

1 Corinthians 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Analysis

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε... τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, naos theou este... to pneuma tou theou oikei en hymin)—Paul shifts from building metaphor to temple reality. Naos (ναός) denotes the inner sanctuary where God's presence dwells, not the outer courts (hieron). The plural 'ye' indicates corporate identity—the church collectively is God's sanctuary. Oikei (οἰκεῖ, 'dwells permanently') promises abiding presence, not temporary visitation.

This is staggering theology: what the Jerusalem temple was (God's dwelling place on earth), the church now is. The glory that filled Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10-11) now indwells believers corporately through the Spirit. This fulfills Jesus's promise: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20). The church's sanctity derives not from architecture or ritual but from divine inhabitation. Paul will later apply 'temple' to individual believers (1 Corinthians 6:19), but here the corporate identity is primary—you (plural) collectively are God's holy dwelling.

Historical Context

The Jerusalem temple dominated Jewish identity as the unique dwelling place of YHWH, the focal point of worship and sacrifice. Its destruction in AD 70 devastated Judaism. Paul, writing circa AD 55, reframes temple theology: God no longer inhabits stone buildings but Spirit-indwelt communities. This was

revolutionary—democratizing divine presence while maintaining holiness requirements.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing the church as 'the temple of God' transform your view of corporate worship, church discipline, and congregational purity?
2. What practical difference should God's indwelling presence make in how your church conducts itself—in worship style, conflict resolution, or treatment of visitors?
3. How do you balance individual spirituality with the corporate temple-identity Paul emphasizes here?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ	οἴδατε	ὅτι	ναὸς	θεοῦ	ἐστε	καὶ	τὸ	πνεῦμα
not	Know ye	that	the temple	of God	ye are	and	G3588	that the Spirit
G3756	G1492	G3754	G3485	G2316	G2075	G2532		G4151
τοῦ	θεοῦ	οἰκεῖ	ἐν	ὑμῖν				
G3588	of God	dwelleth	in	you				
	G2316	G3611	G1722	G5213				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 6:19 (Spirit): What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

Ezekiel 36:27 (Spirit): And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (Temple): And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Romans 8:11 (Spirit): But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

John 14:17 (Spirit): Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Romans 8:9 (Spirit): But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

1 Peter 2:5 (Spirit): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:14 (Spirit): That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Hebrews 3:6 (Parallel theme): But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

1 John 4:12 (References God): No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.