

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (EPH 2:22). A habitation is a dwelling place. The Greek word for habitation in this verse means "a permanent residence."

Every Christian knows that God doesn't dwell in manmade temples or buildings. Instead, our Lord has chosen to live in human vessels -- that is, in the hearts and bodies of his people. All who are in Christ make up his temple -- his abode, his permanent residence. Every believer can boast with confidence, "God lives in me."

God has no other physical residence -- no nation, no capital (not even Jerusalem), no mountaintop. He doesn't reside in the clouds or sky, the darkness or daylight, the sun, moon or stars. Of course, the Lord is everywhere, his presence filling all things. But according to his word, God makes his home in his people. The blood-cleansed heart is his permanent dwelling.

When did God begin to abide in us? He did so when we first gave our heart to Jesus. At that moment, Christ's abiding presence filled our being. Moreover, Jesus brought to us the fullness of the Godhead -- the father, son and Holy Spirit. He testifies, ***"I am in my Father...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"*** (JN 14:20-23).

Proverbs 8 Gloriously Reveals the Covenant Plan Between God And His Son Concerning Their Habitation of Humankind

Long before the world was created, the heavenly father and his son

A Habitation of God

agreed that humankind would be their dwelling place. They made a covenant that Jesus would come to earth to inhabit the hearts and bodies of a chosen people. Let me show you this from scripture.

The apostle Paul refers to Christ as being wisdom: ***"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"*** (1.COR 1:30).

Proverbs 8 also speaks of wisdom, in a way that could refer only to Jesus. In verse 30, wisdom says, ***"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."*** How do we know this verse is about Jesus? He alone was his father's delight. God didn't delight in wisdom, but in his son.

We know Christ was with God even before the earth was created. ***"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was"*** (PROV 8:22-23). Can you imagine the delight the father and son enjoyed in each other then? They were together in the glory of heaven, in great bliss.

Remember -- this was before Jesus knew anything of human sadness. He hadn't yet walked in the flesh, with all of its burdens and trials. He had yet to be touched by

any of man's infirmities -- to be rejected, scorned, mocked, spit upon, weighed down by man's sin. And he had yet to face the cross. He hadn't experienced the hiding of his heavenly father's face. And he'd never tasted death.

Then came the plan of the New Covenant. In this plan, God -- having created man to have a free will -- saw that if man failed, he would need a redeemer. So the father asked his son to mediate the New Covenant. The Lord asked, "Will you take on human flesh, and become the sacrifice that redeems fallen humankind? Will you take their sins upon yourself, and deliver them from the evil one's claim on their lives?"

Jesus fully understood the awful prospects. He foresaw the beatings, the crown of thorns, the hatred and rejection by God's own people. And he saw the cross looming before him. Yet scripture says, Jesus delighted to give his life for us. He counted the cost and answered: ***"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart"*** (PSA 40:8).

The son also spoke these incredible words: ***"Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men"*** (PROV 8:31). Do you see what Christ is saying? Of all the marvelous galaxies still undiscovered by man, and all the planets beyond number,

God chose to dwell on this tiny sphere called earth. And he chose man as the place he would inhabit here. We were to be the "habitable part of his earth."

Here is the key to my message: Jesus knew he would no longer enjoy the blissful, face-to-face communion he had with his father. Yet he delighted in the prospect of coming to dwell in us: "*And my delights were with the sons of men*" (8:31). He was saying, "I'm going to bring a people to my heart. And I'm going to be one with them, to enjoy their fellowship." He took delight at the thought of sweet communion -- with us!

Why Did Jesus Rejoice at the Prospect of Man Becoming a Temple He Could Dwell In?

I believe in the absolute foreknowledge of God. And I believe our Lord knew, long before we existed, how each person was going to respond to his gospel. Now, I don't believe in a limited atonement; God didn't choose to damn some people and save others. Jesus died for all, and whoever comes to him may be saved. Our Lord is not willing for anyone to perish (see John 3:15-17, 2 Peter 3:9). Yet if he foreknew our names, he also knew whether we would embrace or reject his sacrifice.

As the very essence of God, Christ shared this foreknowledge. And I believe he foresaw every person who would receive him as king and Lord in their hearts. He knew about every one of us, whether we live in China, Russia, America, the African countries or any other nation. And he rejoiced at the prospect of coming to abide in us.

Do you remember the day you were saved? Do you recall the feelings you experienced -- the pledges you made to Jesus, promising to forsake all others and follow him? Jesus saw it happening, eons ago in eternity -- and he delighted in you. He knew you were going to receive him, even before you were formed in your mother's womb.

David writes, "*Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly*" (PSA 22:9-10). "*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet*

being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (139:16).

When you weren't yet even a seed, God was recording all your body's members in his book. He knew all about you. And his son, Jesus, delighted in knowing you would grow to be his habitation.

Let Me Offer Three Reasons Why Jesus Delighted That You Would Be His Habitation.

1. Jesus rejoiced over you as your bridegroom. He anticipated having intimacy and communion with his bride.

The Bible offers numerous descriptions of our identity in Christ. We're called his body, his sheep, virgins, sons, servants, friends. But the most intimate of all these descriptions is this: we are the bride of Christ. "*As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee*" (ISA 62:5).

If you're married, you remember the time when you and your beloved were engaged. You were head over heels in love with each other. And you counted the days till you could finally be one, in perfect union with your mate.

So it was with Jesus. He so looked forward to being with you, he agreed to leave his perfect communion with the father. He thought ahead to the day when you would finally be his bride. And in his eyes, it was a love match. He would be the apple of your eye, and he'd have you all to himself. That was the cause of his rejoicing.

Your bridegroom anticipated the time when you would come to him in the secret closet daily, delighting in him. You would spend hours together -- shut off from the world, sharing each other's love, enjoying sweet communion. And he would happily take you into his care, rejoicing over you: "*He will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing*" (ZEPH 3:17).

Now think back to the time when you first loved Jesus. You sought him with all your heart. You read his word with pure delight. You were excited about going to God's house to love and worship him.

In Jesus' eyes, every day with you would be a wedding day. He declared, "Here is where I'm going to make my home. I'm going to live in someone who wants me more than anything in the world."

My wife, Gwen, and I have had this kind of love in our marriage. If we're apart for just twenty-four hours, we end up calling each other three times a day. This has lasted through fifty years of marriage -- and we're but humans. Can you imagine the kind of love Jesus anticipated having with you?

2. Jesus rejoiced at the thought of sharing his innermost secrets with you.

One of the greatest expressions of true love is to share intimate secrets with your beloved -- things no one else knows. Like any bridegroom, Christ anticipated sharing his secrets with you. And he anticipated that you would share your heart's secrets with him.

This is what lovers do, even in carnal relationships. Although Samson's delight in Delilah was carnal, he didn't hide anything from her (see Judges 16:4). His love for Delilah caused him to tell her the secret of his strength -- and it cost him his life.

As Jesus rejoiced over you, he anticipated your being not only his bride but also his bosom friend. He foresaw you in your secret closet of prayer, wholly devoted to him. And he rejoiced at the thought of opening his word to you, revealing things other believers would never see or hear. "*I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*" (JN 15:15).

He looked forward to sharing with you the innermost secrets of the Godhead. His word says, "*His secret is with the righteous*" (PROV 3:32). Indeed, the Lord doesn't make any major moves without foretelling his actions to those who love him. Amos writes, "*Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets?*" (AMOS 3:7).

Jesus wanted to speak to you intimate revelations of God's mind: what he desires to accomplish, in the world and in your life...the glories of the New Covenant and of his hallowed names...the beauty of his sacrifice. In turn, he anticipated that you would share with him your

every need and problem, hurt and failure, hope and desire, dream and nightmare. He would be someone to whom you would unburden your heart.

3. Jesus rejoiced that his bride would delight in his word.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (PROV 8:34). Christ is telling us, "This is the person I'll live and abide in -- someone who hangs on my every word. Every morning, my beloved one waits at my gate, just to get a word from me. He anxiously awaits my voice. And he delights in everything I say to him."

As his bride, we are to echo these words: *"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely"* (SOS 2:14).

David was one such believer who waited daily to receive God's word. And he delighted in the word he received. He testified, *"I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word"* (PSA 119:16). *"Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors"* (119:24). *"I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved"* (119:47). *"Thy law is my delight."* (119:77). The literal Hebrew meaning of this last verse is, "I enjoy your word."

I want to focus now on two phrases from the verse mentioned above, (Proverbs 8:34) -- *"watching daily at my gates,"* and *"waiting at the posts of my doors."* First, what is the gate referred to here?

The psalmist gives us the answer: *"Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord"* (118:19). I believe these *"gates of righteousness"* are also the *"strait gate"* Jesus speaks of. They refer to anyone who turns daily to God's word to learn his righteousness.

Such a believer is determined to walk upright before the Lord. He gets excited at every revelation that points him on the path to a holy walk. He tells himself, "I want truth in my inner man. I know I won't get it just by listening to sermon tapes or reading books. I have to wait patiently on the Lord, so he'll open his gates to me."

Faithfully, God's Holy Spirit comes out to meet this believer every morning. And he invites him inside, whispering, "Welcome, friend. Let me show you something new today about God's righteousness."

Second, what does it mean to "wait at the posts of my doors"? This refers to every believer who trembles at God's word. The phrase comes from Isaiah 6, when the prophet waited at the door posts of the temple, longing to hear from God.

As Isaiah stood there, he heard the seraphims singing, "Holy, holy," the skies ringing with their praises. Then suddenly, a mighty voice boomed forth from heaven. The voice was so loud and clear, it shook everything: *"The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke"* (ISA 6:4).

This great voice shook Isaiah to the core. It so stirred and convicted him, he cried out, *"Woe is me! For I am undone"* (6:5). The prophet trembled as he heard God's voice.

Isaiah is an example of someone who "waits at the posts of my doors." This believer longs to hear God's word. And when the word comes, he allows its conviction to sink into his soul. God's word says of such a person, *"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word"* (66:2).

We've seen how Jesus rejoiced over us before the world was made. He anticipated coming to dwell in us and make us his habitation. And he rejoiced that we would cling to him, forsaking all others. We would seek him daily and spend quality time with him. He would share his secrets with us, and we would unburden our hearts to him. We would delight in his ways, searching his word for revelations of his righteousness. And we would tremble at the revelations his word gave us.

How Does Your Life Measure Up to This Description?

The Bible states clearly what Jesus expected to find in us, his habitation. So, are you fulfilling his expectation? He anticipated spending a lifetime with you. Is your intimacy with him increasing? Or, do you neglect him for days on end?

Your bridegroom had it in mind to draw you close to himself. He wanted to open his heart to you, to have sweet fellowship with you daily. He longed to show you many things, things no one else had seen. He desired to mold your life, to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in you. And he wanted to take away your weaknesses, your fears, your feelings of inadequacy.

In turn, you were to be a delight to his heart -- by your tears, your intimacy, your clinging devotion. Your words to him were to be those of a bride: *"I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste"* (SOS 2:3). *"Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice"* (2:14).

The very thought of this relationship with you caused Christ to rejoice, long before the world was created. Yet, now that the time has come to enjoy that relationship, you neglect and ignore the Lord. You have time to watch TV, shop, surf the Internet, garden -- but you have no time for Jesus. I ask you -- do you believe he'll inhabit the heart of a bride who's bored with him? Why would he continue to dwell in someone who has no time to be with him, talk to him, listen to him?

Here is a solemn warning: Jesus will not abide in those who neglect and ignore him. You may object, "But I love my Lord. I haven't given him the cold shoulder." The fact is, if you've neglected prayer and his word for weeks at a time -- if you have no private, intimate relationship with him -- you've made your statement. You've declared, "My actions prove I don't have a passionate love for Jesus. My family, career and personal desires come first."

Beware of Being Given Over to Salt.

God's word clearly warns: *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation"* (HEB 2:3). There is a great price to pay for ignoring Christ. The Bible warns that if we neglect his gift of salvation, we'll turn into salt. Let me explain.

Ezekiel 47 speaks of a river of life that issues from God's throne. This river is made up of holy, healing waters. And as it flows through the desert, it brings life to everything it touches. It expands ever wider and deeper, until there's enough water to swim in.

"These waters...go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live" (EZ 47:8-9).

This river of life represents the preached gospel. Christ's good news began as just a small trickle, through the preaching of his twelve disciples. Then the word spread. It was preached widely by the apostle Paul, and later by his converts. Soon it spread throughout the whole world. Today thousands upon thousands of God's servants preach his gospel all across the earth. So, now there are rivers to swim in. **"Everything shall live whither the river cometh"** (47:9).

This river has been flowing since Calvary. And today, millions who hear and receive God's word are being healed. The truth of Christ is waking them up to their neglect, sloth and apathy. Now their eyes are wide open, and they delight in Jesus. They seek him daily, love his word, share intimacy with him. They're learning things in the Spirit they'd never known. They're being given the secrets of God's heart -- and it's healing them.

So, what has happened to you? Are you swimming in God's healing waters? Or, do you allow this river to flow right past you? Note what happens to the desert areas where these waters don't flow: **"But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt"** (47:11).

Maybe you're guilty of ignoring Jesus. You've been prayerless, disobedient, neglectful of his word. You've heard convicting sermons and allowed them to stir you, but you've continually turned back to your complacency. Now your neglect has become a way of life. In truth, you've aborted all the anticipation Jesus once had for you.

What does it mean to be "given to salt," as Ezekiel states? It means

total barrenness...fruitlessness, emptiness, dryness, loneliness. Think of the Dead Sea in Israel. It's a body of water totally given over to salt. No fish can survive in it. No plant can grow in it or around it. It's completely barren.

Have you become this kind of miry place -- an isolated, dried-up marsh? Is your life barren of fruit for God? Is your daily existence empty, dry, lonely? Perhaps you've been given over to salt. All around you, others are bearing fruit and growing in Christ. They've been healed by God's holy waters. But you don't possess any of the resources they have. You've become a Christian in name only.

If this message is stirring or convicting you, I have good news for you:

**It's Never Too Late to Start Over.
When God's Healing River
Flows, It Heals All Deadness.**

As the New Covenant was being made, the heavenly father and his son foresaw that many would neglect Christ. These people would grow lukewarm or cold, eventually falling away. So, the father and the son made an agreement: if any sheep get lost or went astray, Jesus would go after it and bring it back to the fold.

The truth is, dead humanity can be brought back to life by a fresh flow of healing waters. **"These water...go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed"** (Ezekiel 47:8). When God's healing waters begin to flow, green things start springing up all around -- a blade of grass here, a small plant there. Soon an entire garden is thriving.

Dear saint, God still yearns over you. And he still has plans for you. In fact, you can start your life over today. He promises to restore everything that has been eaten and wasted from your life, no matter how long it's been. **"I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten"** (Joel 2:25).

You can still be his habitation -- still learn his secrets and receive his revelations. Here is your way back: Acknowledge you've neglected him. Admit you've been busy, with time for everything but him. Confess you haven't listened when he has called you. **"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light"** (EPH 5:14).

Cry out to him now: "Oh, God -- heal me. Awaken my soul. Shake me out of this slumber. I want to change. I know you have to do the work in me, Lord. I long for your fresh touch."

Jeremiah shows us God's heart toward a people who neglected and forgot him: **"Return, thou backsliding Israel...and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord...only acknowledge thine iniquity...turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you...and I will heal your backslidings"** (JER 3:12-14,22).

Isaiah adds this reassurance; **"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth...I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off...and I will heal him"** (ISA 57:15-19).

God is saying to you, "My child, for a while I was angry with you. I gave you over to your emptiness and loneliness. But now I'm going to restore to you everything the devil has destroyed."

Your life can be a garden again. It's never too late to start over. Let the Lord make this the first day of a new beginning for you.

by David Wilkerson
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