



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION 4B: THE NEW COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Ephesians 2:11-22

"Exploring the new life and new society God has created through Jesus"

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1. Looking at Sequim, what social, generational, or cultural group would have the hardest time feeling accepted and a part of our church? _____
Is there anything that could be done to remove barriers? _____

Ephesians 2:14 says that Jesus "is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility".

2. What is the meaning of each of the things Christ accomplished on the cross (found in Ephesians 2:15-19)?
 - Abolished the law (v. 15) _____
 - Creating a new humanity (v. 15) _____
 - Reconciliation and Peace (v. 16-17) _____
 - We can approach God through the Holy Spirit (v. 18) _____
 - No longer strangers or foreigners to God (v. 19) _____
 - Now members of God's household (v. 19) _____

In Ephesians chapter one, the church was compared to a body. Now Paul uses the image of a temple in verses 2:19-22. When he says that Jesus is the cornerstone, Paul may be referring to the capstone at the top of a Roman arch (see *1 Peter 2:6-7*). That particular stone is the one all the others balance on, and if it is removed, the entire structure collapses.

3. What do you think it means to stand on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?

Jesus related to the Temple in four distinct ways.

First, as a pious Jew who was zealous for the Lord Jesus showed respect for the Temple. He referred to it as "the house of God" (Matt. 12:4) and "My Father's house" (John 2:16).

He taught that everything in it was holy because of the sanctifying presence of God (Matt. 23:17,21).

Second, Jesus' zeal led Him to purge the Temple of the moneychangers (Mark 11:15-17; John 2:16) and to weep over it as He reflected on its coming destruction (Mark 13:1; Luke 19:41-44). Because (Malachi 3:1) prophesied the cleansing of the Temple as something the Lord and His Messenger would do, Jesus' act implied His deity and messiahship. Consequently, the hard-hearted scribes and chief priests "sought how they might destroy Him" (Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47).

Third, because He was the Son of God incarnate, Jesus taught that He was greater than the Temple (Matt. 12:6). Jesus' teaching that if the temple of His body was destroyed in three days He would raise it up (John 2:19) likewise affirms His superiority to the Temple building. That saying of Jesus may have provided the basis for the claim of the two false witnesses at His trial who stated that Jesus said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days" (Matt. 26:60-61; 27:40; Mark 14:57-58; 15:29).

Finally, Jesus taught that the church (Matt. 16:18) is the new, eschatological temple (Matt. 18:19-20; John 14:23).

At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). By His death, Jesus opened a new way into the presence of God. A new order replaced the old. No longer was the Temple in Jerusalem to be the place where men worshiped God. From now on they would worship Him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:21-24).

4. Why is the analogy of a temple significant for us? _____

• What insights can you draw about the role and function of the church from this word picture? _____

Digging Deeper

For those who want to do more personal reflection on this topic.

The significance of the Temple in Judaism and Christianity.

Adapted from Nelson's Bible Dictionary.

The Old Testament describes temples as some of man's oldest buildings. A temple was thought of as the building where God manifested his presence, so the place the temple occupied was holy, or sacred. Because God was thought to dwell in the temple, the Old Testament had no specific word for temple. It refers instead to the "house" of God. Since they were wandering herdsmen, the patriarchs such as Abraham and Jacob did not build temples. However, they did have shrines and altars in places where God had revealed Himself to them, such as by the oak of Moreh (Gen. 12:6-7; 33:20), at Bethel (Gen. 12:8; 28:18-22), and at Beersheba (Gen. 21:33; 26:23-25). The Tabernacle, instituted by Moses, was a kind of portable temple, that could be taken from place to place when the people were wandering in the desert and during times of war.

Once the land was fully conquered and all the tribes were properly settled, it was important that the worship of God be centralized. Because he was a man of war, David was not allowed to build the Temple, but he was allowed to gather the materials for it and to organize the project. The Temple was completed by Solomon about 960 B. C., seven years later after the work began (1 Kin. 6:37-38). Soon after, rival sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan (1 Kin. 12:28-33) competed with it. Later the Samaritans had a Temple on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20).

In biblical times three Temples were built on the same site: Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, and Herod's. In 587 B. C. the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar looted, sacked and burned the Temple (2 Kin. 25:9,13-17), but people still came to the site to offer sacrifice (Jer. 41:5). Cyrus, king of Persia, authorized the return of the Jewish captives, the return of the Temple vessels Nebuchadnezzar had looted, and the reconstruction of the Temple (about 537 B. C.), which was finished about 515 B. C. The completed Temple was smaller than and inferior to Solomon's (Ezra 3:12). The ark of the covenant was never recovered, and so the Second Temple (and Herod's Temple) had no ark. Neither were Solomon's ten lamp stands recovered. One seven branched candelabrum, the table of shewbread, and the incense altar stood in the Holy Place of the second Temple (as they did in Herod's Temple), but these were taken by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (about 175-163 B. C.), who defiled the altar in 167 B. C. The Maccabees cleansed the Temple, restored its furnishings (164 B. C.; (1 Macc. 4:36-59) and later turned it into a fortress.

King Herod sought to appease his Jewish subjects by constructing an enormous, ornate, cream-colored Temple of stone and gold that began in 19 B. C. The main building was finished by 9 B. C., but the entire structure was not completed until A. D. 64. The Romans destroyed it in A. D. 70. Since then there has been no ongoing sacrifice for the last two millennia.

Temple in the New Testament.

The first Christians were converted Jews. They continued to worship at the Temple as Jesus had (Luke 24:52; Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:12,20-21,42). As they began to understand the meaning and significance of Jesus' person, work, and teaching, they realized they were the new people of God, infused by God's Spirit. As such, they were a new, living Temple. A new order had replaced the old. Stephen, a Christian of Gentile background (Acts 6:1-5), was the first person to understand that the church had replaced the Temple as the place where God's presence was manifested in a special way among His people.

In (Acts 15:13-18) Stephen's insight was carried forward by James, who identified the church with Amos' prophecy about the "tabernacle of David, which has fallen" (v. 16). According to James' application of Amos' prophesy about the end times, the restoration of David's tabernacle, the Temple, would serve as the rallying point for Gentiles who wished to come to the Lord (Amos 9:11-12). James understood the church as the new temple that fulfilled that prophecy.

According to the apostle Paul, "All the promises of God" are "Yes, and... Amen" in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Ezekiel and other prophets had prophesied a new Temple (Ezekiel 40--43), and Paul understood the church as the fulfillment of those prophesies. Individually the Christian's body is "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). Corporately the church is "the temple of God" where the Spirit of God dwells (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16). Christians are growing "into

a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22). Because we are God's new temple where the Holy Spirit dwells, Christians are to be holy (1 Cor. 6:18-20; 2 Cor. 7:1).

Because God dwells in us, Christians are holy to God. (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Because there is only one new temple and all Christians-- regardless of race or religious background-- are members of it, all Christians have equal access to God (Eph. 2:19-22). Paul understood the church, then, as the eschatological temple to which God is gathering Israel and the other nations of the world (Is. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-5).

Paul used the metaphor of the temple to express the unity of the new people of God that God is bringing about through the preaching of the gospel. The members of this new race are Jews and Gentiles who formerly were separated by the "middle wall of separation" and the "ordinances" that forbade them to mix (Eph. 2:14-15). Christ's sacrificial death on the cross ushered in a new age in God's relationship with mankind and abolished the enmity between Jew and Gentile by abolishing the validity of the ordinances that gave expression to it (v. 15). He abolished those ordinances in order to create "one new man," a new race composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians at peace with one another (v. 15, 17).

Jesus Himself is the chief cornerstone of the building and so gives it shape and character (v. 20). The building is holy because it is growing "in the Lord" (v. 21) and because God dwells there in the Spirit (v. 22). "Lord," "God," and "Spirit" define this new temple in a trinitarian fashion. The metaphors of God's new people being a temple ("building") and being a body ("growing") are blended in (verse 21).

The New Testament also alludes to a heavenly temple in whose life the church participates. The Temple in Jerusalem was only a "copy and shadow," a type, of the true temple, which is in heaven (Heb. 8:5). Therefore the true, heavenly sanctuary into which Christ has entered on our behalf is better than its earthly copy (9:24). Because Christ our High Priest dwells in this heavenly sanctuary (9:24; 10:12; 19-22), we can enter the heavenly Holy of Holies and participate in the worship of the heavenly temple (10:19-22; 12:18-24). The author appears to define the heavenly temple as "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (12:23).

According to John, the author of Revelation, there is a celestial Mount Zion (14:1; 21:10), a heavenly Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), and a heavenly temple (11:19; 15:5--16:1). Christians who overcome temptation and trials are made pillars in the heavenly temple of God (3:12). As in Ephesians, then, the heavenly temple grows.

From this heavenly temple God will issue His judgments on the nations during the Tribulation (11:19; 14:14-20; 15:5--16:1). The martyrs of the Tribulation will serve God "day and night in His [heavenly] temple" (7:15). The temple in Jerusalem will be measured and judged during that time (11:1-2).

In the New Jerusalem there will not be a temple because "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22). In that perfect city nothing will come between God and man, and we "shall see His face" (22:4). In the new heaven and earth "the tabernacle of God" will be "with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God" (21:3).