

Sunday 17th January 2010. 10.30am.
BOB x03. (JTH)

READ PSALM 127: 1, 2. (Building with JUSTICE)

2010 BOB: Building, Outreach, Belonging.

These 3 key aspects of following God and seeking to be ready for God to use us each day IN HIS WORK OF BUILDING the new heaven and earth and bringing in his Kingdom rule. God calls us to work together with him and one another (2C6:1). **Paul when he writes to the Ephesian Christians talks about a plan that was drawn and laid before the foundation of the World – before creation itself.**

Foundation of Jesus: 1 Corinthians 3: 11. (Cornerstone of this building here 1869)

Jesus declared that he would build his Church and the gates of hades (death) would not stand against it. (Matthew 16: 18). The foundation stone of the Church is believing faith in Jesus AND the foundation of all that God is doing goes back a lot further than the foundation of the Christian Church just 2,000 years ago.

Human beings have built many things throughout their history – what we may ask remains of our efforts?

Some of the earliest structures built are temples/ shrines to worship “god in his house”. In the Bible the first such structure mentioned is the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11: 4*). After the Hebrews “grew” from being a nomadic people to being a nation of Israel a central shrine was thought to be a necessity – a gathering point and a symbol of unity in the worship of God. (So shrines, and then a moving tabernacle, become a temple – King David wanted God to have a house like him! (*2 Sam 7: 2*).

But none of the Temples built remain! Soloman’s Temple (no longer visible above ground), Ezekiel’s temple (never built), The Second Temple (which stood 500 years) – Georgina spoke about last week: Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Herod’s Temple (begun in 19BC, finished in AD64, levelled by the Romans in AD70).

Jesus and “The Temple”! The later was the Temple that Jesus taught in but he was also outraged by The Temple because of what it had become as a building and system: it was a place of injustice, exploitation and idolatry – *a den of thieves rather than a place of prayer for all nations*. He called it *the house of God* (*John 2: 16; Matt 12: 4*) but also said that:

- He was greater than the Temple (*Matt 12: 6*)
- the Temple hid Israel’s spiritual barrenness (*Mark 11: 12 – 26*)
- the Temple would be torn down (*Mark 14: 58; 15: 29*) and he would build another one:

Jesus spoke about building Another Temple: he described how his body (temple) would be destroyed but he would raise it in 3 days. (Resurrection). So Jesus used the metaphor of the human body as a temple for God to live in by his Spirit and of course the Resurrection/ messianic community of the Church as the New Temple for God to live with human beings. (*Matt 18: 20; John 14: 23*) Paul, the Writer to the Hebrews, and John further wrote on this: *see Hebrews 3: 1 – 6; 12:23; Revelation 21: 22.*

Paul in Corinthians uses the term “Temple of Holy Spirit” to relate to:

- the lives of individual followers of Jesus, body temple of Holy Spirit – to live holy lives – *1 Corinthians 6: 19*
- the Church, living stones, built together as a dwelling for God with humanity. The quality of each person’s work counts *1 Corinthians 3: 16 – 17*.

So the “temple” in Christian thought relates to our lives in this material world but on the larger metaphorical scale to building a spiritual temple for God to dwell with humanity and for his glory to reside. The temple is our relationship together with God.

Jesus is building this, he is making everything new, he is building a new people with whom he is in special relationship....he is not building on his own...he calls us to build with him...

What are the ways we build and using what principles?

We understand I hope that it is the **person of Jesus** that gives us unity and also the **purpose of building the Kingdom** that unites us **but the way that we build is crucial.** What we build with will determine whether the building lasts! What does it mean to be a Holy Temple?

READ Psalm 127: 1, 2 again. We are to build with the values of JUSTICE!

Human efforts are vain (empty – the opposite of Shalom) without God.

In Hebrew “*to build a house*” means either:

- to construct a house,
- to run a household including raising a family. So here it could mean “temple” or “family/dynasty”.
- “House” can also serve as a metaphor for an administrative leadership with justice.

V2. Hard work is not being knocked here – but anxious, frenetic ceaseless involvement is useless. God will provide the needs of those he loves – he doesn’t sleep.

We need to be working with God, as he directs and doing it his way – in this case with justice.

Fair treatment, honesty, transparency, and correcting & challenging injustice.

It is God’s cry through his prophet **Micah** that God requires us to: *act justly, to love mercy and to walk in humble fellowship with God (Micah 6: 8).*

Last week Georgina took us to the account of **Nehemiah** gathering the exiles to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, **Ezra** gathering people to set the Temple in order and we see that God challenged them about the quality of their building – not whether the material stones were set straight and the doors well hung – but rather the way they were building their community.

The poorest were in great debt to the wealthiest and having to pawn their children into slavery. God required the richest of his people to Cancel the debt of the poorest who were being oppressed. *Nehemiah 5: 13.* The leaders were told if they didn’t do this God would shake them out! They promised: they said *Amen! And praised the LORD.*

The way we build counts! To be a holy temple where God dwells we must build with justice. This is the building God will accept and that will remain.