

Indwelling Christ

In the past, I used to go to Dallas Theological Seminary library and read some of the Master's Theses. I found one that gives a good overview of the Indwelling Christ. I quote from the introductory paragraph of this Master's Thesis.

“The Bible speaks of God as dwelling with man (Lev. 26:11-12; Jn. 1:14; II Cor.6:16). This divine presence is a guarantee of the covenant blessings promised in the Old Testament (Lev.26) and of the “unfathomable riches” of invisible assets provided for every church age believer (Eph.3:8; cf. Col. 1:27). But, between Israel and the Church there is an obvious difference in the manifestation of that presence. Yahweh is presented as a tabernacling God who first dwelled in a tent in the wilderness, and subsequently in a series of sacred buildings. The incarnate Christ dwelled with His people in a body which He described as a temple. In the Church Age the Holy Spirit indwells the temple of the believer's body. In spite of these changes in residence the continuity of God's presence is readily discernible. Is, therefore, the dwelling presence of God a unifying theme between the Old and New Testaments?¹”

We are dealing with the temple and the indwelling Shekinah Glory because of Romans chapter 8:9-10.

Romans 8:9 (Wuest) But, as for you, you are not in the sphere of the sinful nature, but in the sphere of the Spirit, provided that the Spirit of God is in residence in you. But, assuming that a person does not have Christ's Spirit, this one does not belong to Him.

1 R. B. Thieme III Master's Thesis introductory paragraph.

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

Romans 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

These verses bring up the subject of indwelling. Both the Holy Spirit and Christ are mentioned as being in or dwelling in the body of the believer. To get a better statement of these, let us look at 1 Corinthians chapters 3 and 6.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple (ναός) of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

There are some issues with the vocabulary and grammar that we must look at.

In you. First, “in you” is sometimes taken as referring to the corporate body of Christ. Yet, Paul is talking to individual believers. If Paul was talking of the corporate body of Christ, why would the “you” refer to anyone other than the Corinthian church. So, here “you” refers to the individual listeners of the letter to the Corinthian church.

Temple. This is an interesting word. This will take us on a journey through the Old Testament. Paul is not referring to Corinthian temples. Certainly, there were several in the city of Corinth. Paul uses a specific Greek word that refers to the “holy place” of the Jewish Temple. It still existed in Paul’s day. The Jewish community in Corinth could easily

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

explain to the Gentile believers the make up of it. And remember, believers in Paul's day did not have the New Testament Scriptures. So Scripture meant the Old Testament canon. The listeners were no doubt familiar with the temple in Jerusalem.

Let's start with the Greek word used here for "temple," "ναός" (*naos*). The verb form means to dwell. It is used of the "inner sanctuary" of the temple as Biblehub.com says:

"The term Ναός (Strong's Greek 3485) denotes the sanctuary proper—the dwelling place of God—rather than the wider temple precincts. Scripture consistently presents it as the unique sphere of divine presence, holiness, sacrifice, and worship, themes that converge and culminate in Jesus Christ, His people, and the eternal state.²"

Other authorities confirm this. This word refers to the holy place which contained the Holy of Holies, the residence of God Himself.

So, if we relate the indwelling in the believer's temple during the Church Age to the Jewish temple, who lived in the Holy of Holies? The pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity. So by analogy, the dweller in the believer is Jesus Christ.

But before we leave this verse to look at related Biblical information, note the rest of the verse.

The Spirit of God. The Spirit of God has to be the Holy Spirit.

Dwells in you. Dwells is not from "*naos*." It is from a Greek word meaning house (οἰκέω). So you might be led to translate it as "housed." This is a permanent dwelling. Again, Paul is addressing individual believers in the Corinthian church.

² <https://biblehub.com/greek/3485.htm>

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

Now we start a detour focusing on the person of Jesus Christ as the manifest person of the Trinity who dwells with mankind.

In Genesis chapters 1-3, God interacts with Adam and Eve. At one point:

Genesis 3:8 (NASB 1995) They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

There are some surprises in the Hebrew of this verse.

Lord. This is the so called “tetragrammaton” which we transliterate as “Yahweh.” This is often used of the God of the Covenant, the pre-incarnate Christ. The NASB consistently translates this word as “LORD” in capital letters. But this is the name of God.

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”

Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Exodus 3:15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD (YAHWEH), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My

name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

Sound. While “sound” is an allowable translation, there is perhaps a better word for this context. As it stands, “sound” is ambiguous. What is the “sound” of the Lord? But the Hebrew word also means “voice.” Ah ha. The voice of the Lord. He was talking to them. Indeed, in the next verse the Lord God talks to Adam and Eve using the verb form from which the noun is derived. So the translation should be “voice of the Lord God.” It has the sense of God calling them. Indeed immediately God asks “Where are you?”

Walking. Apparently the Lord God took on some physical form that could walk. In the Old Testament we have seen that God is portrayed as the “Angel of the Lord.” That was a physical form that people could converse with as if He was a man.

Cool of the day. The word for cool does not refer to temperature. It is the word for wind, breeze or spirit. Why at this point mention the weather when the Lord Yahweh approaches? Bruce Waltke gives us some insight: “This is literally the “wind” or “spirit” of the day. The wind/spirit is the symbol of God’s presence.³” This begs the question, “Was there a time of day when the Lord God approached Adam and Eve to teach them about themselves and their relationship to God?” A kind of spiritual time of day? All we have is this hint without a clear answer. And what happens in this particular encounter? They learn that they are now spiritually dead. They were previously warned. Now that relationship has been defiled.

3 Waltke, B.K. and Fredricks, C.J. (2001). *Genesis: a Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan. Page 92.

Here is a more literal translation:

Genesis 3:8 (Watts Translation) Afterward they began to hear the voice of Yahweh God, who was walking in the garden at the breezy time of day; so the man and his wife proceeded to hide themselves from the face of Yahweh God in the midst of the trees of the garden.⁴

Bruce Waltke has a nice comment on this verse. “The Gardener has not abandoned his garden. The proof of love is the unwillingness to abandon the object of love even when love fails to achieve its desired end.⁵”

In the pre-flood days, there is an interesting textual issue in Genesis 6:3:

Genesis 6:3 (NASB 1995) Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive (?dwell?) with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

Strive. Robby Dean pointed out the textual issue here. So I looked up the LXX of this verse. Instead of “strive” or “judge,” it has a word that means “to dwell.” Indeed, there is evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls of a Hebrew word that may mean “to dwell.”⁶ If that is the case, God is dwelling with mankind in the pre-flood days. We see in what follows that God, after the flood, dwells with His chosen people.

Exodus 13:21 The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to

4 J. Wash Watts, *A distinctive translation of Genesis*, Grand Rapids:Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963. page 23

5 Waltke, B.K. and Fredricks, C.J. (2001). *Genesis: a Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan. Page 92.

6 Tov, E. (2012). *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Fortress Press. Page 114

give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Exodus 13:22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Interesting to note that the word for “going” is a word that can also mean walking and ordering one’s life. Walking like in the Garden. God was walking with His people.

Now we come to

Exodus 25:8 Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.

Dwell. This verb is the source of the noun “Shekinah” in the Rabbinical term “Shekinah Glory.”

Exodus 25:21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you.

Exodus 25:22 There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

It is interesting to note that the Shekinah was the second person of the Trinity, yet it is the Holy Spirit that aids in the building of the original Tabernacle:

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

Exodus 31:3 I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *kinds of* craftsmanship,

Exodus 31:4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,

Exodus 31:5 and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all *kinds of* craftsmanship.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was involved in providing the temple for the Shekinah Glory. In the New Testament, the indwelling Holy Spirit provides the temple for the indwelling Christ. Interesting.

Eventually, God allowed Solomon to build a “permanent” building to replace the Tabernacle. During the dedication ceremony...

1 Kings 8:12 Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.

1 Kings 8:13 “I have surely built You a lofty house, A place for Your dwelling forever.”

Dwell. Again the word for dwell is the same as before, the precursor to the “Shekinah.”

After the Exile, the Jews rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:14 And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished

building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Ezra 6:15 This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Ezra 6:16 And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

House. The place where God dwelt.

Now we transition to the Gospels, the boundary between the Jewish Age and the Church Age.

Jesus identifies Himself as the temple. I am giving you an extended quote because John uses three different words to refer to the temple in Jerusalem.

ἱερόν hieron = temple complex

οἶκος oikos = house (of God)

ναός naos = inner sanctuary/Holy Place

John 2:13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

John 2:14 And He found in the temple (*hieron*) those who were selling oxen and sheep and

doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*.

John 2:15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple (*hieron*), with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

John 2:16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house (*oikos*) a place of business.”

John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, “ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE (*HIERON*) WILL CONSUME ME.”

John 2:18 The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?”

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple (*naos*), and in three days I will raise it up.”

John 2:20 The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple (*naos*), and will You raise it up in three days?”

John 2:21 But He was speaking of the temple (*naos*) of His body.

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

There is a double entendre here with a profound meaning which the Jews missed entirely. Jesus as the manifest person of the Godhead, the Shekinah Glory, should have been “dwelling” in the Holy of Holies. Unfortunately for the Jews, the Ark of the Covenant had been lost. It was not in the temple. But here is the Shekinah Glory standing in front of them speaking to them.

John 2:22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

During the crucifixion of Christ...

Matthew 27:51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

The Ryrie Study Bible says this: “The curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The tearing of the curtain signified Christ’s making it possible for believers to go directly into God’s presence (see Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45; Heb 9:1-14; 10:14-22 and notes).”

Then we come to our passages in the New Testament epistles.

Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Romans 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 3:17 If any man destroys (defiles) the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

John 17:22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Indwelling Christ
Romans 8:9-10

Robby Dean sums up this concept:

“The conclusion is, then, that in the temple of the Old Testament the temple is a housing for the glory of the second person of the trinity. That house was constructed by man, the Jews, in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament we will see that God the Holy Spirit is going to construct by means of sanctification a dwelling place for Jesus Christ who is going to produce His glory in us. It is a glory that is not necessarily the brilliant radiance that was demonstrated either in the Old Testament or on the Mount of Transfiguration but is a glory that is manifested through character. That character is defined in Galatians chapter five as the fruit of the Spirit which is the character of Jesus Christ.⁷”

⁷ <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/1-corinthians-menuitem/message/2002-1stcorinthians-021/read>