

Ephesians 2:19-22

The Church as a Kingdom, a Family and a Temple

Introduction

Having explained how only the Gospel can bring men together in any real depth and power, Paul now goes on to tell us more about the privileges and responsibilities as people of God. This epistle has some wonderful pictures of the Church. He has already described it as the Body of Christ of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:23). And at the end of the epistle he uses the picture of the Bride of Christ, with Christ as the bridegroom (Ephesians 5:23).

Now three other pictures of the Church (i) the Kingdom of God and believers are citizens of it, (ii) the Family or Household of God and believers are members, (iii) the Temple in which God dwells and believers are living stones. Very important to realize who we are, to learn the glories and privileges of being God's people, to know our high calling and realize what we possess. Solves many problems in the Christian Church if Christians realize these things. See trials and problems in very different way if we did. The New Testament epistles constantly urge us to see ourselves as we are in Christ, to see what we have and how we should live.

The Church as the Kingdom of God

No longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people (Ephesians 2:19), i.e. the people of God, those in Christ, are in God's Kingdom, are no longer living on a passport, they have a birth certificate. They belong. God has established new international country ruled by God. Replaced the Old Testament people of Israel as His special people, and Jews and Gentiles belong to it on equal terms. Citizens are free and secure. No longer have rootless life as they did outside of Christ. But have a stability and sense of belonging as part of God's new people.

A Kingdom that cannot be shaken and that will have no end. And if we are saved by God's grace and submitted to Christ's kingship, we are citizens in the kingdom. Important to realize we are part of people of God, a very distinct grouping. The Christian is taken out of the world. **Rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves** (Colossians 1:13). Separated people, not like others, found all over the world in many nations.

This does not mean we can adopt a superior 'better than you' attitude. But we are different, and meant to be different c.f. a Scotsman is never more conscious that he is a Scotsman than when he lives in England! So with a Christian. Common allegiance to a ruler, to laws, way of life and to one another – a special bond with others in the same kingdom.

Brought us many privileges. We are under the rule of the one who is the king of kings. Our true home is heaven. Only pilgrims and strangers down here. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him. Right of access to ear of the King who rules universe

and can plead our cause, be sure of His protection and resources available. Men of God, when hard pressed, are sure of that protection. **The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe** (Proverbs 18:10). **The Lord is a stronghold in times of trouble** (Psalms 9:9). **If God is for us, who can be against us** (Romans 8:31). Cannot get more security than that, or be in safer place than that.

Then with the privileges come the responsibilities of citizenship in kingdom. Live as members of the kingdom. Represent our kingdom and country among men. They will judge the kingdom by the lives of its citizens. We are in the world but not of it. Different laws and principles govern our lives and that should be evident. **Be holy, because I am holy** (1 Peter 1:16). **Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ** (Philippians 1:27). We should be concerned with the defence of the kingdom: **Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you** (1 Peter 3:15). And we should be concerned to see the confines of the kingdom spread and expand, and hence we should pray **Thy kingdom come**.

Members of the family of God

Members of God's household. Children in God's family. Not there originally, but adopted by His grace into the family. No universal fatherhood of God – though widely believed and constantly preached. **Sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus** (Galatians 3:26). Once we are accepted in Christ, we become brothers and sisters in God's family. "Brethren", i.e. brothers and sisters, is commonest word for Christians in the New Testament. Suggests close relationship, affection, care, support.

The head of the family is the Father, who cares. Described in the Sermon on the Mount – He who knows all that we need – food, clothing and all daily concerns, therefore we do not need to worry like everyone else does. God's loving interest in each one of us was shown in Christ's ministry. Despite the crowds who thronged Him, He always had time for the individual – Zacchaeus, the widow who lost her only son, the woman who was a sinner, the blind man.

Amazing that the God who made everything from nothing, controls all, from eternity to eternity, to whom the nations are a drop in the bucket – He is our Father, interested and concerned. How we need to live as sons and not servants, and rob ourselves of privileges. God has a personal interest. Never too small or unimportant that we are forgotten.

*"O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear"*

What about the responsibilities of family membership. To show forth the family likeness. Behaviour of the child should reflect the teaching of the home. The child proclaims the parent. Hence **Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven** (Matthew 5:16). So next time you are in doubt about the action we should take, simply ask "Is that sort of thing worthy of the son of such a father? Is it consistent with family honour and standards? Is it worthy of the Father I represent before men?"

Stones in the Temple of God

Now the Church is likened to a building, especially a Temple. There had been a Temple – Solomon's, Zerubbabel's and finally Herod's – for 1000 years, and it was the focal point of Israel's worship. Here God was present and manifested Himself (Exodus 40:34f; 1 Kings 8). Now the new people of God are to have a temple and they themselves are to be the temple where God dwelt. Both individual Christian is a Temple, because **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19), and the Church as a whole is a temple, because **you yourselves (plural) are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you** (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

Then the apostle gives us details of this temple - foundation and cornerstone, structure of its individual stones, and whole purpose behind the temple. Firstly there is a foundation. Nothing is more important than a solid stable foundation. **The foundation of the apostles and prophets** – two groups with teaching role in the early Church. The apostles were inspired teachers, organs of divine revelation, speaking with God's authority. They were especially called and chosen, and consisted of the Twelve plus Paul and James. The teachers (prophets) were associated with the apostles. Teachers had special revelation, direct message from God. The order suggests New Testament prophets (though some also include Old Testament prophets).

In practical terms, the Church was built on New Testament scriptures. This was the Church's foundation documents. As a foundation is laid once for all, so the New Testament scriptures and their truth cannot be changed or added to or modified by people today. The Church stands or falls by loyal dependence on foundation truths.

Our doctrinal basis is an expression of these foundation truths, and in a day when the call is to unite with all and sundry, and very often Christian truth is vaguely defined, our position regarding unity must be based on adherence to these foundation truths. Never start with unity. Always start with truth. Else could end up with false and spurious unity.

Then there is the cornerstone, which is part of the foundation. Helps to hold building steady and keeps it in line. Binds the whole structure together. It is at the corner and everything is supported by it and welds all together. Jerusalem Temple had massive cornerstones. Archeologists have found one from the southern wall of the temple, which is almost 40 feet long.

In the new temple, Christ is the chief cornerstone. He is **the stone the builders rejected** which **has become the capstone** (Mark 12:10). As the cornerstone, the Lord unites the church and causes it to grow. Unless believers are securely united to Christ, the church's unity will disintegrate and there will be no more growth. No unity or growth apart from Him. It is our relationship to Him and dependence on Him that matters. He is central and He is vital. Do I know Him? Am I in a vital relationship with Him?

Then the structure is made up of individual stones. **In Him you too are being built together.** Believers are the individual stones. Gradually taken and added. God lays one living stone on another and so the walls are gradually being built. Not yet

complete till the day of the Lord. In each generation God quarries, chooses and places stones in right place, having shaped, chipped and chiselled them.

So the temple with its foundation, cornerstone and growing walls is being built. Why? **To become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.** To be God's dwelling place, or home, on earth. God does not manifest Himself in manmade temple but in His people.

Is God seen in us? Do we give the impression to outsiders that we are the dwelling place of God? When visitors come to this church, do they get the impression that God is here, or is it just a building full of religious people going through various pious motions?

Conclusion

Glorious picture of church. Kingdom ruled by the king of kings. Family belonging to loving heavenly father. Growing temple where God manifests Himself. Either in or outside this people of God. The test is relationship to Christ. If you belong to Him, you are in His kingdom, family and temple. No intermediate position.

Do you belong to God's people? Appearance only or really belong? Real and living interest in Christ? Know in heart the truths spoken of Sunday by Sunday? Or all remote and distant and foreign? Does His Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?