21st Century Temples- Part One

# Where Heaven Meets Earth

## (2 Corinthians 6:16)

I have been looking forward to being back with you and sharing this message called “Where Heaven Meets Earth” as we launch our new series, 21st-Century Temples. To understand what that means for us today, we first need to look back at the original temple—the one King Solomon built in Jerusalem around 966 BC. This was the most important building ever constructed, not because of its size or beauty, but because of its purpose. It represented a revolutionary shift for the people of God, a place where His presence would dwell among them in a way the world had never seen before.

You see, before there was a temple, Israel worshiped at the tabernacle—a large, portable tent God instructed Moses to build in the wilderness. His presence would come upon it in power, but it was never meant to be permanent. The tabernacle traveled wherever the people went, and while God’s glory was real, it was not anchored to one fixed location. Outside of those extraordinary moments when His glory appeared, the people never knew exactly when or where God would reveal Himself.

It was King David who first expressed the desire to build God a house. It wasn’t God’s plan, but He honored David’s heart and said,

“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

David spent the rest of his life gathering the resources, but it was his son Solomon who actually built the temple. When it was completed, on the night of its dedication, God revealed His purpose for it saying:

“Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there” (2 Chronicles 7:15–16).

For the first time, God attached His presence to a physical place. People could come and not just hope, but know they would encounter Him and that He would hear their prayers. The temple became the meeting point where heaven touched earth.

Now, you might say, “That’s amazing, but the temple is gone.” The building may be gone, but the principle of the temple remains. Under the new covenant, God’s dwelling is no longer a building of stone—it is His people.

“For we are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The same Holy Spirit who filled the temple now lives in us, leading us into all truth as we listen to His voice and grow to know Him through His Word. What God did then still shines brightly today, revealing and confirming what He is doing in us right now.

You see, the temple in Jerusalem wasn’t tucked away in some hidden valley. It stood high and unmistakable, a landmark in the city and a constant reminder to everyone who saw it that the God of Israel was near. It was a public witness to His presence. If that was true of the temple then, it should be true of us now.

The problem today isn’t that people have lost interest in the gospel—if anything, there are more questions than ever about life, truth, hope, and eternity. The real problem is that there aren’t enough visible temples. People are searching, but they don’t always know where to look. God never designed His house to be hidden; He designed it to be seen.

Jesus made this clear when He said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).

Just as the temple rose above the skyline of Jerusalem, our lives as followers of Christ should rise above the backdrop of this world. A visible temple is a life that shines with hope when others are in despair, walks in purity in a culture of compromise, shows love in a climate of division, and demonstrates God’s power in the face of human weakness.

Your neighborhood, workplace, and school should be able to look at your life and know exactly where to find truth, where to find peace, and where to find God. Visibility is not about being loud or drawing attention to yourself—it’s about being faithful. It’s about living with consistency. It’s about letting the everyday light of Christ shine through your words, your choices, your attitudes, and your actions.

The other week, we read where God told Moses, “No one may see me and live” (Exodus 33:20).

But then He said something remarkable: “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock” (Exodus 33:21).

Do you remember that? He was talking about nearness, closeness, and proximity. God was saying, “You can’t handle the fullness of My glory yet, but I will bring you close enough to know without a doubt that I am here.”

And so, the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you. Today, Jesus has made that closeness, that intimacy, that nearness, permanent. He promised:

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live… I am in my father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:18-20).

Now, God invites broken, imperfect people to live close to His heart through His Son Jesus Christ. And here’s the connection: visibility flows out of nearness. The closer you are to Him, the brighter His light will shine through you. We don’t shine brighter by trying harder to be impressive—we shine because we remain close to the One who said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

The temple was not only visible to the world—it was the place where heaven and earth met in conversation. It was more than a symbol; it was an altar of communion between God and His people.

Jesus affirmed this when He said, “My house will be called a house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13).

That was the temple’s heartbeat. And if we are His temples today, then prayer must be the heartbeat of our lives. As we talked about several weeks ago, prayer is not just a religious exercise—it is the lifeline of the temple. God does not respond to our perfection; He responds to our prayers. Without prayer, a temple is only an empty structure. But when prayer fills the temple, the presence of God fills the atmosphere.

Jesus promised, “Whoever believes in me, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38).

In other words, Jesus responds to our faith. And so, if you believe, the kingdom of God is within you. That’s why the Spirit of God says,

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Therefore, because His Spirit dwells in you, His presence goes everywhere you go.

Even if you wanted to escape like Jonah, the Bible says,

“If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there” (Psalm 139:8).

And Jesus Himself gave us this promise,

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Think about this—God chose to dwell in you, fully knowing your past, your present, and your future. He knew every victory and every failure before you ever experienced them, and He still chose you.

That is the love of a God who “Sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

Prayer keeps that friendship alive. But prayer is more than speaking—it is consecration. It is tuning your heart and mind to the God who is already near. In a noisy, distracted world, we must make deliberate choices to turn down the volume. Stillness, focus, and expectation help us recognize His presence. Sometimes that means shutting the door, turning off the phone, or putting away every distraction so we can fully enter His presence.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8).

And when you do, you will discover the truth of 2 Chronicles 16:9, which says: “The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Prayer doesn’t just change situations—it changes the temple. And when the temple changes, the world around it can’t help but notice.

And so, we have seen that the temple was visible and a place of prayer, but there’s one more thing we cannot miss: the temple was holy. The Bible declares, “The Lord is in his holy temple” (Psalms 11:4).

Holiness is one of the most misunderstood concepts in the Christian community. Many hear the word and immediately think of rules, rituals, or flawless living. But holiness has always been the defining mark of God’s dwelling place. And here’s what’s fascinating—every religion in the world talks about holiness in some way. Every belief system wrestles with the same questions: “How can we be made clean? How can we be accepted by God?” That longing for holiness is the common thread woven through the human story.

But here’s the difference—apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, holiness is always something you climb toward. There’s always a ladder. In some religions, you climb it by fasting, in others by sacrifice, in others by chanting, or by praying in a certain direction. The ladder may look different, but the idea is always the same: “If I do enough, maybe I’ll reach holiness someday.”

The good news of Jesus Christ turns that ladder upside down. Yes, there’s a ladder, the Bible says,

“Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven…” (Genesis 28:12-13).

But now in Christ, it’s not us climbing up to God, it’s God coming down to us. Jesus said:

“I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

Jacob’s dream was a prophetic picture of the true meeting point between heaven and earth—God Himself coming down to bring us up.

Jesus looked at us and said, “They can’t make it on their own. They can’t produce holiness by their own works. So I will go to them. I will take them in My arms and carry them back up to the Father.” That’s the gospel. Holiness is not your final destination—it’s your starting point. It’s not a reward for years of good behavior—it’s a gift placed in your hands the moment you believe and are born again.

Look at Jesus’ baptism. Before He preached one sermon, healed one sick person, or raised one dead person, the heavens opened and the Father said,

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

That wasn’t after years of ministry—it was at the very beginning. In Christ, the same is true for you. The moment you belong to Him, God declares, “You are my beloved. I am pleased with you.”

Now, does that mean we stop working on our attitudes, our character, or our speech? Absolutely not. The Bible says,

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

But here’s the difference—we are not working to perfect our holiness; we are purifying ourselves so that we reflect His holiness. If you could perfect it yourself, then Jesus would never have needed to die. Your holiness in Him is already complete. What must grow is how clearly the world can see it in you—through your words, your priorities, your habits, and your responses.

And understand this—your circumstances cannot pollute your holiness unless you allow them to. You can walk through storms, loss, and betrayal, but those things cannot touch what God has placed within you—unless you open the door.

Think of a boat. It doesn’t sink because of the water around it—it sinks because of the water that gets inside. In the same way, keep your heart guarded:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (Ephesians 4:31).

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Hebrews 12:15).

When you protect your heart, your holiness is preserved. That holiness becomes a force within you that empowers you to overcome whatever the enemy throws your way. You can’t hold a holy temple back. Whatever the devil sends against you, God will give you the strength to endure—and you will come out stronger on the other side.

We’ve seen that the temple in Jerusalem was visible—it stood as a constant reminder of God’s presence. We’ve seen that it was a house of prayer—the meeting place where heaven and earth came together in conversation. And we’ve seen that it was holy—set apart and filled with the glory of God.

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Now, under the new covenant, you are that temple. The same God who filled the temple with His presence has filled you with His Spirit. If the temple back then was visible, then so should you be. If it was a place of prayer, then your life should be marked by ongoing communion with God. If it was holy, then holiness should define you—not as something you are working toward someday, but as the starting point of your life in Christ.

And all of this points us to the cross. The true and final meeting place between heaven and earth was not a building made with human hands—it was a Savior, hanging on an old rugged cross on a hill, making the way for us to be reconciled to God. Moses once stood in the cleft of the rock to draw near to God, but Jesus is the Rock. And the water that flowed from that rock is the Holy Spirit, poured out to fill the new temple, that is you.

On the cross, “One of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water” (John 19:34).

That flow wasn’t random—it was the sign that the price for sin was fully paid. The blood for forgiveness, the water for cleansing. Just as Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier,

“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5).

And in that same moment, when Jesus gave up His spirit,

“The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51).

That was God’s way of saying, “The way into My presence is now open. You don’t have to stand at a distance anymore. You can come in.” The Old Testament temple had an outer court, an inner court, and then the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could enter once a year. But now, because of Jesus, every believer has direct access to God’s presence.

That’s why we come to the Lord’s table. Communion is not just a ritual—it is the declaration that His body was broken so we could become His dwelling place. The bread reminds us of Christ’s body given for us. The cup reminds us of His blood, sealing the new covenant in which God’s Spirit would not just visit but remain in His people forever.

The Bible says: “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

So today, as we hold the bread and the cup, we’re not just remembering a historical event—we are proclaiming that we are the 21st-century temples of the living God: visible, prayerful, holy, because of what Jesus has done. We are declaring that His presence lives in us now, and we are looking forward to the day when we will see Him face to face.

As we’ve seen today, the temple was always a place of divine exchange. In the Old Testament, if you were sick and came to the temple, you could be healed. If you were broken, you could be restored. If you lacked peace, you could find it there. The temple was the place where heaven touched earth and God met with His people.

Now, under the new covenant, we are the temple of the living God. His presence isn’t tied to a building in Jerusalem—it lives inside you and me. And as 21st-century temples, we carry the same purpose: to be a place where people encounter God, experience His holiness, and witness His miraculous power.

But of all the miracles God can do, there is none greater than the miracle of salvation. The moment a human heart opens to Jesus and He moves in with eternal life, forgiveness, and peace—that is the greatest work of God we could ever witness.

And that miracle was made possible by one moment in history—the cross. The curtain of the temple was torn in two, and the barrier was removed. Holiness was not something we had to climb up to—it came down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. And now, through His sacrifice, we have full access to God.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

August 24, 2025

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*