

Holiness as the Proper Worship Atmosphere

Psalm 93:5

Your testimonies
have been very steadfast.
Holiness is lovely
for your **house**,
O Yahweh, for length of days!

God's testimonies are more stabilizing than any force in the universe. It is God's decree, in fact, which holds all things together.

That is why it is good for **GOD'S HOUSE** to be *adorned with holiness*. It is where we 'set ourselves apart' to worship the One who serves as the foundation and glue for us and our world.

In the psalmist's day, one immediately thought of the Temple when God's house was mentioned. In our day, we are told to turn our thoughts elsewhere in reference to God's house:

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I delay, that you may know how to behave in the **house** of God, which is the ASSEMBLY of the living God, *the* pillar and foundation of the truth.

The house of God is equated to a gathering. Therefore, if a gathering of believers meets in the woods (which is not uncommon in countries where the body of Christ is persecuted), that is where the house of God is- or we might say *one* manifestation of the house of God. Any *local* church (Gk. 'ekklesia'- called out ones) is part of the *universal* Church. Any smaller assembly of saints is part of the larger of assembly of all the saints on earth and in Heaven.

In the psalmist's day, he could picture priests in Divinely specified clothing working with Divinely ordained utensils going through Divinely decreed activities in the Temple day after day, year after year. This was according to the pattern of the Temple in Heaven (Heb. 8:5), from which Temple we see various ministries in the book of Revelation.

The earthly Temple service, as a picture of the Heavenly Temple and the everlasting sacrifice and priesthood of Christ, was 'dripping' with holiness, so to speak.

When Christians enter corporate worship, it is not a *less* holy atmosphere than the Temple, but a *more* holy one:

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ did not enter into *the Holy of Holies made by hands*, types of the true things, but into **Heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf

The Temple was only the FORSHADOWING. *We* are dealing with the REALITY. The priests had the benefit

of sight. We have the 'advantage' of faith. That is, we do not have the temptation of confusing symbols with realities. That is the dreadful error of Roman Catholic and similar worship. It returns to symbol, borrowing from Old Covenant priestly rig. Doesn't a return to symbol deny reality? That's what Hebrews is warning about.

But, whereas Christian worship form does not confuse symbols with reality, we certainly may mistake invisible for 'free-form'. It is a mistake we can barely *avoid* making if we do not conceive of God, Heaven, holiness, and the Church in the proper manner, Biblically.

If God deals with us according to our present conceptions of these, then there is not much interaction between Heaven and earth in our day. God looks down and sees something more akin to a circus (on the one hand) or a business meeting (on the other) than a 'dripping-with-holiness' assemblage.

It seems that we cannot put ourselves into the right frame of mind without having symbols pushed right against our faces. The most recent simulation of holiness is obtaining the 'feeling' of worship by heartfelt singing, etc. This, however, easily sidesteps holiness by emphasizing "Listen to us!" over "We're listening to You."

Ecclesiastes 5:1 Guard your feet when you go to the house of God, and draw near to hear, more than to give a sacrifice, *as do* the fools. For they do not know that they are doing evil.

True holiness is fitting and pleasant for God's house. It attends to God. It draws its holiness, in fact, from the Holy One.

In light of this, do we bring a proper reverence to the assembly of the saints? Only thus can we walk away into our daily service, our 'living sacrifice', with a proper reverence.