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God's Spirit Lives in God's Temple 3: 16-23

God's Spirit lives in God's temple DIG: Why is it essential that your place of worship have unity of purpose? How is where you worship God's temple? How has God made this world's "wisdom" look pretty foolish? In what sense does Paul mean that "all things are yours?"

REFLECT: As God's temple in the world, how are you God's alternative to both its pagan religion and corrupt lifestyle? If you were arrested for being a believer, would there be enough evidence to convict you? What practical wisdom have you gained from Chapter 3?

The Body of Messiah is God's temple and God's Spirit lives in all believers.

In a series of three paragraphs, using images from agriculture to architecture, **Paul** proceeds to address three closely related issues. Beginning with a farm metaphor, then a building metaphor, **he** takes up the question of how **the Corinthians** as a whole were to regard **their shepherds**. After describing **Yeshua** as **the Master Builder** (**to see link click Au – Yeshua is the Master Builder**), **Paul** uses a third metaphor, and moves quite naturally to the very nature of **the building** per se. **The people themselves** were **God's temple** in **Corinth**. Thus, **they** are warned against destroying it, as **their** present obsession with **"wisdom"** and **divisions** was currently doing.[101]



The whole congregation (3:16-17): Don't you know that you people, as the Body of **Messiah**, **are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you (3:16)?** The words **don't you know** are the first of ten occurrences in this letter **(**here, **5:6, 6:2-3** and **9, 6:15-15, 6:19, 9:13)** and each time introduces something self-evident, but nevertheless forgotten by **the Corinthians**. It was clear from **their** current behavior that **they did not know**, or at least had not seriously considered the implications of who **they** were as **God's people** in **Corinth**.

Stephen got it right when **he** declared, in the shadow of **the Temple** no less: **The Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands (Acts 7:48 NLT). YHVH** has chosen to **dwell** both within us and within the collective gathering of **His people**, which **He** calls "The Church." Later, **Paul** will make the case that **God dwells** *within* each believer since our **bodies** are **a temple for the Ruach HaKodesh who lives inside you (6:19).** Here, **he** states emphatically that **God** similarly **dwells** *among* us when we come together in corporate worship. **God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3).** In that sense, a Messianic synagogue, or a church – be it the church at **Corinth**, or your place of worship today – is **God's temple**.[102]

The imagery of the gathered church as **God's temple**, which occurs twice more in **Second Corinthians 6:16** and **Ephesians 2:21**, was meaningful for both **Paul** and **the** Gentile **Corinthians**. The word **temple** (Greek: *naos*) refers to **the** actual **sanctuary**, the place where **God dwelt with His people (John 1:1)**. For **Paul**, the imagery reflected **the Tabernacle** in the wilderness. Although it was never called **God's temple**, as such, **they** were **God's** own **people**, among whom **He** chose to **dwell,** by **tabernacling in their midst (Psalm 114:2)**.

The imagery of the church as a temple would have been easily understood by **the Corinthians** as well, although perhaps not with all of its rich Torah overtones. Before being saved, **they** were practicing pagans, and would have visited many pagan temples in **their city**. Indeed, some of them were arguing for the right to continue to do so **(Chapters 8-10)**. But now **Paul** is calling **their** attention to the fact that, since there is only *one* **God**, and that one **God** can have only *one temple* in **Corinth**, and **they themselves**, as a gathered community of believers, *were* that **temple**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How wonderful it is that **You** dwell in believers and are with them at all times! To think that the awesome **God** of the universe has chosen to take up residence in those who love **Him** – is unspeakably fantastic!*

Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23). *Along with that great privilege of our body being* ***the temple of the living God (Ephesians 2:21)*** *– comes the responsibility of using all of ourselves to honor and to please* ***God****. What a joy it is to please our great creator* ***Father*** *who is always watching his child for he is living within his child. We cannot thank and praise you enough for being so gracious and willing to come to earth to suffer shame and pain* ***(Philippians 2:6-10)*** *on our behalf so we could obtain your righteousness and live in heaven with* ***You (Second Corinthians 5:21).*** *We love* ***You*** *and desire to please and bless* ***You*** *in all we do and say and think- for* ***You*** *are so worthy of total honor and glory! In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of resurrection. Amen*

As **God's temple** in **Corinth**, the church was to be **God's** alternative to **Corinth**, to both its pagan religion and corrupt lifestyle. But **the Corinthians**, by **their worldly "wisdom," boasting,** and **divisions** were, in effect, "banishing" **the Spirit** and thus about to **destroy** the only alternative **God** had in **their city**. Therefore, following the description above that called attention to who **they** were, **Paul** soberly warned **those** who were thus creating chaos in the church: **So, if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you yourselves are that temple (3:17).**[103] Some believers at **Corinth** were engaged in behaviors that were being used by the Enemy to **destroy Messiah's** witness in that desperately needy **city**. In the eyes of **ADONAI**, **they** did not warrant a simple slap on the wrist. This was a spiritual assault focused precisely on the one place of hope in an otherwise hopeless **city**. **Those** whose actions weakened the church would be held individually responsible, not with loss of salvation, but with consequences in **their** lives. Forgiveness does not exclude accountability.

Some worldly teachers (3:18-20): Paul warns those in **Corinth** that they ought not to allow **themselves** to be **deceived** into thinking that just because **they** held positions of influence in the church, they automatically had the spiritual qualifications to lead it. **Let no one deceive himself. If someone among you thinks he is "wise" by this world's standards** (of course **he** does; that is quite the point)**, let him become "foolish," so that he may become truly wise (3:18). Paul** returns to the theme of **the wise** and **the foolish (1:18-27** and **2:14).** To be **wise**, one must be willing to **become a fool** in **the eyes of the world**. Some of the leaders of **the Corinthian** church needed to guard against

falling victim to **self-deception**.

Presumably, **Paul** has in mind **those** who consider **themselves** to be **"wise" teachers**, and **those** who align **themselves** with these **teachers,** and thereby assume that **they**, too, are **"wise." The self-deceived** think that **they** build with **gold**, when in fact **they** build with **straw** (see **Au – God is the Master Builder**); or that **they** can get away with **destroying God's temple**. They may **fool themselves** and others by posing as **"wise"** according to **the world's standards**, but **they** will not **fool God,** who sees **them** as **they** really are.[104]

Paul had previously asked: **Hasn't God made this world's "wisdom" look pretty foolish (1:20)? He** returns to the thought with **his** assertion that **the "wisdom" of this world is foolishness, as far as God is concerned (3:19a). The worldly wise,** who **the Corinthians** held in such high esteem, were not even capable of understanding **the wisdom of God (1:24),** though the humblest believer can understand it. Was this **Paul's** private opinion? Not at all. Scripture says so and **he** quotes two passages from **the TaNaKh.** First, **Job 5:13** pictures a hunter stalking prey and capturing it. Like **Haman**, **they** are caught in **their** own **trap** (see the commentary on **Esther Bf – So They Impaled Haman on the Pole He Had Set Up for Mordecai**). Thus, **the Spirit** says: **God traps the "wise" in their own cleverness (3:19b). Yeshua** said: **Woe to the world because of snares! For there must be snares, but woe to the person who sets the snare (Matthew 18:7 CJB)!**

To this, **Paul** adds a quote from **Psalm 94:8, "ADONAI knows that the thoughts of 'the wise' are worthless" (3:20).** Although **God's wisdom** is hidden to **humans** except through revelation **(2:16)**, **human** thoughts are not hidden from **God**. In both of these quotes from **the TaNaKh**, **ADONAI** made clear that **He** is not impressed by a person's resume or good **looks**. What often impresses us means nothing to **God**. When speaking of one of **David's** older brothers: **God said to Samuel, "Don't pay attention to how he looks or how tall he is, because I have rejected him. ADONAI doesn't see the way humans see – humans look at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks at the heart"** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ah – Samuel Anoints David**)**.**

Human philosophy is totally inadequate to bring **mankind** to **YHVH**, to show **them** how to be saved or how to live. **Mankind** will always be **entrapped** in **its** own schemes, and **entrap** those who trust in **it**. **The one** who trusts in **human**

"understanding" does not have the right understanding of **himself**. **He** does not see that **his** spiritual opinions and **thoughts** are **worthless**, vain and empty. The proper view of ourselves, the godly and true view, is that apart from divine truth we are **fools** with empty **thoughts**. Recognizing this truth opens the door to true **wisdom** and closes the door to **division**.

Some individual members (3:21-23): With a final emphatic: **So then, Paul** brings the present argument to its conclusion. The believers at **Corinth** needed to have the right view of others: **Let no one boast in men, for all things are yours – whether Paul or Apollos or Peter (3:21-22a). Paul** had spoken strongly against forming "fan clubs" out of certain church leaders **(1:12-14** and **3:4-9)**, the same three he mentions here. But now the emphasis is different. Although **those men** should not have been elevated or revered, **they** were sources of great help and blessing. They were sent to **the Corinthians** by **the Lord**, and therefore, should have been listened to and respected. **They** were **God's** teachers. **They** taught the same truths from **God** and were meant by **God** to be the source of unity, not **division**.

The Corinthians were fortunate to have had the ministry of at least three godly men, and two of them, **Paul** and **Peter**, were **apostles**. **Peter** probably did not serve personally in **Corinth**, but some of **the Corinthians** had benefited from **his** ministry. Each of those men had special gifts and abilities that **God** used to teach and lead believers. The variety of leadership should have enriched the church, not **divided** it. The point **Paul** makes here is that we should rejoice in and profit from all the faithful leaders **ADONAI** sends us, **whether Paul or Apollos or Peter**. If **the Corinthians** had been careful to understand and follow what all three of those men taught, rather than, for instance, how they looked or spoke, the church would have been united, not **divided**. Their view of others had to be corrected.

Or the world or life or death or the present or the future: they all belong to you is totally inclusive **(3:22b). Paul** begins and ends this declaration with **for all things are yours (3:21b)**. In **Messiah**, **all things** are **for** our **sakes** and for **God's glory (Second Corinthians 4:15).**

Specifically, **the world** (Greek: *kosmos*, meaning *the universe*) is ours, even now. **His** primary point is that, in the Messianic Kingdom **for a thousand years** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fh – The Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom**), and in the future (see the commentary on **Revelation Fq – The Eternal State**), we will possess **the world** in a far richer way than we do now (see

the commentary on **Revelation Fs – The Eternal New Jerusalem**). Until then, we need to understand that this **present** world already belongs to us, with all its wonders and glories, imperfections and disappointments. The believer can appreciate **the world** like no one else can. We know where **it** came from, why **it** was created, why we are on **it**, and what **its** final destiny will be. This is our **Father's world**, and we are **His** heirs.

Eternal **life** is ours (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). In **Messiah** we have new **life**, a quality of life that will never tarnish, dimmish, or be lost. **ADONAI's** own **life** is in us now. Through **Yeshua**, **God** lives in us: **If someone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come and make our home within him (John 14:23).** And we share **His nature** and **His life, "God's power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our knowing the One who called us to His own glory and goodness. By these He has given us valuable and superlatively great promises, so that through them you might come to share in God's nature and escape the corruption which evil desires have brought into the world (Second Peter 1:3-4).**

Even **death** is ours. The great enemy of mankind has been overcome. **Yeshua** has conquered **death**, and through **Him** we have conquered **death (First Corinthians 15:54-57)**. Unless we are raptured, we will have to pass through **death**; but we will pass through **it** as **its** master, not **its** slave. All **death** can do is deliver us to our **Savior**. That is why **Paul** could say with such joy: **My desire is to go off and be with Messiah – that is better by far (Philippians 1:23).** Whether we remain here on earth for a while longer or go to be with **the Lord**, we can't lose. For believers, **death** can only make things better. For **God's** people, this **present life** can be good, but **death** – which ushers us into eternal **life** – is even better.

Present things are ours. This encompasses everything we have or experience in our **lives**. It includes the good and the bad, the pleasant and the painful, the joys and disappointments, the health and the sickness, the contentment and the grief. In **God's** hands it all serves to help us **be conformed to the pattern of Yeshua (Romans 8:29). In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us,** and because nothing **shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord,** nothing can cause us any harm **(Romans 8:37-39). ADONAI causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with His purpose (Romans 8:28).**

Future things are ours. This does not refer to our present lives. That is included under **present things**, meaning everything we will experience on earth. The **future things** point to our glorification. At that time, **we will all be changed. It will take but a moment, the blink of an eye, at the final shofar. For the shofar will sound, and the dead will be raised to live forever, and we too will be changed. For this material** body **which can decay must be clothed with imperishability, this which is mortal must be clothed with immortality (15:51b-53).** This will be the greatest blessing of all. We will reign with **Messiah** for a thousand years during the Messianic Kingdom and then **dwell** with **Him** for eternity in the New Jerusalem. So why should **the Corinthians** divide **themselves** into "fan clubs." No **man** is the source of any of this inheritance, so there is no reason to **boast in men (3:21a).**

But by far the most important requirement for overcoming **division is having** the right view of **Yeshua Messiah**. **He Himself** is the source of spiritual unity and the source for healing and **division**. It is in taking our eyes off of **Him** that **division** begins, and it is putting our eyes back on **Him** that **division** ends. **The person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (6:17).** Believers all belong to the same **Lord**, and are thus **one** with each other. Therefore, anyone who denies our **oneness** with each other, denies our **oneness** in **Him (Philippians 2:1-4)**.

The greatest possible motive for maintaining the unity of **the Spirit** and for avoiding **divisions** in **the Body** is knowing that we **belong to the Messiah, and** that **the Messiah belongs to God (3:23).** Because we all belong to **Him**, we all belong to each other. In **His** high priestly prayer, our **Lord** gives us a heavenly view on unity. Speaking to believers, **He** says: **For they are Yours. Indeed, all I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine . . . that they may all be one. Just as You, Father, are united with Me and I with you, I pray that they may be united with Us . . . that they may be one, just as We are One – I united with them and You with Me, so that they may be completely one (John 17:9-10** and **21-23).**

We are tied together in an eternal **oneness** with **God the Father**, **Yeshua Messiah** and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, and thus each other in **them**. How could we, being so much **one**, be **divided**? It begins with the failure to understand the reality of our spiritual unity with **YHVH**. With a common **Lord** and inheritance, common leaders and teachers, and a common dependence on Scripture, there should be no **divisions** among us.[105]