

Sacred Spaces

Exodus 25:8, Ephesians 2:22

Pastor Johanan Justin

The church is not only a body but also God's royal priesthood. Sacred spaces are holy spaces; they are where heaven meets earth. It is God's presence that makes a space sacred and holy.

Sacred Spaces in the Bible

1. The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was where the presence of God dwelled. It is the clearest expression of a sacred space in the Old Testament. The purpose of the Tabernacle is God's dwelling place (Ex. 25:8a). The Tabernacle had a surrounding parameter with a single entrance (Ex. 27:9-19) that led to the outer court of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle itself (Ex. 26) had two main parts – The Holy Place and The Most Holy Place. The Most Holy place was where God's presence was most concentrated. Not everyone could get through the entrance (Num. 3:38). Strict rules of cleansing limited progress. Only the High Priest or the priests on duty could enter into The Holy Place that was separated by thick veils. But only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place once a year; no one else could. Entering into God's presence was not a simple affair in the Old Testament. Only the priests who were set apart in holiness could go further (Lev. 10:10). This structure communicates that only those called by and set apart for God (or 'holy') could draw near to God in the sacred space. Only the holy may draw near to God, so pursue holiness!

2. The Garden

After God brought creation into being, he placed Adam in Eden (Gen. 2:8) - specifically, the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-9, 3:8). In the garden were all kinds of animals, plants and trees. Outside Eden were the wild, untamed lands. A river for enjoyment and life flowed from the Garden. Adam was to work and keep the Garden; he was not just to tend to it, but also guard and protect. He was to safeguard the sacred space from any contaminating or harmful influences (Gen. 2:15, 3:24). The structure of the Garden of Eden was what the Tabernacle was modeled after. The Garden shows us that before sin and the need for cleansing, God had already intended to mingle freely with men not only in the Garden, but also all over the earth (Gen. 1:28). God intended the whole earth to be His Tabernacle and dwelling place, but sin seemed to have prevented this from happening.

3. The New Testament

Here, the Tabernacle is replaced with the Temple. It was the pride of Israel and it was the center of all that Israel did. Then Jesus came - and He is first introduced as the Word of God dwelling (or '*tabernacling*') among us (John 1:14). Jesus cleanses the temple, predicts its destruction and declares Himself the true temple. *Jesus is the true and greater Temple and Tabernacle.* It is through Jesus that we bring our worship, thanksgivings, and offerings to God. With Jesus also comes the cleansing, forgiveness and holiness that we need and long for. Jesus is the true and better Tabernacle and

Temple. Yet even after Jesus' ascension and glorification, the day of Pentecost saw the coming of the Holy Spirit. He fills everyone who puts their faith in Jesus. He makes us temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19a). We now have free access to God that is not limited by location or rituals, and this is true also for the church (2 Cor. 6:16b). When we gather, there is the awe-filled privilege that God is in our midst. **We are God's sacred space on this earth!**

Our priestly roles (application):

#1 **GUARD** this sacred space

#2 **DRAW NEAR** to God

#3 **SHINE** everywhere (Hab. 2:14)

Feeling inadequate to play these priestly roles? God's grace is enough. We were not made sacred spaces by our own righteousness - but by Christ's (2 Cor. 5:21). This same saving grace, will also be our transforming grace.