

The House of God The Family in Heaven and on Earth

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This series of messages will be entitled “The House of God”. The very term “House of God” means very different things to different people. In the common perception, the house of God to historical, religious views is a Gothic style cathedral with stained glass windows that has been standing for centuries. The idea is that the house of God there is the most opulent and impressive building that humans could make in which to acknowledge and even celebrate the concept of a God who is transcendent. This historic notion does not begin with the Christian faith of course, it is what man has been doing with relationship to God since man began to build temples to the various gods. The ancient world saw some of it's most magnificent buildings erected to the celebration of the importance of the god of that particular city. For example, the temple of Ottomus in Ephesus was seen by sailors way out on the bay and it was the pride of the city in which it was located. In the city of Ephesus, as in Corinth, as in Rome, long before there was a Christian faith all these places had magnificent temples built to the gods. That notion has survived even to our time. Even the more modest meeting place is called “The House of God” and there are certain rules of conduct that are associated with meeting together in the house of God.

So it comes as a great surprise that the Scriptures themselves say that God does not dwell in a temple made with human hands. If God does not dwell in a temple made with human hands and if human history in relationship to the gods - whoever they worshiped as God or whatever idea they had as to who God was - if that were keenly associated and routinely attached to the notion of a building, then how does a person have a different view of this when history is so plainly in favor of the term “House of God” meaning a temple in which a deity of that particular people or civilization is worshiped? That poses a very interesting question to me because if God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands then what is the house of God or does He even have a house? Now some would say, “The house of God is actually God dwelling in us,” and they're very proud of the fact that they're understanding of the house of God is that it's not made of brick and mortar but it's made of people. But they limit the understanding of the house of God, to God dwelling in individuals by His Spirit. That represents a more advanced view than the

house of God from antiquity where buildings were dedicated to the worship of a deity but even that notion falls short, the idea that God lives in us though true, it falls short of the proper definition of the house of God. It is in fact an aspect of the house of God but it is not indeed what the house of God is, in it's more complete understanding.

The word "house" you see is more like an old or ancient family that lives in an area for many generations. For example, in Germany one of the ancient houses of Germany is the House of Hanover. In England, a similar ancient family is the House of Windsor. People in the American Southwest and in Latin America are familiar with the ancient houses or Aragon or Castile. So people with last names like "Castile" and "Aragon" are from very famous, ancient, Spanish houses. So what then is a house? A house is an ancient family, it may actually have castles and land but that's not what the house is, that's what the house has, it's not who the house is. A house then is a family that is multi-generational. So what establishes noble houses is the fact that for many generations they may collect wealth of various kinds. We speak for example of the "crown jewels" of the House of Windsor, rare and beautiful jewels acquired over the many centuries by the ruling monarchs who have sat upon the throne. And we speak also of large amounts of money and land and possessions, fine collections of art and the like associated with these ancient noble houses. Some of these houses of course shape history and have produced monarchs and nobles of great significance in the history of entire nations, indeed entire continents.

The house of God is the most ancient of all houses; the house of God is the family of God in time and space. It was the original family, it was the original house. How did the house of God get to be in the earth? And in what sense is the family of God in the earth? Well a family of course presupposes, at a minimum, a father and children of that father.

So let us begin with the question how did the family of God get into the earth, how did it come to be here in the earth? God is a Spirit, how could God have children who are spirit and why would they be put in the earth? Why would they be His offspring, enjoying His same nature and what are they doing in the earth? Well let's begin with the fact that God had a family in the earth. In the book of Luke the third chapter, the genealogy of Christ is presented and at verse 37 the following is said, that, "Noah was the son of Lamech, who was the son of Methuselah, who was the son of Enoch, who was the son of Jared, who was the son of Mahalalel, who was the son of Kenan, who was the son of Enosh, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God." Adam was the son of God. When God created Adam, God was creating a son. Now a son of God, to truly be a son of God, must be of the same kind and nature as God himself, otherwise sonship there is not an actual sonship, it is more of an imputed sonship or a notion of sonship that is not real. When you look at it closely, it does not amount to a real sonship. So one of the things that must be true is if God is Spirit, for Adam to be a son of God, Adam also must be of spirit, the same kind and nature as God.

So when God made man in the book of Genesis the second chapter God said that He was

making man quote “In His own image and in His own likeness”. That means that if God is Spirit then man is spirit and if God's nature is of a particular kind, for example if God is good then the nature of man is also a reflection of the nature of God. So man in nature and in character, how he is and how he behaves, are mirrors of his Father. So God made man in the image of God, God made man in the likeness of God. In image and in likeness, in spirit and in character, man was meant to be the son of God. And that's exactly what the Scriptures say was the purpose of the forming of man, the nature of the forming of man. So in Genesis where this record is presented the following is said. The Lord said concerning the making of man, He gave us His particular intent in Genesis chapter 1 at verse 26, “Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness,’” so God was going to make man in His image and in His likeness. It goes on to say, “And let them rule over the fish of the sea, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Now that was the expressed intent of God and then verse 27 it says that God in fact did what God said He was going to do. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.” So God was intending to create someone in the image and in the likeness of God. That is, God was going to make a person; spirit like God is Spirit and one who would mirror or model the character of God. So if God is good, then the character of man was meant to be a reflection of the nature of God.

So when God made Adam it is clear from the Scriptures God was making a son because Adam was the son of God. And furthermore when you make a son, that son in practical terms needs to be in your image and in your likeness. Whatever you are by your nature, if you are spirit, he'll be spirit; if you're flesh, he'll be flesh. And in likeness, that is, he, in his character resembles you because as is the case here, since God is Spirit, likeness could not possibly mean that he has the same physical features as you. Why? Because a spirit is invisible, God has always been the invisible God but the character of God has been on display in creation. It is not the physical representation of God that is the likeness of God, it is the character of God, the invisible attributes, His invisible being, His divine nature, His invisible power, might be seen in that which is created. So that's what Romans 1 tells us, “The invisible God may be clearly seen in what has been created,” meaning that man, when he puts on display the character of God, resembles God in that. So though God is invisible, His divine nature may be clearly seen in what has been created. This is in fact worth our attention. Let us quickly take a look at the first chapter of the book of Romans which tells us that precise thing. When Paul was speaking to the Romans he speaks of how the invisible God was meant to be seen in that which is created. So in the first chapter of Romans, verse 18 he explains it this way, he says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the Godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and His divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so men are without excuse.”

Now this is not speaking merely of the physical creation, because the context here is one in which Paul the writer is commenting first on the wickedness of men and the response of God, that is that God's wrath is being revealed against Godless and wicked men because they suppress the truth by their wickedness. Now the argument is rather simple. He's saying, "The invisible God may be clearly seen by what is created, so that when He judges the wickedness and the ungodliness of men it is because His judgment is right and proper." But then the question would be: Why is God so hard on wicked and unjust men if God himself is invisible? Clearly the answer to that is not simply that, "Well they could look up in the night sky and see the order of the heavens." One of the problems with wickedness and ungodliness is that men have seared their consciences and so whatever they see, they see through the prism of their own debauchery and wickedness.

So there has to be an objective, alternative standard to this wickedness that is quote "clearly seen in what has been created". And what is "clearly seen" is not just that God can create or A) there is a God, B) He creates and that what He creates is orderly. That's not what Paul is saying. What he's saying is, "The invisible nature of God relative to His character, that is, "His divine nature, His invisible quality, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen and it's understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse." That means that in creation certain people must behave in a fashion that models or mirrors the divine nature of God – the holiness of God, the goodness of God, the mercy of God the compassion of God, the loving kindness of God, the understanding of God, the wisdom of God, the counsel of God. All these things are the opposites of wickedness and ungodliness and you cannot simply infer the existence of these qualities by looking at nature.

He's making the point that in creation God has put His own children as a sign and a token to the world. And in fact this is the essence of the intent of God because at the end of the age the Scriptures tell us in the book of Isaiah chapter 2 and in the book of Micah chapter 4, same prophecy, tells us that, "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills and men will say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob that He may teach us His ways that we may walk in His paths because they have beaten their swords into plowshares, they have formed their spears into pruning hooks.'" Nation shall not rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom." Why? Because in the house of God, as contrasted to the houses of mankind, the nations of mankind, in the house of God the nations will have come to such a place of rest, peace and well being and harmony that the problems that are dividing and destroying the nations around them, have no effect in the house of God and is of no consequence to those who dwell in the house of God.

So clearly when God put a son into the earth from the beginning, when He said, "Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness," He fully intended not just that man would be spirit as God is Spirit but He also intended that man, created as the son of

God, would put on display in creation the very nature and the character of God. So that at every point where the creation becomes so wicked, so debauched, God can in fact correct that civilization, however forcefully, however thoroughly He needs to correct and adjust it because God will always have His house in the earth even if it were just Noah and his household, even if it was just Abraham and Isaac, even if it was just Lot and his wife. God has always had a remnant in the earth because the invisible God may be clearly seen in creation by that which He has created.

So I posit to you this thought, when God said, "Let Us make man in Our own image and after Our own likeness," He was not just positing some esoteric notion, He was actually going to make a son who was spirit like He is Spirit and whose nature would be the model of the very nature of God because if God were ever to judge man....one of the many examples of the need to have your sons in creation to be as you are, if God were ever going to judge man - even in those days of mans greatest debauchery and departure from God - God will still have to have someone in the earth whose nature, whose character was like God. So Noah could judge the world in his day, in the day of unrighteousness Noah was the righteous; in the day of faithlessness, Abraham was the man of faith and so on and so forth.

How did the house of God then, actually come to be in the earth? It is true that God placed Adam in the earth and Adam is a son of God but how does that work exactly? And this is important if we're going to understand not just the how, how does the house of God come to be in the earth, but more to the point: why does God put His house in the earth? We have partially begun to address that by suggesting at a minimum the house of God needs to present in the earth when men are sinful and lawless because that's the only way you could properly judge them inasmuch as the sons of God become the template for righteousness in the earth.

When I was a boy I lived on the island, my father lived in our house of course and where my father – who was the head of our house – where he quartered himself, his bedroom for example and his room, that was the headquarters because the head quartered himself there. He shared that room with my mother, so the headquarters was in our house and we were all there as children of that father. But when I left the island and came to the United States, then the headquarters of my family was still where my father had his quarters but now the family was also in the United States. The family was on my island and the family was also in the United States. Why? Because a son was put in another place, where the son is in another place the family has been extended into that place as well. The house then of Soleyn, my fathers house, was both on the island and in America, in both places. And that's what the Scriptures are speaking to when they say here in Ephesians and we'll conclude on this Scripture. In the book of Ephesians chapter 3 Paul says, "For this reason I kneel before the Father," that's Ephesians 3:14, "For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom His whole family, in heaven and on earth, derives it's name." So the family is in heaven and on the earth when God puts the son in the earth.

Where is the headquarters of the family? Still in heaven where the Head is. But now, because God has put a son into the earth, the family is in heaven and on earth. In that sense, the house of God is the most ancient house of all, it is the original human house in the earth.

Now why did God put His family into the earth? We need to pursue that and so I hope that you will join me for the next episode in which we follow the purpose of the house of God in the earth. I'm Sam Soleyn and I'll talk to you then, bye bye.