

WE ARE THE BUILDING

Part 3 of CHURCH 101. Ephesians 2:20-22.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. September 4, 2022.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

One metaphor for the church is BUILDING OR TEMPLE.

The temple metaphor signifies the presence of God in the church.

Psalms 16:11 (ESV) 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

This is a hymn praising God for the promise of resurrection to eternal life.

Verse 11 makes two main points:

- The fullest experience of God's presence will be after our resurrection.
- The fullest experience of God's presence is our fullest joy and pleasure.

Until our resurrection, the best place to experience the presence of God is when the church gathers in Jesus' Name.

SACRED SPACES

It is human nature to be spiritual.

Sinful human nature seeks spiritual experiences in the wrong places.

Romans 1:23 (NLT) Instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SACRED SPACES

Until Jesus was born, God manifested his presence in:

- Creation - Psalm 19:1; Joshua 2:11
- Tent of Meeting that was replaced by the Tabernacle
- The Temple in Jerusalem.

The Tent, Tabernacle, and the Temple were God's house on earth.

Haggai 1:2 (ESV) "Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD."

1 Kings 8:10-11 (ESV) And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

JESUS IS THE SACRED SPACE

Jesus was the temple or house of God on earth:

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature ...

John 1:14 (NLT) So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John 2:19-21 (NLT) 19 "All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 "What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" 21 But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body.

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD

The church is the temple of God because we are joined to Jesus

Ephesians 2:20-22 (ESV) ... (you are - plural) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you (plural) also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The word used for "temple" refers to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the room where God's presence lived.

The "you" is plural. It is the whole church together that is the temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (ESV) Do you not know that you (plural) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you (plural)?

Everyone who is IN Christ is a brick in the temple wall.

1 Peter 2:5 (ESV) You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house ...

THE BEST PLACE TO MEET GOD

The local church is the best place in the world to meet God

Being in the presence is the greatest thing:

Psalms 122:1 (ESV) I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

Psalms 27:4 (ESV) One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

Psalms 84:1 (ESV) How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

NEXT STEPS

During the week, take some steps to reflect on and apply today's Bible teaching. Pick one or more of these questions to consider:

- Read the following excerpt from Dustin Bengé's book on the church, *The Loveliest Place* (Kindle locations 126-135):

Nineteenth-century preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon captures the admiration all true believers should have for the church in his depiction of her as "the dearest place on earth" (Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Best Donation" [exposition, April 5, 1891], in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Containing Sermons Preached and Revised*, vol. 37). Chosen by God the Father, purchased by Christ the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church should be cherished and recognized as "dear" by all who call her home. Dear is not a word we often hear in our modern context, but its definition amply conveys what Spurgeon is communicating to all believers concerning the church. It suggests deep affection. You may refer to someone as a "dear friend," meaning that you warmly esteem that person and consider him or her a particular treasure in your life. By calling Christ's church "dear," Spurgeon says there is nothing in this present life that we should find more precious to our hearts, for this is how God himself perceives her. Spurgeon continues, "Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than his church; therefore, being his, let us also belong to it, that by our prayers, our gifts, and our labors, we may support and strengthen it." 2

- Take some time to meditate on and write down reasons to thank God for your church family.
- Ask yourself, "If I did not have a church family or if I could not gather with the church in worship for a year, what difference would it make? How would it impact my heart for God, my faith, my spiritual growth, or my love for others?"
- Ask the Lord to make your church family dear, lovely, and precious to you. Over the next few weeks, write down evidence of this prayer being answered.