

The Church – God's Temple

Text : I Cor. 3: 10-17 ; Eph. 2: 14-22

INTRODUCTION :

A. When writing the bible, God faced a challenge that would befuddle mere man.

1. He had to reveal His word in a way that could be understood in all ages.
 - a. Life changes over the years.
 - b. His word had to be relevant thousands of years later.
2. Because His message was for all men, it had to be understandable in all cultures.
 - a. It was much simpler when God dealt exclusively with one nation.
 - b. In addition to language, people think differently and have different value systems.

B. Thus, God communicated the concept of His church using timeless figures.

1. He used the concept of a people separated into an independent community, aliens.
 - a. That taught us the need to maintain a separate identity in the midst of the world.
 - b. Being a separate community of people, Christians must practice a different culture.
 - c. While living in this world, we must resist pressure to conform. (*Be defined by it.*)
2. Comparing His church to man's body, He taught us the need for unity in diversity.
 - a. It's needful that His church be composed of many differing parts. (*God wants it so.*)
 - b. All of the parts are important. ... *none unimportant.*
 - c. The body can only be normal if all of its parts function and all work together.
3. By presenting His church as a family (*household*) God taught us about relationship.
 - a. Being "*born again*" into the family of God forms a special relationship with God.
 - b. Being children of the Father links Christians together as siblings. (*unique bond*)
 - c. The bond between Christians is an eternal bonds. (*It will last longer than earth.*)

C. This lesson seeks to unfold what God is communicating by calling us His temple.

1. The concept of a temple is known by all.
2. God manifested His presence in the temple.
3. In Christ God prepared Christians to be His temple.
4. What does it mean to our lives to have God dwelling within us.

I. Most cultures are familiar with the concept of a temple as a place of worship.

A. The history of man can be traced through his structures built for worship.

1. One of the oldest manmade structures is located (10th mil BC) is Temple
 - a. Located at Gobeli Tepe, on a mountain top in southeastern Turkey.
 - b. 20 structures have survived until this time.
2. Great stone temples from antiquity still stand on almost every inhabited continent.
 - a. Central and South America
 - b. Africa
 - c. Europe
 - d. Asia
3. The ancient temples of Greece, Rome and Egypt are popular tourist destinations.

B. Israel's relationship with God can be traced by what it built for worship.

(**Also**, *one's attitude toward God is manifested by their worship structures.*)

1. When Israel was just a clan, their journeys could be traced by the altars they built.
2. When they left Egypt as a great multitude of people they had no territory so so they built a mobile house of worship, the Tabernacle .
3. When they had secured the Promised Land they build a permanent place of worship.
4. When they became unfaithful to God, God allowed their temple to be destroyed.

C. For something like 500 years the tabernacle was the most beautiful tent on earth.

1. The children of Israel were grateful for their deliverance so they gave generously.
Exod. 36: 5-7 and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded *us* to perform." ⁶ So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." Thus the people were restrained from bringing *any more*. ⁷ For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it.
2. It was built of the most costly materials and made to be beautiful.
3. The tent for worship was built according to an exact pattern given by God.
Exodus 25:9 – "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it."

D. The temple built by David and Solomon was one of the 7 wonders of the world.

1. God selected who would build his temple. **I Chron. 28: 1-10**
2. God gave the pattern for the temple.
 - a. **I Chron. 28: 19** – “**All this,**” said David, “**the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern.**”
 - b. This grand temple was a symbol of God's glory. (*Public Relations for God*)
3. Solomon's temple was possibly the most costly temple ever built.
 - a. David prepared at least 5,400 tons of Gold for the temple. (*plus contributions*)
 - b. At today's prices that gold alone would be worth \$262,703,995,200
 - c. The silver, bronze, jewels, lumber, stones, labor, etc. were all in addition.

II. God manifested Himself among the people in the temple.**A. When the tabernacle was completed the Shekinah glory rested upon it.**

Exod. 40: 35– Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

B. When Solomon completed the temple the Shekinah glory rested upon it.

II Chron. 5: 13-14 then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

C. Even so, the people could not directly approach God.

1. They were required to bring a sacrifice to a feast in Jerusalem three times annually.
 - a. **Deut. 16: 16** – **Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.**
 - b. They could come at other times, but these were required. (*e.g., present firstborn*)
2. Once they arrived at the temple, they could not offer the sacrifice ... only a priest.
3. Only a priest could enter the Holy Place.
4. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and that just once a year.

D. Only those considered faithful Jews could enter even the outer halls.

1. **Remember : Acts 21: 26-31** Thinking Paul took a gentile in they wanted to kill.
2. Jewish women and children were even separated from the men. (*court of women*)

III. In Christ God prepared Christians to be His temple.

A. In preparation for the indwelling of the Spirit of God our temple was cleansed.

1. **Heb. 9: 18-22** Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood.
19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, **20** saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU." **21** And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. **22** And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, **all things are cleansed with blood**, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
2. **Heb. 10: 3-4** But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. **4** For it is **impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**.
3. **Heb. 10: 11-12** Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins**; **12** but He, (*Jesus*) having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,
4. **Heb. 9: 11-14** But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; **12** and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, **14** how much more will the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?
5. At baptism our temple is cleansed by the blood of Christ... **made a holy place**.
Acts 22: 16 – Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (*Spirit can enter clean*)

B. The scriptures declare that Christians are the temple of God.

1. **I Cor. 3: 16-17** Do you not know that **you are a temple of God** and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? **17** If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (*You ARE a holy dwelling place for God.*)
2. **Eph 2: 19-22** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **20** having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, **21** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is **growing into a holy temple in the Lord**, **22** in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

C. Being the temple of God means God lives within us.

1. **Eph 2: 22** – ... you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.
2. **Acts 2: 38** – Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Rom. 8:9** – However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

D. When Jesus completed preparing His church as His dwelling place, i.e., as His temple, God's Shekinah glory rested upon it.

1. **Acts 2: 3** – And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.
2. In the same way the pillar of fire and cloud indicated the presence of God in the O.T.

IV. What does it mean to our lives to have God dwelling within us.

A. It means that we are spiritually alive.

1. **Eph. 2: 4-6** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ ... (cf - **Rom. 8: 9-10**)
2. Just as our spirit makes us alive physically, His spirit makes us alive spiritually.

B. It means that we live in the presence of God. (*You take God everywhere you go.*)

1. **Rom. 8: 16** – The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,
2. Under the Law of Moses only the priests could approach God ... you live with Him.

C. It means that you must keep the temple of God Clean.

1. Paul uses the presence of God to warn about immorality.
I Cor. 6: 17-20 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.
¹⁸ Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?
²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

D. It means that you must shine forth the glory of God to those around you.

1. When people observe a Christian, they judge God by His actions.
2. Jesus told Philip :
John 14: 9 – ... **He who has seen Me has seen the Father; ...**
3. Paul has the correct attitude :
I Cor. 11: 1 – **Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.**

D. It means that we must live a life of worship to God.

1. The temple is a place of worship. (*Thus, your body is a place of worship.*)
2. Being with God we must acknowledge His glory, His power and His Holiness.
3. We must include Him in our thought life, the dialog we have with ourselves.

CONCLUSION :**A. The temple of God is a work in progress.**

1. **Eph. 2: 21-22** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is **growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22** in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.
2. **Eph 2: 20** – having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
3. **I Pet 2: 3** – you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

B. Realizing we are “living stones” we ask, “How is your stone progressing?”

1. Are you being shaped by the teachings of the prophets and the Apostles?
Compare : Acts 2: 42 – They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
2. Are you staying in line with the cornerstone ?
3. Are you supporting the stones above and beside you ?

C. It takes many stones to build a great temple.

1. Are you gathering stones ?
2. Have you been added as a stone ?

INVITATION :

Lesson Texts :**I Cor. 3: 10-17**

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. **11** For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12** Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **13** each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. **14** If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. **15** If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* **17** If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Eph. 2: 14-22

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, **15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, **16** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. **17** AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; **18** for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **20** having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, **21** *in whom* the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, **22** *in whom* you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.