

## INTRODUCTION

(I Cor. 3:16–17; cf. also 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). These New Testament passages reflect a fairly serious biblical teaching about the house of God.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, the building of a house for God, whether temporary (tabernacle) or permanent (temple), was very serious business. Doubters are invited to read the precise instructions about the details of the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–27, 35, 36, and 38–40. They are similarly invited to consider that one of the Old Testament covenants itself was the covenant for the lineage of David to build a permanent house of God, and they are reminded that David himself was not permitted to build this house because of God's judgment against him. Perhaps Jacob was the first to grasp this profundity after his dream about the reuniting of heaven and earth. Jacob's response was this:

“Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the *house of God*, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen. 28:16–17, italics mine)

*House of God*, biblically, is redemptive, and communicates nothing less than the reversal of the curse-banishment of Genesis 3, and the restoration of a once-banished race to the presence of its Maker. Therefore, it is not too much of a stretch, biblically, to say that the house of God is a very significant matter, and that when the New Testament assembly is now referred to by the name *house of God*, it is a rich and significant reality. For this assembly to be designated by God as his *house* is itself a redemptive truth of uncanny importance, indicat-

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ing that the dwelling-place of God is again with humans. For this reason, then, no discussion about what takes place in the house of God is insignificant. Some discussions may be less significant than others (the color of the carpet in the church sanctuary is less significant than, for instance, the frequency of Communion), but every aspect of the house of God is significant, including how it worships God in song.

Another reason that no question regarding the house of God can be insignificant is that worship song itself is an extremely significant matter in the Holy Scriptures. One entire book of the canon (the Psalms) is exclusively a collection of such songs. One suboffice within the order of Levitical priests was that of singer or chorister (e.g., I Chron. 6:33; 9:33; 15:16–19; 2 Chron. 5:11–13). Moses wrote Psalm 90, and sang both the song of the sea (Ex. 15) and the song of the ark of the covenant (Num. 10:35–36) with his fellow Israelites. Deborah and Barak celebrated Yahweh's military deliverance in song (Judg. 5). Zechariah and Mary, respectively, anticipated the births of John (Luke 1:68–79) and Jesus (Luke 1:46–55) with song. Many biblical passages expressly command God's people to "sing to the LORD" (Ex. 15:21; I Chron. 16:23; Pss. 95:1; 96:1–2; 98:1; 147:7; 149:1; Isa. 42:10; Jer. 20:13; cf. also Ps. 100:2; Isa. 49:13; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The apostle Paul wrote instructions about singing in the Christian assemblies (I Cor. 14:15); and perhaps most importantly, John's visions of the redeemed saints in heaven routinely portray them as engaged in worship song:

And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,