

Fellow Citizens of the Living Temple – *Ephesians 2:19-22*

Introduction – Paul continues his discussion of the unity of the body of Christ with three more metaphors. Fellow citizens, members of God's household, and the living temple of God all describe in various ways the transformation of humanity in Jesus Christ. They reflect the powerful work of God to redeem a world of enemies and create a home for His presence and glory to reside on earth.

Immigration at its Finest (v19a) – Foreigners and aliens living in a country not their own long to become full citizens with all the rights and privileges granted. Until then, they often live as second class citizens. The kingdom of heaven solves this problem at the spiritual and global levels. The enmity between all races ends at the Cross as described in vv14-18. This is because all nations are of one blood (Acts 17:26) and there are no second class citizens in the kingdom of God (Gal 3:26-29). Gentiles used to be foreigners in a land with defined borders in a portion of the earth. But in Christ, those borders have been blown open to cover the whole earth. Our citizenship is in heaven because Christ is in heaven (Phil 3:20) and we are in Christ. But as citizens of heaven living upon the world reconciled to God through Christ, He is establishing His kingdom through His church upon this earth just as it is in heaven.

Members of God's Household (v19b) – Not only citizens of His kingdom, the gracious work of Christ draws us even closer and makes us family members. *"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one (Father),"* Hebrews tells us, *"...for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren"* (Heb 2:11). Because we are in Christ, the Father treats us exactly as He treats His Son – with the same infinite love of the Father. And it is as though Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, turns to you and says, "brother, let us go together and glorify *our* Father." Psalm 22:22, *"I will declare Your name to My brethren..."* was not prophesying that Christ would be a Jew. It was prophesying that Christ would be a brother to Jew and Gentile alike, all who find themselves in Him.

A Living, Growing Temple for God (vv20-22) – The Jews had the Temple in Jerusalem and the Ephesians had the temple of Diana (340' X 160' with 100 columns more than 55' high, the sacred image of Diana in the holy place and believed to have fallen from heaven). Therefore this metaphor is particularly and immediately helpful for the Jews and Gentiles at the church in Ephesus. But looking carefully, it is for us as well, for it is more than a metaphor; it is spiritual reality.

Foundations and Cornerstones – Jesus said He was the temple of God (John 2:19-21). Paul says here that Christ is the cornerstone, fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaiah (28:16, cf. 1 Pet 2:4-8). The cornerstone was the major structural part of ancient buildings, precisely laid, because every other part would be oriented to it. The cornerstone was the support, the orienter, and the unifier of the entire building. Why do religions, worldviews, nations, systems of men fail? It is because of the inadequacy of any other cornerstone.

The foundation stones are all directly oriented to the cornerstone and only after that is everything else built upon those foundations. The teachings of the apostles and prophets are those foundations.

Fitted Together – This verb refers to the careful joining of every component of a piece of a wall or building. Each one of us, by the Master's hand, are being fit into this temple and fit together as well – this is the work of God's sanctification of us. Personally, for each of us, this means that everything in our lives, our family, our work, our sufferings, our struggles, our victories, all of our relationships, are to be aligned to Jesus Christ and understood in light of Him, oriented to Him. And this is exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. We are being made perfectly to fit – and we will fit perfectly.

Growing – This temple is alive and growing. Remember, God is doing this and He is gathering His materials from a quarry of dead stones, dead in their trespasses and sins (2:1, 5). As it grows by means of the Holy Spirit, people living in hostility to God and with one another are brought into this living, growing temple. This is the purpose of the church, the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones. We are not called out from the world unto heaven (although our souls will go there for a time when we die). We are called out of the world and into the holy and heavenly temple which is on the earth and whose foundation, in principle, covers the earth. This temple is also the stone in Daniel's vision that grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth (Dan 2:35). It is the smallest seed in the garden that grows into the largest tree (Matt 13:32). It is the temple whose living waters flow out and become a river that cannot be crossed, healing even the waters of the great seas (Ezek 47). This is the knowledge of the glory of the Lord which will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).

A Dwelling Place of God in the Spirit – Having just celebrated Pentecost, we easily are reminded that the church is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. *"Dwelling place"* carries the idea of a permanent home; God is taking up permanent residence as Lord in the church, the vast spiritual body of the redeemed. This is the work of God. He takes dead stones, dead faith, dead people, dead religion, a dead world, and by Christ through a living faith, transforms all of this for Himself into a living temple.