

The Temples of the Bible.

The correct meaning of the word *temple* is "a dwelling." Wherever God dwells visibly, or by his felt presence, there is the temple, dwelling, or house of God. In this extraordinary way he dwelt of old in a part only—the most holy place—of the sacred building on Mount Moriah. That part only was, strictly speaking, the temple, or *naos*. The whole sacred building, with its outer and inner courts, was called "the *hieron*." Hence it is that our Lord speaks of one who was slain "between the temple (*naos*) and the altar," meaning between the most holy place and the altar of burnt offering in the court of the priests. In Scripture we read of three kinds of temples, exclusive of the prophetic temples of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation. The first kind of temple was that of a holy place, the second that of a holy person, and the third that of a holy people.

I. The first temple was a holy place, called also "the tabernacle," "the sanctuary." God commanded the Israelites (Exod. xxv. 8) to make him "a sanctuary, that he might dwell among them," and he promised (Exod. xxix. 44, 45) to "sanctify the tabernacle . . . and to dwell among the children of Israel." This promise was fulfilled by God at the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness, for we read, Exod. xl. 34, 35, when Moses had finished the work, "then the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." This movable temple, or tabernacle, was succeeded by the permanent building on Mount Moriah, where David "desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; but Solomon built him an house, (Acts vii. 46, 47). At its dedication Solomon addressed God in prayer, and said (1 Kings viii. 13), "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever;" and we are told (2 Chron. vii. 1, 2), that "when

Solomon had made an end of praying... the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."

II. The second temple was a holy person—viz., the Lord Jesus Christ. He himself taught the Jews this truth. In John ii. 19. he addressed them in these words, which he intended should be literally understood of himself, for they were literally fulfilled by him: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The evangelist adds the explanation in the 21st verse—"But he spake of the temple of his body." Agreeably to these words of Christ, and the evangelist John, the Apostle Paul teaches the Colossians (i. 19), "It pleased the Father that in him" (that is, in Christ) "should all fullness dwell;" and (ii. 9) "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

III. The third temple is a holy people—namely, all "the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus," that "blessed company of all faithful people" which make up the universal Church of God. They are as real and literal a temple, or dwelling, or house of God, as the body of Christ, or the magnificent house built by Solomon. It is not the language of metaphor St. Paul used when he addressed the Christian believers of Corinth, and said, "Ye are the temple of the living God, and God hath said, I will dwell in them;" or when he addressed the Christians of Ephesus—"Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

It is in this light regarding believers as "an habitation of God," that St. Peter, in his first Epistle, calls the "elect" strangers "lively stones, who are built up a spiritual house" (ii. 5). This spiritual house is called, in ver. 9,