by the Babylonians, later on some Jews returned from their Babylonian exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel their governor and a high priest named Joshua. It was during this general time that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied. The Jews were returning partly to *rebuild the temple* but they got sidetracked into focusing on their own jobs, their own houses, their own careers more than they were focused on God's house of prayer.

Can that really be a prophecy for us in the end time today? Are we guilty of the same?

As we read about this in Haggai 1, take instruction and correction from it. I believe this is a dual prophecy. At bare minimum, we are to remember that all scripture is there for our instruction and admonition (**1 Cor. 10:11**). Let's see if there's a warning for *us* here in Haggai.

Haggai 1:1-9

"In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, [a month before the Trumpets and Feast of Tabernacles] on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by **Haggai** the prophet to **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to **Joshua** the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: "This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.""

3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 **[this is God speaking now, remember—and God's word was not just for their time alone] "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"** [Is *your* "temple" to God in ruins?]

5 Now therefore, **thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!**

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough;

You drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;

And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." [Do you ever feel that way?]

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and **build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,**" says the LORD.

9 "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away.

Why?" says the LORD of hosts. **"Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house."**

Apparently, God isn't happy when we ignore His House, and when we aren't His House of Prayer.

Perhaps some of us pray so seldom, or so ineffectively, that it can be said we don't even HAVE a "house of Prayer" to God's glory! If so, there's good news: we can correct that problem!

Verse 12 says the people back then responded! We can too! In verses 13-14, it says God was with **them** and stirred up their spirit. We can pray for the same responsiveness in our own hearts. We can rebuild, repair, restore and reinstate God's House of Prayer in our lives—to His glory!

We can be as close to God as we want to be once God has called and chosen us. See **Jeremiah 29:13** – we will find God when we seek Him with all our heart. **Proverbs 8:17** – "those who diligently seek Me will find Me".

Rather than berate you about the state of your House of Prayer to the true God, I hope you will be like the people in Haggai's day and be inspired to respond and **commit with me to make our lives once more – or perhaps for the first time – God's glorious House of Prayer.** Will you? I don't care which denomination, which "splinter group", which house church you attend – on this issue, join me in restoring God's House: a house dedicated to prayer, worship and sacrifice. I don't even need to know you, or know who you are. Let's dedicate the first Saturday next month, January 7 2006, as a day of fasting and rededicating ourselves to God as His house of Prayer. Keep your privacy and anonymity if you prefer: just restore your life into a House of God dedicated to prayer and to His worship.

Later, by the time of Malachi, they once again had slipped– this time into offering sick and lame sacrifices. God tells them – and us - very directly He is not happy with this situation! (**Malachi 1:1-10**).

How about you and me? Are we even sacrificing at ALL anymore? I don't mean with bulls and goats – but by being a living sacrifice to the Living God (**Romans 12:1-2**) and doing all to His glory - - at least going forward? It's all part of the concept of being God's House, His House of Prayer.

Let's now go back to the dedication of the temple of Solomon to pick up a few lessons for us today.

LESSONS FROM THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

This temple of Solomon became the "House of God". (Turn to **2 Chronicles 5:1; 7:5**)

As we read about this dedication, think that whatever it says about the building, applies to YOU and me! WE are God's temple, God's House, and WE are the house of prayer today.

2 Chronicles 5:11-14 "And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), 12 and the Levites who were the **singers**, ALL those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, [a huge male chorus of at least **285 superb tenors and baritones and basses**] stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having **cymbals, stringed instruments and harps**, and with them **120 priests sounding with trumpets** -- 13 indeed it came to pass, **when the trumpeters [120] and singers were as one**, to make one sound to be heard in *praising and thanking the LORD*, and when *they lifted up their voice* with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and *praised the LORD*, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever," _that the house, the house of the LORD, *was filled with a cloud*, 14 *so that the priests could not continue ministering* because of the cloud; *for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.*"

This was a *bright* cloud, filled with the glory of God. *GOD is obviously moved by this unforgettable moment of praise, adoration, song, worship and prayer. He can't stay up there in heaven! He has to come down in the shekinah glory to personally fill His new house gifted to Him by David and Solomon, with His presence and glory!* Talk about a "house warming"?

Can you imagine what this must have been like!? Have any of you ever sung in a choir of 50 or more trained voices? How about at least **285 or more voices, like this could have been!** Now add an orchestra and **120 silver trumpets pealing out God's glory!** And now imagine witnessing a huge cloud filled with God's bright glory filling this new house of God! You're there, the day God arrives to accept His new house and you're participating in this once-in-many lifetimes experience!

Brethren, is there any doubt that God dwells any less mightily with His glory in the House of God that you and I can be if we submit to His glory? It can happen again, it will happen for you too, if we make our lives God's House of Prayer, of praise and worship, of adoration, of song and a house of sacrifice – just like the physical temple was.

This service in Solomon's day must have just taken their very breath away, brethren! It can happen again – for you and me, in our lives.

About 32 years ago, when I was 20, I sang with the Ambassador Chorale in England. One year, I participated in an extravaganza that combined the London Philharmonic Orchestra (or was it the Symphony?) with the Huddersfield Choral Society – the most professional and polished choir in all of England, probably 40-50 voices strong, plus our own choir of 30-40 more voices to perform **Handel's Messiah**. The guest conductor of the whole extravaganza was the world famous conductor from the New York Philharmonic-- the *legendary Leonard Bernstein himself*. His exuberance was electrifying. He would leap when he wanted to emphasize a note. Everyone was energized with his magnetism.

When we got together to practice *together* for the first and only time, as the strings, the brass section - trumpets, trombones and tubas were warming up, as the violinists tuned up...I was so moved. When Bernstein was ready to start to you could hear a pin drop. And then when the Huddersfield Choral Society voices, plus our amateur choir, erupted in praise, I was so taken by the whole experience of the *magnificence* of praising our Great God, I couldn't even sing! I "lip synched", as tears *streamed* down my face! ***It has to rank as one of the most moving, powerful, and inspiring moments in my whole life.***

Can you imagine what it was like in *Solomon's* day as **285** trained Levite singers of the fame of "the sons of Asaph" (**1 Chron. 25:7**) and others lifted up their voices in praise, followed by 120 trumpeters simultaneously raising their silver trumpets and then pealing out God's glory in a spine tingling trumpet fanfare? No, we can only dream what it was like!

This was praising the way God likes it! And if WE are the House of God today, we, ***our lives, our prayers, will be FULL of praising God.*** I don't think we praise God nearly enough. Praising isn't done because God is on some ego trip – but because it's good for *us*, and puts us in the right context and perspective as to with Whom we're dealing here!

Keep your finger here but let's read a few verses about the importance of praise, or I can just read them to you. Please be watching for a full-length sermon I'll give soon on PRAISE.

Psalm 22:3 "But You are holy, ***Enthroned in the praises of Israel.***"

Whether you're Israelite, Gentile, green, black, yellow, white or purple – it doesn't matter, if you're a called-out one, you're a part of the "Israel of God". God is enthroned in your praises. Or is He?

Psalm 34:1 David says God's praises will *continually* be in his mouth. How about you and me?

Now back to Solomon's dedication of the temple in 2 Chron 6.

GOD loves being worshiped and praised in song. In the book of Revelation, there are 14 times He is praised in song and worship – more in that one book than in any other book in the Bible except the Psalms. In Revelation we can read how impressive spirit angelic beings by the tens of thousands would erupt into song and praise, prayer and worship. We have no idea how incredible this would be, until WE become a part of it ourselves. Someday we will be *part* of a spiritual choir composed of thousands of perfect voices, all as one, praising and singing to and praying to our God.

Can you feel it? Can you imagine it? This was the House of God. Now you are that house of prayer today. **I hope this message will help us grow in the way we think of prayer forever!**

I believe when you and I pray as they did – with praise, thanksgiving, song, adoration, worship and praise to our King of Kings and to the Great Father we serve—God will glorify Himself in our lives as well. No matter what your past up until now has been like. *You're a brand new creation* in God now.

Let's continue in **2 Chronicles 6** where Solomon gives a short speech, and then dedicates the bright and shining temple at the Feast of Tabernacles 3,000 years ago with a most inspiring prayer. I encourage you to read the whole of 2 Chronicles 6, but we'll catch a few hi-lites. My point in reading part of it is that prayer dedicated that House of God and opened it for the business of prayer.

Perhaps we need to dedicate our lives as well, to prayer. The temple is where thousands of prayers are offered. It was a place where much incense was burned, which the Bible says also was a foreshadow, a type of its reality: prayer.

David was inspired to write, "Let my **prayers** be set before you as **incense**, and the lifting up of my hands [in prayer as Solomon was doing; do you ever do that?] as the evening sacrifice" (**Psalm 141:2**). **The book of Revelation** mentions prayers of the saints were as a sweet smelling incense, a fine aroma, in the golden bowls before the throne of God (**Revelation 5:8**). In my part 2 sermon of this series, I'll get into more detail about the incense and what we can learn from it for prayer. **So once again: are you, is your life, a 'HOUSE OF PRAYER'? Let's continue now with Solomon's prayer.**

2 Chron 6:12-15

"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and **spread out his hands** 13(for Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and he stood on it, **knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven**); 14 and he said [the PRAYER now begins]:

v.14-15 - "LORD God of Israel, **there is no God in heaven or on earth like You**, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.".....

Powerful prayer starts with the right focus. Not on our problems, not on our needs, not on what's happening around us. Boy, do I preach to myself. I am SO human. I sometimes worry, I fret, I see the problems around me, I fear – oh yes. That is why I worked so hard on the series about Living by Faith, because I need all this from the Bible just as you do. The right focus starts with acknowledging GOD as Almighty, supremely holy, beyond our comprehension. That He is there, has never left us, is all powerful, and we hallow, sanctify and glorify our Father – and basically therefore have nothing to worry about.

What an honor it is to be able to come into the presence of the most awesome being in the entire universe anytime we wish. Do you grasp it? I say "No! We don't!". If we did, we'd pray much more than we do. If you've ever wished you could have walked with Jesus – well, you can, anytime you want. In the Old Covenant days, only the High priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year (**Hebrews 9:7**). It was such a frightening experience that they would tie a rope to his ankles so that if he died in the most Holy Place they could pull out his body with that rope, for no one else was permitted to go in there. But now we can, and boldly at that (**Hebrews 4:16**).

But now Jesus' torn body cut the veil wide open into the most holy place (**Matthew 27:51**)

Heb 10:19-23 says: "Therefore, brethren, **having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus**, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, **through the veil, that is, His flesh**, 21 and having a High Priest **over the house of God**, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Jesus is the door, His ripped-open body is the veil. He opened Himself up for us, so we can go through Him now so He can introduce us to His father, who adopts us into the same family! And yes, the Greek word used does mean adopt (**Romans 8:15, 23; Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:5**). And

yes,

we are also now begotten into and are to be born into the very family of God as His very own children (**1 John 3:2; Rom 8:18-22**).

Through the name and blood of Jesus, we can come boldly and confidently before – not just a fearsome God – but the One God who is actually our dear Father, *our very own ABBA* (**Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15**). Listen or ask for my sermon on "God, the Ultimate Father".) What an honor it is! Oh brothers and sisters, why don't we avail ourselves of this opportunity more? We criticize Adam and Eve for not availing themselves of the Tree of Life, but then *we* do the same thing by not availing ourselves of much more prayer!

Like Jesus says when He teaches us, His disciples, to pray: we start with "**Our FATHER in heaven, may your holy name be honored – hallowed be thy name.**" This great God we pray to is also our Father. And you are Father's son or daughter, whom He loves so deeply and from whom He wants to hear frequently – as *any* loving father does.

When we start prayers right, the rest of our prayers fall into place. When we *start* with God our Father, as we praise Him and remind ourselves of what a loving, powerful, wonderful God and heavenly Daddy we have – **a miracle happens: *Nothing else seems so big or overpowering.*** God's peace of mind settles into our lives. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is *stayed* on thee" – **Isaiah 26:3**.

Isaiah experienced *how awesome it is to come into God's presence – and that's what we do when we pray. We should think about that.* Righteous King Uzziah – one of the top 5 righteous kings of Judah – had just died. Uzziah had brought stability and righteousness into the land for almost 50 years. Isaiah was feeling "lost" – kinda the way we all feel when any great leader we have dies.

Isaiah 6:1-7

"In the year that King Uzziah died, ***I saw the Lord (Adonai) sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.*** 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"

4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; **For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.**"

[Do you and I "see" the King, the LORD Eternal enthroned in our lives, His house?]

Do we act like it? I mean recently, and going forward. God looks at the present, and how we end up – if we've repented of our failings in our miserable past. Do you see God lifted up in honor and praise to the holy, holy, holy God – in your life now?]

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

"Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

You can read this in **Isaiah 6** on your own.

I'll just remind you that in a great vision he sees the YHWH – the Eternal God – high and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the whole temple. And the 6-winged seraphim even used 2 of their wings to cover their own faces in the indescribable glory of God's presence. Isaiah comes to see himself, repents, and is called to be a prophet. ONE of the implied messages God has for him, is "Isaiah, I'm still on my throne. I'm still king. I haven't gone anywhere." When I pray now, especially when I feel unsettled, I like to re-read Isaiah 6 and remember God IS on His throne. I'll cover Isaiah 6 in far greater detail when we do the sermons on Being Holy.

But there's more! **When the Hebrews wanted to emphasize a thought or word, they repeated it.** Jesus would say "Verily, verily" – literally Amen, amen – meaning "What I'm about to tell you is true, and very important". There are many examples of a phrase being repeated for emphasis. **But only one of God's TRAITS is repeated 3X.** We don't read that God is love, love, love. We don't read that God is just, just, just. **We do read though in Isaiah 6 that God is "Holy, holy, holy". If anything is mentioned three times, it is incredibly deep- - to the 3rd degree!** And Isaiah felt he had come "undone", or unglued, he was falling apart! Coming unglued! "Woe is me, for I am undone". Whenever righteous men saw God in His holiness, they quaked in their boots. That's the consistent pattern.

When we pray, we need to come to God realizing that in a very unholy world, there is One who is perfectly holy, so much so that the very holy angels themselves are overcome by His glory, and brilliance. When we come to God in prayer, we need to understand we are coming into the presence of the holy, holy, holy God of the universe. When we do, everything else falls into place. If you get nothing else out of this sermon but to "see" God's glory when you pray, then it has been worthwhile.

Back to 2 Chron 6:18-21 and Solomon's prayer:

18 "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! 19 Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You: 20 that Your eyes may be open toward this temple day and night, toward the place where You said You would put Your name, that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. 21 And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive."

Read the rest of this incredible prayer yourself. Now jump to chapter 7.

2 Chronicles 7:1

"When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple."

Was God moved by that prayer? Of course! He obviously was! God can be just as moved today—He changes not – by OUR prayers. Don't ever underestimate the power of your heartfelt prayer. Never do that! But if you're not praying much lately, you are devaluing prayer! A heart-felt prayer today can also result in "And the glory of the Eternal filled the temple" – in our lives. We just have to believe—and start praying a whole lot more.

2 Chronicles 7:12-17

"Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have **chosen this place for Myself as a house** of sacrifice. 13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, *14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray **and seek My face**, and **turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* 15 **Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place (church).** 16 **For now I have chosen and sanctified this house [church- and your life], that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My HEART will be there [with YOU, personally, and the church] perpetually.**"

God Almighty Himself says His eyes and ears are open and attentive to us when we pray. He says He chose and sanctified you – "this house" – and has placed HIS name on you forever and He says He places His heart, *God's heart*, with *you forever!* Perpetually!

But when does He assure us His heart and His eyes will be fixed on us? VERSE 14 tells us:

"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and PRAY and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land."
There you have it.

DOES GOD'S TEMPLE NEED CLEANING UP?

The end time church we're all in now is not praying enough, in my estimation, because we could not be a praying church--really praying-- **and have the description we're given of the end time church** as I said earlier. Turn now to **2 Chronicles 29**. As you know, we say what Jesus did was to "cleanse the temple" – John 2:13-16. Do our lives, our "House of God", need cleansing too?

Just as the early temple had fallen into disuse, disrepair and filth—so have many of our lives and it's time to acknowledge that, as I do and as I have in my own life, and present God a new, cleansed temple.

2 Chronicles 29:3-9

"In the first year of Hezekiah's reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. [**The doors had been SHUT! JESUS is the door!**] 4 Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, 5 and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place. 6 For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, **have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him.** 7 They have **also shut up the doors** of the vestibule, put out the **lamps**, and have not **burned incense** or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. 8 Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. 9 For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity."

Got that? Verse 7- "they shut the doors". Remember *Jesus is pictured in Revelation 3 as outside His own house, knocking on shut doors! He is our door.* What a SHAME, brethren, that we have shut out our beloved King! Let's open the doors of our hearts to our Great God. Imagine our King having to stand outside His own house, His own church – and having to knock on the doors to come into our lives.

Are you God's "House of Prayer"?, cont'd.

Imagine! We've shut the door to God! Don't get mad and deny you're doing it! God says we are.

I'll believe God's assessment of my spiritual state more than my own deceitful heart's assessment. Besides that, *look what else it says happened in that temple:*

"Have put out the LAMPS" – Remind you of **Matthew 25**? Are our lamps of the Spirit burning brightly, going out, just as the Bridegroom is about to appear?

"Have not burned incense" = according to Psalms and Revelation, incense represents the prayers of God's people. It's saying they're no longer really praying! (Rev. 5:8; Psalm 141:2).

"nor offered burnt sacrifices" = meaning we are not a people who have given our whole lives to God. A burnt sacrifice was completely burnt up. Nothing left. All of it was for God. Is your whole life, all of it, dedicated to God? Are our lives showing lives of sacrifice? That's what the temple was! A place of prayer and sacrifice. We today are to be living sacrifices (**Romans 12:1-2**).

This sounds just like us in the 21st century, doesn't it? Brethren, let's repent. Let's cry out to God to help us become His House of Prayer again, a clean, holy temple. A Place of Worship where our lamps burn brightly. A house of praise and sacrifice.

Let's continue: 2 Chron 29:15-16

"Then the priests went into *the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and brought out all the debris [garbage!]* that they found in the temple of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it out and carried it to the Brook Kidron."

The holy sanctuary had become a storage place, even a kind of garbage dump. Imagine! But that's written for our admonition, for our lives are also full of "the stuff" of life that distracts.

What's the "inner part" of the house of God that our lives are? Our hearts. We have an outward appearance of righteousness, but our insides need cleaning up. I preach to myself as well, brethren.

Matt 23:25-28

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.** 26 Blind Pharisee, **first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.**

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and **all uncleanness**. 28 Even so you also outwardly **appear** righteous to men, but inside you are full of **hypocrisy and lawlessness.**"

So Jesus identifies the garbage in our lives as hypocrisy, lawlessness, self-indulgence and unclean living.

Mark 7:20-23 "And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 **For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,** 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

What's the garbage in your life – in your "house of God"? We have to give it up. It could be *anything* in which we are not living to God's glory or in submission to His will (be watching for a

Here are some areas of our lives that may be in a state of garbage if we're not careful:

- * our marriage, perhaps. * Our health habits. * Stinginess to the poor. * Sexual sins and lusts.
- * Sabbath breaking – or not treating the 7th day as very holy.

- * A coarse mouth. Taking God's name in vain. * Lack of forgiveness of others – or of yourself.
- * Pride in your accomplishments. Disdain for others. * Self righteousness. * Discontent. Coveting.

- * Idolatry – anything we put before God.
- * Overly focusing on money. Remember it was the money changers, the businessmen who were making money off of God's people that Jesus really went after! That's just a short list for starters.

You who are the poor of the land don't get off the hook on this. You poor can be just as guilty of this focus on money – by *worrying* about money, wondering how you're going to pay bills. Or maybe you're just discontent about your life.

Remember the Parable of the Sower. The seed thrown into the thorns are described as those who become choked by the "stuff" of life – and could not go on to maturity, but rather became unfruitful:

Matthew 13:22 says "the *cares* of this world and deceitfulness of riches"

Mark 4:19 adds "...and **the desires for other things** entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. What "things"? Cars, trips, better house, being discontent with your JOB, your life. It's a spirit of COVETING a better LIFE, a better wife or husband, more of the "STUFF" of life that makes us proud, that makes us feel successful and better than others.

But these things CHOKE the word and keep it from ripening in our lives.

Luke 8:14 adds "and *pleasures of life*" choke the word and it never ripens! A fruit that never ripens is HARD, BITTER, and *really good for nothing useful*.

The only way to have a clean and holy inside is for God Himself to come into our lives and (**Eph 3:17**), into what Jesus calls "the within". **God's presence is what makes anything and anyone holy.** We have to be washed (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**) before our temple is fit to present to the Master as His temple. **When the Master dwells in and rules our hearts, we not only stand on holy ground—get this: our lives which came from the dust of the ground become holy ground themselves**, we become the righteousness of GOD (**Romans 8:9-10; Phil. 3:9**). "Be holy, for I am holy" (**1 Peter 1:15-16**).

You get the point? We have our work cut out before we can be truly effective as *God's* house of prayer.

The Lesson from the temple of King Hezekiah's day: before worship and God's glory indwelling in the temple, there had to first be cleansing, consecration and re-dedication.

WE must do the same today. **Read 2 Chron 29:18-30.** After Hezekiah has it cleansed, the temple once again became a fabulous and holy House of God for prayer! Your life and mine can follow the same pattern. King Hezekiah says in **2 Chron 29:31**—"NOW that you have consecrated yourselves to the

LORD, now bring thank offerings and sacrifices to the Lord".

In the next chapter – **2 Chron 30** – they kept the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread for double the time... and notice how it **ends up** – and realize this can be describing what can happen in your life and into the church in general if we do the same thing:

2 Chron 30:26-27 “So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. 27 Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, **and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven**”

Tired of Unanswered prayer? I sure am! If you'd take the time to slowly study 2 Chronicles 29 and 30, you'll find the answers to God's glory shining in our lives today too. Let's take the same steps.

- Let's open the doors – for Christ is outside knocking (Rev. 3:20-21).
- Let's trim our lamps and light the fires of the Spirit once again in God's temple
- Let's clean up the House of God – our lives – and take out the distracting noises and “stuff of life” that keeps us unholy
- Let's burn the incense (pray), let's bring in the showbread (picturing Christ – hear the message on “have you eaten your Manna today”). It pictures daily Bible study and walking with the Lord)
- Let's bring holy sacrifices to God – of praise, worship, and a serving life to His will and glory

Then we're ready to be a House of Prayer, we're ready to offer the kinds of prayers that go all the way up to God's holy dwelling place, to heaven itself – and it will also be said about *us* someday, “**AND THEIR VOICE was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven**”.

I'm ready for that. Aren't you? So what do I suggest we all do?

CONSECRATE A FAST -- AND REDEDICATE YOURSELF TO GOD

Joel 1:13-14 says to consecrate a FAST! Starting with the ministry! Why not? Why can't all of God's people have a day where all of us fast and return to God and seek His face and ask for forgiveness like Joel 1 says, for indeed we are just before the great and terrible “day of the LORD”! If we *don't* do what Joel 1 says, the Day of the Lord will be great and terrible to us too – not just to the world.

So I am setting for myself and any of you who will follow this example – **a Sabbath day 5 weeks from the day I'm recording this, I'd like to ask you join me in fasting on January 7, 2006** - for a **Sabbath day of Fasting, a lot of prayer and repentance** as we ask for God's mercy on His people and His House, for the BRETHREN who feel as one to come together. This is not about corporate churches, but our one-on-one relationship with Christ, even though you may attend a corporate church. **If you**

absolutely can't fast with us on January 7, or hear about this too late, pick a different day, but just do it! I do feel there is extra power when God sees a lot of His children coming together to worship Him and pray to Him as one body. But try to join us in fasting on January 7. *I don't need to personally hear from you. GOD does though.* Beyond this announcement, there will be no fanfare. Let's just do it.

FATHER IS WAITING TO HEAR FROM US, SO LET'S PRAY!

But please – you are supposed to be God's House of Prayer. **God loves hearing from you. God is our father and as a father myself, I know how happy I feel when my daughters, who now live far away from us, call us on the phone** – and especially when there's nothing particular they want to say, or have to say.... But calling just because. Just because they *want* to talk to their Dad and Mom.

Is God any different? Is HE not the One who fills my heart with joy when the phone rings and it's one of my children on the other end? Do I not feel that way – because God made me feel that way, as He is that way when He hears from us? Have you "let God's phone ring" lately?

God loves interaction with His children, much more so than I even do! Why aren't we giving Him tons of interaction, much, much more than we're doing now? More than just the "gimme's" –Give me this, give me that – let's really talk to God. Let's praise His holy name. Let's thank Him, adore Him, magnify Him. Let's recall His greatness. Let's be awed by His majesty and glory.... And then watch miracles happen.

God has invited us into His presence. Let's RSVP, every day, many times a day. Our God has feelings, deep feelings of love for us, His children. One of my goals in offering the website is to help people come to *know* God. A God of love and a God of profoundly deep, and passionate, feelings. A God who forgives and renews our lives, and loves to hear from people like you, and me – from all of us who are now His consecrated children!

*** I THINK THAT'S A GOOD PLACE TO STOP FOR NOW AND CONTINUE NEXT TIME.

We'll get into ideas next time on how to make our prayers more effective, and things which can upset an effective prayer from happening. Why not pray for me too, that these messages will be inspired and guided by God to help the most possible number of people.

That's all for now – Until next time, this is your brother in Christ, Philip, hoping and praying *you become* God's awesome House of Prayer. And **why not fast with me on Jan 7th** to ask God to cleanse our hearts, our desires and lack of faith – and to help open the doors to His House, light the lamps and burn the incense of prayer in His glorious house once more.

Yes, we can once more be God's House of Prayer.



