

## Sam. Popoola

**“And let them make me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them”** Ex 25 vs.8 God’s eternal purpose is to the end that He may exercise His effective government over the earth. This divine intention He seeks to accomplish using man who is born in the image of Christ as His divine instrument. This plan of God was contained in the divine statement, **“let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...”** Gen. 1:26. Man brought forth in the image of God is the man who can be God’s instrument to administer God’s government upon the earth. The capacity by man, to serve as God’s instrument of governing, is tied to his being brought forth in God’s image. The place or the state where a man can be fashioned in the image of the incorruptible God is called the **“Sanctuary”**. The sanctuary suggests the place of a relationship. It is a platform of availability for personal fellowship with God. It is the ground of devotion. It provides the place of consecration; it is a call to a life of devotion. It finds uniqueness in a life of separation for a divine purpose.

**“...Let them make me a sanctuary...”** God’s man is God’s sanctuary. Man in his folly adorns physical temples built with human hands to human standard and to meet human satisfaction. God does not need to inhabit material shelters of whatever dimension of grandeur. Man in his foolish rebellion and endless futility can go on building his cathedrals and religious empires; all that does nothing to impress God. God needs people. God needs men’s hearts. Wherever men are found, whose hearts are available, there, God is found. It may be in the cave or by the riverside, under the tree, under a shed or in a simple shelter from the sun and from the rain. God wants hearts which are adorned rather than the adornment of physical structures.

**“Thus saith the LORD, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hands made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”** Is 66:1. Stephen echoing this divine thought said, affirmatively, **“the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands...”** Acts 7:48. God’s temple is a people with hearts towards God. Since man lost his place at Eden, God’s recovery plan has been directed towards raising men in the image of Christ; Jesus Christ is God’s seed. This seed successfully planted in a willing heart provides the environment for God to find a dwelling, an habitation in man. The act of planting the seed of Christ is a work of grace. The work of grace itself requires that a man’s heart be willingly available. Once the seed has been planted, to find a progressive development to a level where a man’s heart has become God’s dwelling place requires for certain basic demands. These demands are included in the divine instruction, **“let them make me a sanctuary”**.

To make or to build God a Sanctuary is a Christian’s primary goal. The Sanctuary is that which relates primarily with the heart more than with geography-physical building, or physical adornment of the body. **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?...what, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,...ye are the temple of the living God...”** I Cor.3:16; I Cor.6:19; II Cor.6:16.

The true concept of **“making God a sanctuary”** consists not as much in separating special days to worship God as in Sanctifying every moment of every day to worship him. The true concept of building God a Sanctuary consists not as much in building institutionalised projects and religious empires for personal ambition of making fame as in building human lives not in the image of men but in the image of God. James echoing Peter in the Book of Acts rehearsed God’s plan, which is **“to take...a people for His name”** Acts 15:14. God’s vision is a people for His Name; a people who bear his Name; a people rising in the estate of His image; a people rising in the estate of His nature, character and testimony!

David made a vow and said, **“surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”** Ps.132: 3-5. Building a Sanctuary, nay a habitation for God, will likely place some demands on personal comforts and conveniences. **“Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house”** is a willing Sacrifice of all personal comforts. It entails self-denials sometimes of some legitimate things. David’s house is his legitimate property. Taking rest in the comfort of his house is his legitimate right. However, to become God’s habitation or God’s Sanctuary demands sacrificing those legitimate rights. The sacrifice is in love and with no effort. This is because a sacrifice motivated by love must **“obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”** Heb 4:16.

**“I will not come into the tabernacle of my house”** is an emphasis to rather expend one’s useful energy on things, which bother on God’s eternal purpose, which things will endure than concentrate one’s useful strength on the material, which has but temporary span of life. All that men run after, as glittering and as glamorous they may appear, have but transient glory. All the material comforts for which men lose their spiritual values do not possess lasting glory and are not worth investing a lifetime on. The preacher called them all vanity! **“I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven... I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit”** Eccl 1:13-14. The greatest distraction to whoever desires to build a **“sanctuary”** to God or become a worthy **“habitation”** for God is to set his heart to pursue material comforts. The natural man loves comfort and ease. The spiritual man’s undoing is to allow his heart to be drawn away to find rest in material comfort. The heart condition is the issue at stake. It is in the heart a Sanctuary can be built. The heart is also the centre of attraction for material treasure. What a man treasures his heart finds comfort in. If a man treasures spiritual things, his heart is detached from the abundance of the things that he has or has not. If a man treasures material things, those things steal away his heart. The Lord Jesus counselled, **“lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”** Mt.6: 19-21. To build a Sanctuary, personal or corporate, emphasis must be on spiritual value rather than on things corporeal and temporal that are all but ephemeral with constantly fading glory. Ability to build a **Sanctuary”** involves the ability to correctly position and prioritise personal values. Misplacement of values place men alongside of Esau who could trade off his birthright for a pot of porridge; that is rather being a carnal person than being spiritual.

What makes all the difference between Esau and Jacob is not as much as in their personal weaknesses, and disabilities as on what they placed their values. Esau’s values are corporeal and temporal. Jacob’s values lie in God’s eternal goal and purposes. For Esau, what bothered him

was what he could have now, Jacob looked beyond the immediate gains and concerns. His eyes were on the eternal inheritance in Christ. **“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”** II Cor.4: 18. All human emphases on material rather than Spiritual value belong to the realm of Esau who is a carnal man with all life investments on carnal things. Esau was called a fornicator and a profane person because his emphasis was on the carnal, the realm of the material. The Scriptures warned **“lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth right. For ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”** Heb 4:16-17.

God’s Sanctuary entails a purging of personal motives, unholy desires and ambitions. It entails sanctified and consecrated living, a life of personal devotion and unmistakable vision for the throne. In the shadow of the Tabernacle of Moses, the Sanctuary represented the **“Holiest of ALL”**. The tabernacle itself consists of three compartments: the outer, where every Dick and Harry had access; next is the inner compartment where only the **“Priests”** could enter to minister. The third, which is the innermost, was only to be accessed by the **“high priest”** alone and this is once in a year. This is the place of God’s presence. There was contained the **“ark”** inside which were the golden pot containing the **“hidden manner”**, Aaron’s rod that budded and the two tables of stone which contained the commandments. On the ark was the **“mercy seat”** that symbolised the **“throne”** the symbol of God’s presence. If a Christian were to be God’s temple as the scriptures affirm that he is, then his body, soul and spirit become the type of the three compartments in the tabernacle of Moses. If this were so, then his spirit is typical of the inner most of the tabernacle or the **“Holiest of ALL”**. If the Holiest of All in Moses’ Tabernacle is the place of God’s presence, then the spirit component of the Christian’s life must qualify for God’s presence for that is the place of the Sanctuary. A true Sanctuary must contain the ark and the mercy seat that make up God’s throne in the heart of the Christian. God’s throne is God’s authority. It speaks of the Lordship of Jesus over our lives. Where the true lordship of Christ exists, there you find obedience and true submission to the Holy Spirit’s daily guidance. The evidence of such a reality is in holy living and sanctified thoughts. It reflects in a life of soberness and true sobriety. It projects a life of meekness and humility, a life that does nothing but as he is instructed of God. This is God’s desire for every Christian. A life with divided interests the Heart of God detests. This is why He said, **“thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God....”** Ex 20:3-5a. Nothing, however cherished must compete with our love for God. Preference for any thing material or immaterial, animate or inanimate, above God raises a question of doubt as to the level of our commitment and devotion to God. Whatsoever takes our attention or reduces our commitment or personal devotion lowers our consecration. The implication is that God’s Sanctuary that we ought to be loses its vitality. Love for any- human or thing-apart from God amounts to idolatry. This is why we cannot worship men; we can only thank God for their lives. We cannot worship riches or poverty either. A heart that qualifies for God’s Sanctuary must be detached from all things and be totally separated unto God in holy worship for then are we true Christians.

Every Christian who is God's true Sanctuary will find progressively a grace that gradually works into him the divine nature, character and attributes. This is the Symbolism of the golden pot inside the ark right in the Sanctuary. Gold typifies God's nature; what God hates we must hate. What He detests we must detest if truly His divine nature we are beginning to possess. The whole emphasis of the ministry in the "**Holiest of All**" is the redemptive work, ministry and nature of Christ's life. All true work of ministry must be seen to bring men into true encounter and relationship with the redemptive work of Christ in both its priestly and kingly dimensions. Any emphasis in life and ministry which cannot translate to bringing fruits of righteousness and true sense of reverential fear for God and the things of God must be seen as not conforming to the mind and purpose of God. The whole essence of God setting the nation of Israel apart from other nations of the world was to teach this principle: God desires our hearts and our attention; He wants our all for Himself. He longs for worship not from the lips but from the hearts. He longs for a people whose lives are as worship unto God and who are separated unto His divine purposes.

**"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" Ex 19:6** Peter re-echoed these words when he said, **"but ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light..."**

I Pet 2:9. The purpose in God's calling to be His Sanctuary is to bring forth fruits of Christ in every sense of it. Paul writing to the Church at Corinth admonished, **"...I beseech you, be ye followers...of my ways which be in Christ..."** 1 Cor.4: 16. Further, he said, **"be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"** I Cor.11: 1. Exhorting the Philippian Church he wrote, **"be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample"** Phil.3: 17. The example and the pattern in Paul is **"that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain..."** Phil.3: 10-11. Identifying with Paul in this state of union with Christ and His purposes, we must be willing to follow his admonition: **"no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully"** II Tim.2: 4-5. Attainment of divine goal and purposes poses the greatest challenge to demands on faithfulness either as a soldier or as an athlete. This is as the words of Paul: **"know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away"** I Cor.9: 24-27.

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