

Date: May 2, 2021

Title: "The Church is God's Temple"

Scripture: Ephesians 2

I. Introduction

The second chapter of Ephesians continues Paul's description of where the church sits in relation to God. And Paul is excited about the subject too. Some people will tell you that Ephesians 2 is a mini version of the book Romans. One tiny chapter that covers the breadth of the full sixteen chapters of that book. It shows how God's righteousness is needed, how it has been provided, how it has vindicated us and what the practical result is in our lives.

I like the book because it is a story of God's work at reconciliation. Some have said that this entire chapter parallels the parable of the two brothers - or as some call it, the story of the prodigal son. That title kind of misses a huge part of Jesus's message because BOTH of the brothers were children of the father. And that's what Ephesians 2 is about. Two members of the same family united together. And Christ has built a united church body into His temple - a temple which is built with him as its Cornerstone.

II. Read All of Ephesians 2.

III. Who is Paul talking to here?

The very first sentence makes it clear that Paul is going to be talking about your favorite subject "You!". It says it right there in the first sentence:

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins" Okay maybe that's not your favorite subject after all. That sounds a little harsh doesn't it? It kind of is right? I mean it's so harsh that some English translations of the Bible (e.g. KJV, NKJV, RSV) have stolen a few words from verse 5, "he made alive", and stuck them right here in verse one to soften the blow. "And you, he made alive, were dead in your trespasses. That's another reason why I like the CSB and ESV as well as other more literal translations. Meaning matters.

Now I can't be too hard on the translators because Paul is in the middle of what's called a "Periodic Sentence" and we just don't have those in English. A periodic sentence is one that keeps building and building before it reaches a final statement saying what it all meant. Paul does this when he's on a roll. In chapter one, verses 3-14 are one long sentence in the original Greek. Here in Chapter 2, verses 1-7 are one long sentence arriving at the point that God's work on calvary was done so "that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

That's worth getting excited about.

But Paul's story is not just about Gentile Christians like You and Me, for when Paul says "You" meaning Gentiles, he then goes on to say "We" meaning himself and other Jewish Christians.

IV. The Temple, as Built by Man

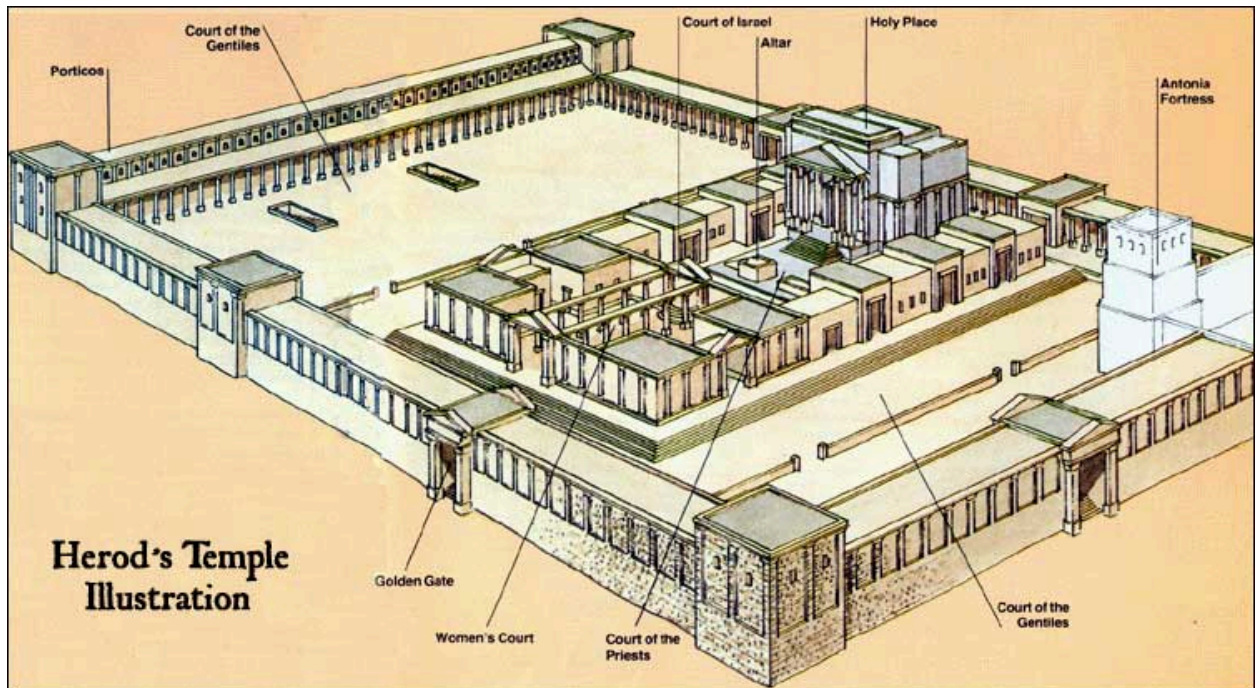
Paul then moves on into a section where he is describing the division that exists between these two groups and shows how whatever we build - even if it is meant to glorify God - will so often only divide us.

He uses the temple in Jerusalem as an example. The temple was originally built around 530BC when Israel had returned from exile. You can read about that starting in the book of Ezra. Herod The Great began expanding it around 19BC for his and God's glory..

Bible-History.com says

"The work of rebuilding the Temple began in 19 BC which was the 18th year of King Herod's reign. There were 10,000 skilled laborers and according to Josephus (Ant. 15.11.2) the laity could not enter certain parts of the building, therefore 1000 Levites were specially trained as builders and masons, and carried out their work so efficiently and carefully that at no time was there any interruption in the sacrifices and other services. The work was started by leveling larger portions of the Temple Mount, so that the new building might be erected on a broader base. It was also made much taller, so that the white stone gleamed in the bright Palestinian sun and could be seen from miles away. [...] While the main part of Herod's rebuilding was completed before his death in 4 BC, the work went on for more than 60 years after that. When Jesus visited the Temple at the first Passover of his ministry it was said that the place had by then been under construction for 46 years. The work was not entirely finished until 63 AD, only 7 years before the destruction of the entire Temple in 70 AD."

As glorious as it was, it served only to divide God's children. Gentiles were only allowed in the common area around the outside. They could only look in to the Court of Women (all Jews were allowed in here regardless of gender). Then only ritually clean men were allowed in the Court of Israel and restrictions got even tighter till the high priest was able to access the Holy of Holies after much ritual.



V. The Temple, as Built by God

However that is not what God's masterwork does. God's masterwork united all of the children of the world as one. God made a new temple unto him: the Church. You and I, whether Jew or Gentile are united with Christ as our cornerstone as a temple for God. In the story of the two brothers, one went astray only to return devastated and torn up by the world but was always with the father and everything the father had was already his. In the end, the brothers were reunited with each other and with the father. Once again they were one family. So it is also true of the gentiles and the Jews. We gentiles have returned home and have been welcomed with open arms and we have a feast to look forward to. And the Jews are no longer burdened with regulations and the need to perfectly adhere to the law in order to maintain their worth to God.

God's work through Jesus truly is remarkable. So much so, that I think we can forgive Paul's run-on sentences.

VI. Next Week

Next week we will dive into the third chapter of Ephesians and look deeper into how the church is one family, as we celebrate Mother's Day.

May your week be a blessed one,

-Pastor Brian