

## Message Eight

### **Growing into a Holy Temple in the Lord**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:5-6, 8, 18-22; 3:4-5; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:17

#### **I. Our being saved by grace, being raised up together with Christ and seated together with Him in the heavenlies, and having access to the Father are for the building up of the church, His Body, through growing into a holy temple in the Lord—Eph. 2:5-6, 8, 18, 21-22:**

- A. God enlivened us together when He enlivened the crucified Jesus; therefore, He made us alive together with Christ—v. 5.
- B. By grace we have been saved out of our wretched position of death into the marvelous realm of life—v. 5.
- C. Through God the Son, who is the Accomplisher, the means, and in God the Spirit, who is the Executor, the application, we have access unto God the Father, who is the Originator, the unique source—v. 18:
  - 1. Positionally, we were reconciled to God; experientially, we have access unto the Father—vv. 16, 18:
    - a. To be reconciled to God is to be saved; to have access unto the Father is to enjoy God.
    - b. When we contact God, we come to Him through Christ in the Spirit unto the Father; this is the Triune God in our experience and for our enjoyment—v. 18.
  - 2. The Father came to us through the Son in the Spirit, and now the Spirit brings us back to the Father through the Son; through this wonderful two-way traffic, we enjoy the dispensing of the Triune God—2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:16-17a.
  - 3. Through the Son is through the Triune God, in the Spirit is in the Triune God, and unto the Father is unto the Triune God; this is how we experience the Triune God and the way that we can be built up—2:18, 21-22.

#### **II. As believers in Christ and as members of the Body of Christ, we are “being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone”—v. 20:**

- A. Since the mystery of Christ, the church, has been revealed to the apostles, the revelation that they received is considered the foundation upon which the church is built—3:4-5; 2:20:
  - 1. This corresponds to the rock in Matthew 16:18, which is not only Christ Himself but also the revelation concerning Christ, on which He will build His church.
  - 2. We need to build the church upon the apostles and prophets—Eph. 2:20.
- B. In Ephesians 2:20 Christ is referred to as the cornerstone:
  - 1. Christ as the cornerstone joins together the Jewish believers and Gentile believers into a holy temple in the Lord—Psa. 118:22-26; Eph. 2:20-22.
  - 2. Christ, the cornerstone, is for the building up of the church in the New Testament age—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:5:
    - a. For the building up of the church as the temple of God, we need to experience Christ as the cornerstone—vv. 6-7.

- b. In Christ as the cornerstone, all the building is growing into a holy temple in the Lord—Eph. 2:20-22.
- 3. In God's New Testament economy Christ as the cornerstone, in His saving us (Acts 4:10-12), first makes us living stones for the building up of God's spiritual house (Matt. 16:18; John 1:42; 1 Pet. 2:4-7) and then, in the process of His transforming us (Rom. 12:2a; 2 Cor. 3:18), builds us up into a dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:19-22) so that He may carry out God's eternal economy for God's good pleasure (1:9; 3:9-11).

**III. In Christ, who is the cornerstone, "all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord"—2:21:**

- A. The phrase *all the building* denotes the universal building, the church throughout the universe—v. 21.
- B. The word *fitted* means being made suitable for the condition and situation of the building—v. 21:
  - 1. To be fitted together is for all parts of the frame of the Body to be fitted together to form one structure—4:16.
  - 2. In the building all the materials are fitted together; this is not merely to pile up but to build up—2:21.
- C. Since the building is living, it is growing because it is organic—1 Pet. 2:5:
  - 1. This building is growing into a holy temple, a holy dwelling place of God; this indicates that the holy temple is a living building—Eph. 2:21.
  - 2. Apparently, growth and building are separate things; actually, the building of the house is the growth of the Body—4:15-16.
  - 3. The building of the church as the temple, the house of God, is by the believers' growth in life—1 Cor. 3:6-7; Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:2.
  - 4. The Body grows with the growth of God—Col. 2:19:
    - a. The growth of the Body depends on the growth of God, the addition of God, the increase of God, within us—Eph. 4:16.
    - b. God gives the growth by giving Himself to us in a subjective way—3:16-17a:
      - (1) For God to give us growth actually means that He gives us Himself—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
      - (2) The more God is added to us, the more growth He gives—Eph. 4:15-16.
  - 5. The church grows by life dispensing, the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—2 Cor. 13:14:
    - a. The threefold God—God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is dispensing Himself into us as life and as our life supply—Eph. 3:16-17.
    - b. As long as the processed and consummated Triune God is dispensing Himself into us as life, we are nourished and we grow—4:15-16.
    - c. In the churches we should care for the genuine growth through the dispensing of the divine life—1 Cor. 3:6-7; 2 Pet. 1:5-7.
- D. All the building is becoming holy—Eph. 2:21:
  - 1. God makes us holy by imparting Himself, the Holy One, into our being so that our whole being may be permeated and saturated with His holy nature—1:4; 1 Thes. 5:23.
  - 2. For us, God's chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of God's divine nature and have our whole being permeated with God Himself; this makes our

being holy in God's nature and character, just like God Himself—2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22.

- E. All the building is growing into a temple in the Lord—Eph. 2:21:
1. The Greek word rendered “temple” in verse 21 means the sanctuary, the inner part of the temple.
  2. The church is the temple of God; as such, it is the sanctuary of the holy God, the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells—1 Cor. 3:16-17:
    - a. *The temple of God* in verse 16 refers to the believers collectively in a certain locality, whereas *the temple of God* in verse 17 refers to all the believers universally.
    - b. The unique spiritual temple of God in the universe has its expression in many localities on earth; each expression is the temple of God in that locality—Eph. 2:21-22.
  3. There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple—Rev. 21:22:
    - a. The holy city Jerusalem as a whole will be the Holy of Holies; hence, there will be no temple in it—v. 16.
    - b. This inner temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb—v. 22.
  4. The entire building of God's house, His sanctuary, is in Christ the Lord—Eph. 2:21.

**IV. Referring to the local saints in Ephesus, Paul says, “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit”—v. 22:**

- A. The temple and the dwelling place refer to two aspects of the same thing—vv. 21-22:
1. The temple is the place where God's people contact God, worship God, and hear His oracle—v. 21.
  2. The dwelling place of God is a place of rest; God rests in His dwelling place—v. 22.
  3. The temple and the dwelling place are not two distinct places; rather, they are two aspects, two functions or usages, of the same building.
- B. The word *also* in verse 22 indicates that the building in verse 21 is universal and that the building in verse 22 is local:
1. According to the context, in verse 21 the holy temple is universal, and in verse 22 the dwelling place of God is local.
  2. Universally, the church is uniquely one and is growing universally; locally, the church in a particular locality is also one, and the local saints are being built up together in their particular locality—vv. 21-22; 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16-17.
- C. The dwelling place of God is in our spirit—Eph. 2:22:
1. Verse 21 says that the holy temple is in the Lord, and verse 22, that the dwelling place of God is in spirit.
  2. This indicates that for the building of God's dwelling place, the Lord is one with our spirit, and our spirit is one with the Lord—1 Cor. 6:17.
  3. Our spirit is where the building of the dwelling place of God takes place.