

## **"A Holy Temple In The Lord"**

*"in whom each several building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Eph. 2:21). Paul, having shown that the partition wall between Jew and Gentile has been removed, hastens on to show what was the consequence of Jesus' death on the cross. He showed that while Gentiles had once been strangers from the covenant God made with Israel, they were strangers no more. Rather than being *"strangers and sojourners,"* they were now *"fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God"* (Eph. 2:19). The expressions *"fellow-citizen"* is an implication they belonged to a government, a kingdom and while nothing more is said of this matter in the passage before us, the word *"citizen"* necessarily implies it. These were fellows, equals, participants with the Jews in the kingdom and household of God. Then the apostle calls to mind they were *"being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone"* (Eph. 2:2). We are not to think that the apostles were the foundation in Paul's statement (although John's revelation indicates that the holy city has twelve foundation, which are the twelve apostles, Rev. 21:14); we are rather to understand it was the doctrine of the apostles which was the foundation for the temple that Jews and Gentile become in Christ. The prophets also had prophesied of the grace that should come unto them; and with their prophecy and the teachings of the apostles that the prophecies had been fulfilled, this was the word that the Ephesians had believed and submitted to, becoming in their obedience, part of the holy temple in the Lord.

In this structure, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. Upon Him the church is built, and apart from Him, no other foundation can be laid (1 Cor. 3:11). Isaiah is the source of Paul's quotation when he said, *"Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone"* and Psalms is the source of another reference to Christ as a stone (Isa. 28:16; Psalms 118:22). Jew and Gentile are fitly framed together for by God's design, each was to be part of this building. God's promise to Abraham *"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* is echoed by different Old Testament prophets. One wrote, *"In him shall the Gentiles hope"* (Isa. 11:10). Ezekiel, in his prophecy of Israel's return to her land, declared that strangers and sojourners dwelling among them would also be heirs (Ezek. 47:22). Because God had planned for inclusion of both; they were *"fitly framed together"* in God's house.

These are said to grow *"into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit"* (Eph. 2:21f). That Paul has the church in mind when he speaks of the *"holy temple"* let none doubt. In his first letter to Corinth, he pursues the same theme, speaking of himself and Apollos as *"fellow workers"* and of the Corinthians as *"God's building"* (1

Cor. 3:9). He concludes: *"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye"* (1 Cor. 3:16f). This passage affirms what the apostle said in Ephesians: *"Ye are building together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."*

Paul dispelled the notion that God literally dwells in a material building when he told Athenians, *"The God that made the world and all things there ... dwelleth not in temples made with hands"* (Acts 17:28). Nor should we think that God literally dwells in Christians. True, Paul wrote, *"Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have from God"* and yes, God said, *"I will dwell in them, and walk in them"* (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16); but God dwells in us, as His word dwells in us, influencing, molding and guiding our lives. None could "see" God literally dwelling in man. ALL can see God's spiritual dwelling in man by the lives He influences us to live!

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