

2 Chronicles 2:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

Analysis

Solomon's rhetorical question 'But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him?' expresses proper theological understanding of divine transcendence. God is omnipresent (1 Kings 8:27) - no physical structure can 'contain' Him. Yet paradoxically, God condescends to dwell among His people. The phrase 'who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?' acknowledges human limitation while affirming God's gracious accommodation. The temple's purpose is worship (sacrifice) not housing God. This tension between transcendence and immanence finds resolution in Christ, the true temple who is fully God yet dwelling among us.

Historical Context

Solomon's letter to Hiram of Tyre (c. 967 BCE) requesting cedar demonstrates the temple project's international scope. Acknowledging God's transcendence to a pagan king served apologetic purposes, distinguishing YHWH from local deities supposedly bound to shrines.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you hold in tension God's transcendence (beyond all creation) and His immanence (dwelling with His people)?
2. What does Christ's incarnation teach about God's willingness to dwell with humanity despite our unworthiness?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵי	יַעֲצֹר	כִּי	אֶבְנֶה	לִי	
H4310	But who is able	H3581	him who am I then that I should build	H0	
	H6113		H1129		
בֵּית	יְהוָה	וְהַשָּׁמַיִם	וְהַשָּׁמַיִם	וְהַשָּׁמַיִם	לֹא יִכְלְלוּ הוּא
him an house	H3588	and heaven	and heaven	and heaven	H3808 cannot contain
H1004		H8064	H8064	H8064	H3557
וְאֵי	אֶבְנֵה	אֲשֶׁר	אֶבְנֶה	לִי	בֵּית
H4310	H589	H834	him who am I then that I should build	H0	him an house
			H1129		H1004
יְהוָה	אֶם	לְהִקְטִיר	לִפְנֵי:		
H3588	save only	to burn sacrifice	before		
	H518	H6999	H6440		

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 8:27 (Parallel theme): But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

2 Chronicles 6:18 (Parallel theme): But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

Isaiah 66:1 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

Exodus 3:11 (Parallel theme): And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

1 Chronicles 29:14 (Parallel theme): But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

2 Chronicles 1:10 (Parallel theme): Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

2 Samuel 7:18 (Parallel theme): Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Ephesians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

2 Corinthians 2:16 (Parallel theme): To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Deuteronomy 12:14 (Sacrifice): But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.