

Measure the Temple!

Do dreams really have meanings?

Some of them, perhaps? All of them? Perhaps none of them?

In a recent Bible study, when we were discussing the prophetic, meaningful dreams and visions of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, I mentioned that, according to the scientific experts on such things, many or most dreams are merely what they term “resonance of neural circuits” – what a lay-person would call “random electricity on the brain.”

But for God’s people, are some of our dreams perhaps, at least sometimes, a kind of “nudge” from God to get us to shift our minds in a certain direction?

I ask this question, because a few weeks ago, I had a strange dream.

Have you ever noticed that, normally, we tend to totally forget most dreams – even vivid ones – very soon after we wake up? This is usually the case with me and my dreams. But this one was different. I remembered it hours and even days after waking. So I wrote down all the details that I could remember.

The well-known surrealist artist, Salvador Dali (1904-1989) used to do this kind of thing on purpose, for art’s sake. He was known to rig up a crude, but effective, alarm system so that, after his lunch each day when he dozed off in the Catalonian sunshine, his alarm would go off, waking him up; and he would immediately make notes of what he saw in his dream. He included some of these dream images in many of his more bizarre paintings.

The images of my own recent dream may well have just been random electricity on my brain. But maybe not. At the very least, they gave me a relevant subject for this pre-Passover sermon!

So here is my record of my dream:

I first remember some kind of sports activity – perhaps a church-related one; perhaps a Y.O.U. track and field meet from the Nineteen-eighties? Another person and I had to measure whatever was being thrown. Discus? Shot? Javelin? I don't know what it was.

But, as sometimes happens in dreams, the perceived location changed; and the next thing I remember, the other person and I were then measuring the inside of a building – a dim and unpleasant, brick-lined basement of a building, in which we found cluttered cubby-holes containing evidence of rubby-dubs making their home there.

For our measurements, we were using a measuring tape – but one that was way too short for our purposes. As with the “bed too short” allegory of Isaiah 28:20, this short tape-measure was very frustrating to me because it made it necessary for us to make multiple measurements, which needed to be added together. This made me even more frustrated because we had no paper or pencil with which to record our measurements, and my mental arithmetic skills being as poor as they are, I kept losing track of the total length!

So that was it! That was my dream! As with many dreams, this one had no happy, logical, sensible ending. I woke with that same feeling of frustration; but also wondering if there was perhaps a lesson in the dream; if it meant anything. Perhaps, I thought, it might have meant that there is something more that I should be doing that I have *not* been doing up to this point in my Christian sojourn. Was God perhaps trying to nudge me into thinking about something that I should have been thinking about; but had not been? If so, what *was* that something?

The main theme of my dream was that of *measurement*. And what do Christians and other Bible students think of when we hear the words “measurement” or “measure”? Don't we often think of the measuring of the temple? That is the train of thought that this dream led me into. So for this article, let us do a Bible study on this subject of the measuring of the temple. I believe that such a study is particularly appropriate for this time leading up to the Passover.

Ezekiel's Temple Measuring Prophecies

A study of the building of God's tent-tabernacle and later stone temples will make it obvious that many measurements were made in order to fulfill God's instructions as to their sizes and designs. In this regard, may I recommend an excellent and eye-opening book, first published in 1899, entitled "The Tabernacle – its Priests and Services" by William Brown, which goes into the fine, but very interesting and inspiring, detail of the design and building of God's tent-tabernacle.

Rather than going into these details of the physical tent-tabernacle and stone temples in this article, I would like to go into the spiritual and prophetic aspects of the measuring of God's temples.

There are quite a few different places where we could begin this study. I chose to begin in the fortieth chapter of the book of Ezekiel:

In the twenty-fifth year of our (*Judah's*) captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city (*Jerusalem*) was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there.

(Ezekiel 40:1)

It is interesting that God inspired this vision to take place during the final lead-up to the Passover – specifically on the tenth day of the month called Abib. This was the day on which God commanded the Passover lambs to be chosen and watched. This was the day that began the three days of the "beholding of the lambs" (Exodus 12:3-6; John 1:29, 36). Still in Ezekiel 40, continuing now in verses 2 and 3:

In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. He took me there, and behold, there was a man (*probably an angel*) whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

Bible scholar John Gill suggests that one of these measuring devices may have been used to measure broadly, and the other was to measure in detail.

Continuing in verse 4:

And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.”

Poor Ezekiel! I hope that, unlike me in my dream, he took a note-book and pencil along with him! There was so very much for him to remember and to pass on!

Verse 5:

Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man’s hand was a measuring rod six cubits long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod.

Men can argue about the modern views of the actual length of the Bible’s cubit; but most scholars agree that it is about eighteen inches. This would make this measuring rod nine feet long. This is an interesting snippet of information, but we do not need to get into that level of detail in this discussion. The main two details that I want to point out here are these: Firstly, that it was the temple that was being measured here. The Hebrew word for “temple” is “bayith.” Secondly, there was a whole lot of measuring going on; and God wanted His prophet Ezekiel to witness it and to record it all. On to verses 6 and 7:

Then he went to the gateway which faced east; and he went up its stairs and measured the threshold of the gateway, which was one rod wide, and the other threshold was one rod wide. Each gate chamber was one rod long and one rod wide; between the gate chambers was a space of five cubits; and the threshold of the gateway by the vestibule of the inside gate was one rod.

This measuring continues throughout this whole fortieth chapter. It is not necessary for us to read it all. As the Hebrew word “bayith” can also mean “house,” “tribe” and other words, we will jump down to verses 38 and 39, and just touch on a few points relevant to the fact that it is one of God’s temples that is being measured here:

There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering.

Subsequent verses also mention the priests, the Levites, the altar and the temple musicians. Then again, in verses 45 and 48, the temple is specified:

Then he said to me, “This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple... Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the doorposts of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side; and the width of the gateway was three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side.

This measuring continues on into Chapter 41. We will just pick out a few relevant verses for now:

Then he brought me into the sanctuary (*Hebrew “heykal” which can mean temple, palace, nave, hall*) and measured the doorposts, six cubits wide on one side and six cubits wide on the other side—the width of the tabernacle (*Hebrew “ohel” which can mean tent, dwelling, place, covering, home*)... He measured the length, twenty cubits; and the width, twenty cubits, beyond the sanctuary; (*heykal*) and he said to me, “This is the Most Holy Place”... He measured the length of the building behind it, facing the separating courtyard, with its galleries on the one side and on the other side, one hundred cubits, as well as the inner temple... (*heykal*)... and the porches of the court. (Ezekiel 41:1, 4, 15)

Most Bible scholars agree that the temple being described here was not the tent-tabernacle; nor was it Solomon's temple; nor the post-exilic rebuilding by Zerubbabel; nor that of Herod's later embellishments; but rather that it was a prophetic depiction of the future temple of the World Tomorrow. This makes a lot of sense, because God, through Ezekiel, later says of this same temple:

And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places." (Ezekiel 43:7)

At the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy, the house of Israel and its kings and other leaders will no longer be defiling God's holy name; nor will their kings and other leaders. We know also that, since the time of this prophecy, the Israelites and their kings certainly *have* defiled God's holy name and committed these other sins.

Other Temple Measuring Prophecies

Let us leave the book of Ezekiel now and move over to chapter eleven of the book of Revelation, where we read a similar prophecy regarding the subject of the measuring of the temple from the apostle John:

Revelation 11:

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:1-2)

We will come back to these verses later; but for now, just so that we can determine the end-time setting of this prophecy, let us take a quick peek at verses 3 and 4:

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

Please keep this in the back of your mind. There is an implication here that there might be a temple of some kind in existence in Jerusalem at the time prophesied here – the time of the ministry of the two witnesses, immediately prior to Christ’s return. This would fit in with Daniel 9:27 which foretells the termination of the sacrifice and oblation:

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

In order for them to cease, the sacrifices and oblations must first be reintroduced; and in order for the sacrifices to be reintroduced, a temple is a necessity. The reason the sacrifices and oblations ceased in 70AD was because the temple was destroyed.

We will come back to Revelation 11 later, but for now, let us move on and examine some other prophecies which tell us that, as well as the measuring rod or tape, a “plummet” or plumb line is necessary. For what purpose? To see if the building/temple is straight, plumb, perpendicular:

And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab... (II Kings 21:13)

Here is another relevant mention in Amos 7:7-8:

Thus He showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said: “Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.”

Here, we join the prophet Amos, as he sees the Lord holding a plumb-line in His hand, standing on a wall which, as Amos specifically notes, was built using a plumb-line. This might imply that this wall was originally built good and straight.

Then the Lord tells Amos that He is setting a plumb-line in the midst of His people Israel. Why? To give them a perfectly straight standard to line themselves up against. Can we also apply this standard to the New Testament Israel of God – His church (Galatians 6:16)? Of course! But what is that standard? God tells us through another prophet, Isaiah:

Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet... (Isaiah 28:17)

Please notice that God says here that it is He who retains the authority as to what His measuring line and plumb-line should symbolize. He clearly tells us here the interpretation of His spiritually symbolic measuring line and plumb line:

His measuring line represents true justice. The Hebrew word is “Mishpat” which, interestingly, can also mean *Measure!* It can also mean *judgment, right, law, lawful, order, worthy, and discretion.*

God's plumb-line represents true righteousness. The Hebrew word is "Tsedawkaw" which can also mean *justice, right* and *righteous acts*.

Please keep these definitions in the back of your mind, as we will come back to them later. But for now, let us move on to another prophet's mention of the Measuring of the Temple – and this is a very interesting one:

**For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."
(Zechariah 4:10)**

The question, "Who has despised the day of small things?" is well known to all Bible students. Haven't you ever wondered about what "the small things" refer to, and how this question is relevant to the plumb-line that Zerubbabel is carrying?

The Targum (which is the ancient Aramaic translation of the Bible) paraphrases this question as: "For who is he that despises this day, because the building is small?" This might refer to the size of "the second temple" that God was rebuilding through Zerubbabel. It was small and perhaps inferior in comparison to Solomon's temple (See Haggai 2:2-3).

Zechariah 4:10 also mentions "these seven" who rejoice to see that Zerubbabel came with a plumb-line? These seven *what?* Let us go back to the beginning of the chapter to see:

Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." (Zechariah 4:1-3)

So "these seven" in verse 10 is referring to these seven lamps and the seven pipes. This seems to be referring to the lamp-stand that was manufactured for temple use. But remember that "these seven" have the ability to rejoice; so they must represent something much more than just an inanimate lamp-stand.

I do not want to get into too much detail on the symbolism of this lampstand in this article. It would make a good Bible study on its own. But I would like to do is to tie it in with the end-time temple and the measurement of it.

Let us continue in verse 4 to 9:

So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?” Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone *(of the temple)* with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”’” Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you...

This clinches the fact that God’s temple is again being referred to here. Let’s repeat verse 10 and continue through verse 14:

For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Then I answered and said to him, “What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” And I further answered and said to him, “What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?” Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord. So he said, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.”

And what are the two olive trees to the right and left of the lampstand? What are these two olive branches? Who are these two anointed ones who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth? They are mentioned again and identified in more detail in Revelation 11:3-4:

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

The Zechariah 4 prophecy dovetails perfectly with the ones we read in Revelation 11 and Revelation 1. But again, I do not want to get too far onto the secondary topic of the lampstand and off our main topic of Measuring the Temple. But what I am trying to get at here is that all three prophecies are referring to the same temple measurements; also that the reference to the two witnesses in Revelation clearly shows the end-time setting.

God and His People are the Ultimate Temple

Yes, God had His tent-tabernacles and His stone temples throughout many eras of what we call “Bible times”; and it appears that there might also be physical temples at the end-time and even during the Millennium. But, important as they are, these physical temples are merely physical symbols of their spiritual counterparts. There may be more, but I count three spiritual temples:

- i) God’s throne in heaven – right now,
- ii) The people of God’s true church, collectively – right now,
- iii) God the Father, Jesus Christ and the resurrected saints – in the World Tomorrow. Maybe during the Millennium, but definitely in the eternity following it.

Let us look at a few scriptures which support the amazing concept of these spiritual temples. First of all, from Jesus Himself, telling the Jews that, even in His human form, He was the true temple of God:

Jesus answered and said unto them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then said the Jews, “Forty six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:19-21)

Being totally unaware that this prophecy would be fulfilled within a few days from that time, the Jews used this against Him in their accusations which were designed to have Him put to death. They also mocked Him with His own words as He hung on the stake:

We heard him say, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.” (Mark 14:58)

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" (Mark 15:29-30)

Yes. Jesus clearly declared that He was (and still is) the temple of God. What did His apostle Paul say on this subject? Lots! Let us just look at a few instances:

**Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.
(I Corinthians 3:16-17)**

Paul repeats himself here – for emphasis – that the people of God’s true church are, collectively, the temple of God. He also warns anyone against defiling God’s temple. How can we defile God’s temple? What did he mean by this? Paul comes back to it in chapter 6:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!.. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (I Corinthians 6:15, 18-20)

This can be a warning against spiritual immorality – idolatry – as well as physical. In his second letter to God’s church in Corinth, Paul reminds them of what he had pointed out in his first:

**And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”
(II Corinthians 6:16)**

Paul clearly sent this message to the church members in Corinth. We will come back to this repeated warning again later in this article. But was it only the Corinthian brethren who made up the spiritual temple of God? Of course not! Paul wrote this to God's church in Ephesus:

**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.
(Ephesians 2:19)**

The word "household" here is translated from the Greek word "oikeios."

The English "household" is quite an acceptable translation; but there seems to be a "double entendre" here. As well as implying the God Family membership aspect, the word can also be translated "house" as in a building. This second intended meaning becomes clear as we continue in verses 20 to 22:

... having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul's references in his letters to the Corinthians might lead us to believe that God's people were a complete temple building by that time of his writing. But this mention to the Ephesus congregation strongly implies that they were – and by extension we are – still in the building process. Please notice that Paul says that we "are growing into a holy temple" and that we "are being built."

A second implication in Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that we are all individual parts of the temple building. Jesus Christ certainly agrees with this concept. After all, He inspired Paul's statement. But He also countersigns it through the words He commanded the apostle John to record – that we are all pillars in God's temple:

**He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.
(Revelation 3:12)**

In Galatians 2:9, Paul recognized his fellow-apostles, James, Cephas (Peter) and John as being spiritual pillars. Also, in his first letter to young Timothy, he writes:

I Timothy 3:15:

But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Let us take a quick look at these two words “ground” and “pillar.”

- “Ground” is a poor translation of the Greek word “hedraioma.” It actually means a stay, prop or support.
- The Greek word for “pillar” is “stulos” which is derived from “stuo” which means to stiffen. It refers to a column, prop or support.

It is important that the pillars of any building, but especially those of God’s holy temple, must be stiff, rigid, straight and strong; also that they must be of an adequate circumference. Hence, we can see the need for an accurate measuring rod or line to measure the size, and the necessity for a plumb line to make sure that the pillars and other parts of the temple structure are straight and true. We will come back to this.

Measuring Ourselves Only?

Are we actively measuring our own pillars? Our own individual parts of God's temple? As we draw close to the Passover, we know that we are to put a high priority on examining ourselves:

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (I Corinthians 11:28)

Yes, this is especially important prior to each Passover; but also, it is necessary on a regular, ongoing basis throughout the year:

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified. (II Corinthians 13:5)

Yes, we are to measure our own personal parts and pillars of the temple. But does this mean that we are not to measure our neighbouring pillars in order to see if they measure up and are straight? Is it wrong to do so? Please consider this:

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:1-2)

Please notice that it was John – a human being – who was given the commandment to measure God's temple. Notice also that John was not given authority to measure anything or anyone outside the temple itself – only the temple, the altar and those who worship there. Could this, perhaps be a repetition of the scripture that tells us to righteously judge the people of the church – but not those of the world outside? Here it is:

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person. (I Corinthians 5:11-13)

What was Paul referring to here? Let us go back to the beginning of the chapter. Here are verses 1 to 3:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

The apostle Paul certainly *did* exercise righteous judgment regarding the wrong-doing that was going on in the Corinthian church – not only the terrible sin of gross immorality; but also the leaders’ and members’ acceptance of it. By God’s authority, Paul took these men and women who claimed to be Corinthian pillars and stones of God’s spiritual temple, and he lined them up beside the Standard – Jesus Christ; he measured them with Jesus’ measuring rod and plumb-line, and he found them requiring more work – more chiseling – before they could be effectively used as pillars.

As mentioned earlier, in his second epistle to them, in the same set of scriptures in which Paul commanded the Corinthians to examine themselves apart from the pre-Passover context, he re-warned them that he would come and judge them again if it became necessary:

I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare. (II Corinthians 13:2)

Is proper, righteous judgment of our fellow Christians OK in certain circumstances? Yes, it is. In addition to the scriptures already quoted, our Lord Jesus Christ clearly said so in Matthew 7:16 and 20, Luke 6:44 and John 7:24.

When we consider the physical symbols, we will see that there is good reason for the proper measurement – righteous judgment – of our neighbouring pillars. What would happen in God’s physical temple if *our* pillar was the right height, width and circumference in order to carry the load placed upon us; but some of our neighbour pillars were not? What if some of them were too long or too short? Or what if their circumference was too small? Or what if they were made from inferior, weak stone like the crumbly Tufa stone found in much of Italy? Not only would the building *look* very odd – it would be unwieldy and might be in danger of falling.

Mismatched pillars attempting to bear the load of God's temple building would be like different kinds of animals being yoked together to pull a plough or a cart (I will happily share Paul's mixing of metaphors in this case):

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (II Corinthians 6:14-16)

But what if we become aware of some fellow church members or ministers claiming to be temple pillars; but who are involved in or supporting some of these things? What are we to do? God tells us, through Paul, repeating from I Corinthians 5:13, quoted earlier:

But those who are outside (*i.e. outside God's church*) God judges. Therefore "Put away from yourselves the evil person."

But what if we do not have authority to put that evil person away from our fellowship? What if that person's actions are approved or supported by the leadership of that church group? What do we do then? Back to II Corinthians 6, we will continue in verses 17 and 18:

Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," says the LORD Almighty.

If we are unable to put the evil person away from ourselves, then we must put ourselves away from the evil person. God knows that such separation would be painful for us; but He commanded it as a necessity, nevertheless.

Sure Foundation

In a few weeks time, my wife, Tricia, and I hope to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy. From its very beginning, this famous tower suffered from a design flaw. It began to sink very early in its life – after construction had progressed only to the third floor in 1178. This was due to a mere three-metre (nine foot) foundation, set in weak, unstable subsoil.

The foundation of God's temple cannot – must not – be flawed. It must be straight, strong and perfect. So let us ask the question, *Is* the foundation solid? Is it perfect? The short answer is, Yes, it is:

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house... *(and what house is there greater than God's temple?)*... there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. (II Timothy 2:19-21)

These “vessels” might refer to all of the things that make up a house, a household or, in this case, a temple. The list would include the building materials, yes; but also the utensils that are in daily use in the house. And high quality is mandatory. Would inferior pieces of wood be acceptable? Of course not! They might be warped, thus causing the building to be out of alignment.

Following this sub-topic, let us go back to I Corinthians 3, where we were earlier:

**Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.
(I Corinthians 3:8-9)**

Here, Paul was just coming to the end of an agricultural analogy; but at the end of verse 9, with the words, “you are God's building,” he changes to begin a new analogy; that of a building project.

Paul's Greek word for "building" here is "oikodomay" which can also mean *an edifice, edification, the act of building up, or of promoting another's growth*. Continuing in verses 10 through 15:

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work (*i.e. building work*), of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

So any part that we may have in this building project must be of the very highest quality. As with God's tent-tabernacle and His stone temples, only the best will do. Inferior quality building materials are totally unacceptable and must be rejected.

Just what is this building that God, through Paul, is referring to here? He clearly tells us in verses 16 and 17:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Of course, Paul is referring to the holy, spiritual temple of God – collectively the people of His church. While on this sub-topic of quality building on Christ's quality foundation, let us go back to Ephesians 2, beginning with verse 19:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Paul had a great way of transitioning from one sub-topic to another – sometimes using word-play. Here, pivoting on the word "household" (Greek "oikeios"), he makes the transition from his sub-topic of our membership in the Family and household of God over to his related sub-topic of the house itself – the building – the temple. Continuing in verses 20 to 22:

Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Here is that foundation again. The same one? Yes, Jesus Christ, the Rock, being the main corner foundation stone, supported by the other main foundation stones – His faithful apostles and prophets. Highest quality to start with on the very basic level? You bet!

What about the subsequent layers of stones – those that represented the various eras of the church of God throughout the centuries? Were they of the highest quality? Of course they were! If they weren't, God would have rejected them. What about the current layer of church-stones – *us*? Are we of the highest quality? Brethren, we must be! If we are not, then we will be rejected. We must strive to “become perfect” just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:48. If we are doing our level best, using the Holy Spirit that He has put within us, to become perfect quality stones and pillars, He promises to fill in and make up for any gaps in our perfection (II Corinthians 12:9-10; 13:9-11; Philippians 4:19).

This foundation, the holy city and the eternal temple which the foundation undergirds – is it something new? Something New Testament? No!

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents (*flimsy, temporary tents*) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the (*Rock solid*) city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)

Abraham saw the Holy City thousands of years in advance; but did he get to live in it? Verse 13 tells us “No”:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Through faith they as good as had them. But not quite. What was it that Abraham and the other patriarchs saw and inherited, but still have not yet received?

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:14)

This agrees with Ephesians 2:20 (which we read earlier) in that the secondary foundations are made up of Jesus' apostles and prophets. The primary foundation stone – the head of the corner is Jesus Christ Himself. This is important. It is mentioned over and over again. God inspired the psalmist to declare it first in Psalm 118:22. Jesus quoted it in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17. The apostle Peter quoted it in Acts 4:11 and again in I Peter 2:7. Back in Revelation 21, verse 19:

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald... etc., etc.

Our pillars must be built on that right, Rock-solid foundation; that of Christ, His apostles and prophets. But why? Jesus gives the answer in Luke 6:47-49:

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation (*like those builders of the leaning tower of Pisa*), against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

We must align ourselves with Jesus' straightness and uprightness. We must measure ourselves – not against the Imperial standard of inches and feet, or the Metric standard of metres and centimetres – but against the pure and holy standard of Jesus Christ:

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:13)

Final Measurements and the Ultimate Temple

Back in Revelation 11, once again, we see that John was commanded to measure the temple, etc.:

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.” (Verse 1)

The ensuing verses reveal that the time setting of this measuring appears to be at the time of the Two Witnesses, immediately prior to Christ’s return. Then ten chapters later in chapter 21 – a thousand year Millennium has gone by. What do we see? We see more measuring taking place – an angel measuring the holy city, its gates and its wall:

And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. (Revelation 21:15-17)

But please notice that we do not see this angel measuring the temple. In fact, we do not see a temple at all! Why not? We are told in verse 22:

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

No more measuring of the temple will be required. All will be plumb, straight and of perfect measure, relative to God’s perfect standard of measurement. All will be one. God’s people will at last be in 100% unity and perfection with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, and with each other. All will be perfect. All imperfections will have been negated – as verses 8 and 27 tell us – swiftly and mercifully neutralized by fire:

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death... But there shall by no means enter it (*the Holy City*) anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

But we are not there yet. We still have some way to go. So we must keep on with our measuring of God's temple. Yes, in our pre-Passover self-examination; but also on an ongoing, daily basis.

Arise! And measure the temple!

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