

The Sanctuary

“Sanctuary” in Hebrew is one of the forms of שֶׁדָּךְ:

qadash	(verb)	to be set apart or consecrated
qadosh	(adjective)	sacred or holy
qodesh	(noun)	apartness, sacredness, holiness; places set apart as sacred
miqdash	(noun)	holy or sacred place

Both miqdash and qodesh are often translated “sanctuary”, usually referring to the Tabernacle, or the Temple (Solomon’s), but can also refer to God’s heavenly habitation, Mt. Sinai, the Jerusalem area, the future Messianic city, and even places of false worship (like the backslidden Israelites, or the Moabites).

It was natural for the Israelites of old to see God’s sanctuary primarily as the Tabernacle or Temple (especially the Holy of Holies, on the “mercy seat” above the ark). But those places are no more. In the future we can easily see his sanctuary as referring to the Millennial throne of the Messiah in Jerusalem, or God’s presence with us in the eternal, holy city, the New Jerusalem. **But where is God’s sanctuary now?**

1. The most obvious answer still is, **in heaven.**

Dt. 26:15 – “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel ...”

Ps. 102:19 – “For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;”

2. We can also consider the sanctuary to be **in churches and synagogues, but only inasmuch as that is where we meet together to worship God**, and as he comes to be in our midst. People commonly refer to the main worship area of a church building as “the sanctuary”. We know God is everywhere (He is omnipresent), but there is a special sense in which he is sometimes present in gatherings of his people. This is why we pray for God’s presence to be with us in our worship and teaching.

Mt. 18:20 – “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Ps. 134:2 – “Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.” (in your meeting place)

3. There is even a sense in which **we, his people, are his sanctuary.**

Ps. 114:1-2 – “When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language: Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.”

2 Cor. 6:16 – “... for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Jn. 14:16-17 – “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

Mt. 28:20 – “... and, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

But on the other hand, God is our Sanctuary

Does this seem strange, that we can be God’s sanctuary, and also that God is our sanctuary?

1 Jn. 4:13 – “Hereby know we that we dwell in God, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

1. **He is our place of comfort and refuge when in trouble and distress.**

Ps. 77:13 – “Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?” But the previous 12 verses show the context:

1-4 – He was crying to God in a time of trouble. He was complaining and crying to God and seeking him, and his spirit was so overwhelmed that he could hardly speak.

7-9 – He even questioned whether God’s mercies, grace, and favor were gone forever, and that he would be cast off forever.

5-6, 10-12 – His only solace was to remember God’s presence and acts to him and to Israel in the past, and to talk of God’s doings.

13-20 moves beyond his depressing thoughts, to recognize that God is sovereign above (“in the sanctuary”) and that he does mighty works in and through his people, as he pleases. This is our comfort, when we cannot understand what is going on around us.

Ps. 63:1-2 – “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” The sanctuary is not just the tabernacle or a church, but more generally, the “holy place” where we meet with God in private and holy communion. Under the stars, in a hay mow, walking alone or wherever we go for God to speak and we will listen.

Ps. 46:1-2 – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Isa. 43:1-3 – “... Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour ...”

2. He is the source of our life, and we are to dwell in his presence, “abiding in the Vine”

Ps. 84:1-2, 4, 10 – “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ... Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will still be praising thee. ... For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Ps. 90:1 – “LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Ps. 91:1 – “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Where is your secret place?

3. What may appear strange though, is that God will be a sanctuary to us even in the midst of chastening and correction.

Ezek. 11:16-21 – “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD.

God will restore us from our state of chastening, and give us a new heart, and we will once again know his voice and presence. But, restoration cannot come to those who refuse this chastening. Their evil way will fall on their own heads.

God gives us a challenge – He will be to us either a rock of refuge and a sanctuary, or a stone of offense and stumbling.

Isa. 8:13-14 – “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And **he shall be for a sanctuary**; but **for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence** to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.