

**A House of Worship**  
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“ . . . the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” I Kings 8:11

What makes a church a dwelling place for the Lord? While the beauty and uplifting nature of its architecture and windows can help draw a person's mind to higher contemplation and worship, these things by themselves are insufficient. We can know this if we've paid attention to homes in this world. There can be a clean, neat, wonderfully decorated home and the life that goes on inside it may either be warm and loving or thoroughly unpleasant, cold or angry. Similarly, you can have a home, not so spic and span, with simple, even worn furniture and it likewise can be either warm and loving or thoroughly unpleasant, cold or angry. It is not so much the externals of the home it is what goes on inside of it. What is the life of the household? What are the relationships like within it?

For both the tabernacle and Solomon's temple once they were assembled and dedicated the glory of the Lord filled them. This was because both served a special role in the church at that time. For the people of the Israelitish Church there was a connection between heaven and the church on earth not by the interior qualities of the people in the church but through the proper order of the externals of their worship. Consequently, when the tabernacle and temple existed with the ark in the holy of holies, lampstands, basins, altar of sacrifice and all the other elements of their worship there was huge power there. When the tabernacle was set up and all its parts were anointed with a holy oil, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. When the temple was set up and countless sheep and oxen were sacrificed, once again the glory of the Lord filled it.

We cannot depend on external things alone. We need to change our lives. This concept is clearly presented in the following quotation from the teachings for the New Church:

All of us have to do our part and move closer to God. The closer we come to God, the more God enters us, which is His part. It is similar with a house of worship: first it has to be built by human hands; then it has to be dedicated; and finally prayers are said for God to be present and unite Himself to the church that gathers there. (*True Christian Religion/True Christianity* 126)

There are things we need to do for the glory of the Lord to be with us. Reading again from the teachings for the New Church.

The meaning of the glory of the Lord can be seen from this, that the light of heaven, from which is all wisdom, beauty, and magnificence in the heavens, proceeds from the Lord as a sun, and it is the Lord's Divine love that appears to the angels as a sun. From this it is clear that the light of heaven, which in its essence is Divine truth and Divine wisdom, is the Divine love proceeding; and as love desires nothing else than to give that which is its own to another, thus to fill others with blessedness, what will not the Divine love do? Nevertheless, the Lord cannot give His glory to us and fill us with wisdom and blessedness unless we acknowledge and worship the Lord, for it is by this that we conjoins ourselves to the Lord by love and faith; for in order that acknowledgment and worship may be acknowledgment and worship, it must be from love and faith; and

without conjunction by means of these no good can flow in from the Lord, because it is not received. All this makes clear that "to give glory to the God of heaven" means to acknowledge and worship the Lord. (*Apocalypse Explained* 678:3)

When the tabernacle had been built Moses anointed all parts of it with a special oil that represented all the good things that come from love (*Arcana Caelestia* 10010). When our lives come to state in which a wise kindness reigns in each part of our lives, the glory of the Lord is revealed within us. When Solomon was dedicating his temple, he sacrificed countless sheep and oxen. These also represent good affections and good things done by a person from love. When our lives are filled with countless good motivations and good words and deeds the glory of the Lord is revealed within us.

What would bring the glory of the Lord to the Cathedral. Picture an infant girl who was baptized in this building. Her parents inspired her with habits of regular Sunday worship. They encouraged her to think about what she was learning and to see how it could change some of her habits and reactions. As she grew up, she continued to grow spiritually. Her heart was touched over and over again with the music at services. When she started into a serious relationship with a young man, together they made attending Cathedral services an important part of their growing love and life together. They chose to have their wedding in this building and make their commitment to their marriage before the Lord. When children came, they too were brought to Sunday worship services. They strived to have their home be a place where the Lord was present. Through good times and bad she remembered to turn to the Lord for guidance, comfort and hope. In her friendships and the life of this community this woman was treasured for her willingness to help out whether it was listening to personal challenges or providing a meal or helping look after someone's children after a tragedy. As her children grew up and became adults themselves, they could count on wise counsel from her for their many life-choices. Eventually she became a grandmother with grandchildren who looked forward to any visit they could make with her. She treasured the opportunities to accompany the grandchildren to Christmas Tableaux services and see the wonder on their faces as they heard the beginning of the shepherd's choir and got to go forward to see a tiny infant in the manger. As she grew even older her failing health limited some of the activities of her earlier life and still when she could she found that Sunday just didn't feel like Sunday if she couldn't be here to worship, praise and learn from the Lord. Finally, the time would come when her natural body could no longer support her spirit and she passed from this world to the next. A memorial service would be held for her in this building and so many of those who attended could be filled with gratitude for what this woman's life had meant to so many. It is lives like hers that brings the glory of the Lord to this house of worship.

Or picture a man who learned about the New Church as an adult coming to this Cathedral, first out of interest in the building and grounds. A Cathedral guide piqued his curiosity with some of the things she said. He had long felt disappointed in what he could learn from the church of his youth and even some of the common behavior seemed lacking in common Christian kindness. Coming here for Sunday services were sometimes challenging as he tried to shift his perspective on the Lord, the Word, the life of religion, and the nature of life after death. He found that the Family Service seemed to serve his growing spiritual life the best. Over time he recognized how much his life was changing for the better. He could face stressful situations with a greater focus on what was most important and an inner trust that all the Lord expected of him was to do what he could reasonably accomplish. Each Sunday he looked forward to the benefits of attending the Family Service and checking in with the friendships he had formed with people here. Through

his changed relationship with the Lord, improved usefulness in his many roles and responsibilities this man would bring the glory of the Lord to this house of worship.

And this is our opportunity as well. Each of us by our lives can bring the glory of the Lord to this Cathedral. One of the times the Lord was seen in His glory was the transfiguration when He shown like the sun before three of His disciples. About this event we read:

Peter, James, and John . . . represented faith, charity, and good flowing from charity. Their presence alone on that occasion meant that no others are able to see the glory of the Lord which is present in His Word than those with whom faith, its partner charity, and good flowing from charity are present. (*Arcana Caelestia* 2135)

Certainly, many of us have times that we don't feel so spiritually alive. The idea of the glory of the Lord filling our lives can seem like a remote possibility. The Lord knows we go through these times. It is His greatest desire to lead us out of these states. The final lesson today from the *True Christian Religion* describes a miraculous transformation leading to a sight of the Lord in His glory. Prior to the portion read today is a description of a falling apart building with a profane image within it. The floor was a swamp under which was a copy of the Word hidden under a large hewn stone. These images represented an empty faith with no presence of the Lord. Then the wind blew away the building and image, dried the swamp and revealed stone covering the Word. A Tabernacle was then seen, then a temple and finally the Lord Himself. The Lord can bring about this transformation in each of our lives if we are willing. This Cathedral and the services we have been holding here for 100 years exist to help the Lord bring about a transformation of our lives from times of spiritual darkness to ones that behold the glory of the Lord.

May we be grateful for the generations that have gone before us who helped bring this Cathedral into existence and provided worship services with inspiring music, heartfelt prayers and ideas that the Lord has revealed to us. May we do what we can to invite the glory of the Lord into our lives and so into this house of worship. Amen.

Lessons: Exodus 40 portions, I Kings 8 portions, *True Christian Religion* 187: 3-4

### **Exodus 40:1-39, 33-35**

<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>2</sup> "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. <sup>3</sup> You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. <sup>4</sup> You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. <sup>5</sup> You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. <sup>6</sup> Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. <sup>7</sup> And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. <sup>8</sup> You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate. <sup>9</sup> And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy . . . So Moses finished the work. <sup>34</sup> Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

## **1 Kings 8:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the City of David, which *is* Zion. . . . <sup>3</sup> So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. <sup>4</sup> Then they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that *were* in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. <sup>5</sup> Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. <sup>6</sup> Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy *Place*, under the wings of the cherubim. . . . <sup>9</sup> Nothing *was* in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. <sup>10</sup> And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup> so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

## **True Christian Religion 187:3-4**

Immediately the east wind came up and blew away the shrine with the sculpture. It dried up the swamp and exposed the stone that had the Word lying underneath it.

Then a warm, springlike breeze blew in from heaven. To my surprise I then saw a tent in that same place, a very simple one in its outer form.

Angels who were with me said, "Look, it is Abrahams tent just as it was when the three angels came to him to announce that Isaac was going to be born [Genesis 18:1, 2, and following]. The tent looks simple to the eye, but as the light of heaven flows in, it becomes more and more magnificent."

The angels were then granted the ability to open the heaven where spiritual angels live - the angels who have wisdom. In the light that flowed in from that heaven, the tent looked like the Temple in Jerusalem. When I looked inside, I saw that the foundation stone under which the Word had been hidden was now covered in precious stones. From the precious stones a kind of lightning was flashing across to walls that had relief's of angel guardians on them, giving the angel guardians beautifully different colors.

As I was feeling awestruck by these sights, the angels said, "You are about to see things that are even more miraculous." They were then granted the ability to open the third heaven where heavenly angels live - the angels who have love. As a result of the blazing light that flowed in from that heaven, the entire temple disappeared. In its place I saw the Lord alone, standing on the foundation stone, which was the Word. He looked much the way He had when seen by John in Revelation chapter 1.

Yet because holiness then filled the inner realms of the angels' minds so that they felt an overwhelming urge to fall forward on their faces, suddenly the channel of light from the third heaven was closed by the Lord and the channel of light from the second heaven was reopened. As a result, the earlier appearance of a temple, and also a tent, returned. The tent was in the middle of the temple.

These experiences illustrated what Revelation 21 means when it says, "Behold, the tent of God is with people, and He will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:3); and when it says, "I saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, because the Lord God Almighty is its Temple, and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22).