
Why Church?

Part 2 - Glory Gathering

I have a few dreams that I remember from my childhood - dreams where you are in a familiar place, and yet it's totally foreign when you pay closer attention.

When it comes to talking about the Church, and in particular this week the aspect I'm talking about that has to do with the church as the place for God's glory to rest, I get the same feeling: that this is a familiar sounding idea, but when I get to really digging into it, it's quite foreign to what I think I know about church.

Glory Gathering

There are many definitions of church that have existed throughout the last two thousand years, and they all contribute something to the understanding we have of church.

We're looking at some of the biblical descriptors of God's people, what we have in common with each other, and how we can express that when we come together in this thing we call church.

God Built A Home, Not Just a House

If we go back to the start, we can get a handle on the 'why'. Beginnings set the scene, they give context, they give establishing information that helps us engage with the whole story.

We find the answer in the first two chapters of Genesis.

The purpose of the house is for dwelling, abiding, for communion and relationship; for family to dwell in.

God built a home, not just a house, and God saw fit to live with us in it.

God's Home is His Temple

In the ancient world of the Israelites and the Old Testament, they called the dwelling place of a god a temple.

Genesis 1:26–27

Humanity living in the created world: we are designed to be the image of the God placed in the middle of His temple.

Genesis 1:28

This is the beginning, it sets the scene for what happens, and sets the meaning and purpose of the players: God who created a temple to dwell in, who created image bearers to be His representatives and His agents (His workers, His delegated authorities) within that sacred space.

The Glory Is Lost, The Story Continues

Shekinah – the glory of God, His manifest presence; it's the weightiness of who God is; and when He is visibly, tangibly present with His creation.

Seen in the Tabernacle in the desert, the Temple in Jerusalem.

But God's people rejected the invitation to be at home with God.

But God Had Another Plan

John 1:14

John 16:7

Acts 2:1-4

The Temple of The Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

We all are a dwelling place for God! We are the place where God designed the shekinah to rest!

This is the feeling I get when it all seems familiar, but totally foreign.

Walking This Out

It matters because we are still God's chosen agents, we still carry the purpose of being God's image-bearers, His representatives in this world.

Matthew 5:13-14

Ephesians 3:20-21

Discussion Questions

1. Take some time to read Genesis 1. Think about this in the context not of material creation but in the ordering of God's creation into a place where He could dwell with His people. How does that influence your idea of God?
2. God's desire to be with His people is in the Bible from the earliest chapters. How have you sensed God's desire to be with you in your walk with Him?
3. What impact does it have on your life to know that God designed you to carry His image in the world? What does the reality of being a temple of the Holy Spirit mean to you?
4. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit working through you and through the church as a whole?
5. How has God revealed Himself to you, and how can you pass that on to others around you?
6. What would it cost you to prioritise times to make God's manifest presence welcome in your life? What could it look like and feel like to have God reveal Himself tangibly to you?
7. Spend some time praying and asking God to reveal Himself afresh to you. If you are in a group setting, invite everyone to put aside distractions, questions and personal differences; and have everyone invite God the Holy Spirit to be welcome. Invite Him to show Himself in whatever way He chooses and thank Him when He does. Remember, it can be in spectacular or subtle ways, but whenever the God of the universe presents Himself to us, it's always supernatural!