

## 6. Learning How the Lord Is Building His Church

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God has worked in our lives. We saw that God planned even before the creation to create us for good works. It is only possible to do those good works after we have placed our faith in Christ because the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to carry out good works. In our topic today, we are going to see how the Lord is building His church so that it includes both Jews and Gentiles.

In Ephesians 2:14-16, we read, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” We see in these verses that it is Christ Himself who is our peace. In the temple courtyard, in Jerusalem, the Jews had a wall that divided the courtyard into two parts. One part was called the court of the Gentiles. The other part, the Gentiles were not allowed to enter. As a result, this was a wall of separation that separated the Jews and the Gentiles.

Here, we see that Christ is the One who broke down the wall that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In the church, we have become one whether we are Jews or Gentiles. The early church asked the Holy Spirit for guidance about whether Gentiles had to follow the ceremonial laws of the Jews when they became Christians. After much prayer and discussion, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem wrote to the Gentiles in Acts 15:28-29, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” These four things came from the first nine chapters of Genesis so are universal principles that applied to all people and had nothing to do with the Jewish law.

Through His death on the cross, Christ removed this barrier that had separated the Gentiles from the Jews from the time that the Law was given to Moses. By His death, Christ made Jews and Gentiles one new man in the body of Christ, the church. The word that is translated “new” speaks of something that is new in kind because there has never been anything like it before. This word is used in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where we read, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We are new creations as Christians because we are made something that we could never be before Christ came into our lives. The same word is also used in Ephesians 4:24 where we are told, “And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Christ gave us a new nature which we could not have without Christ.

As a result, we now have peace with God and with one another. We also see that when we place our faith in Christ, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are reconciled to God and made one body. Christ has made us one through the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, “Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of

reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The word “reconcile” means *to bring back to a former state of harmony*. Once, we were separated from God and each other by sin. Now, we are brought back into harmony through the blood of Christ. Christ put to death the cause of enmity or hatred when He defeated sin. That is why we can be one.

We go on to read in Ephesians 2:17-18, “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Christ came to this earth both to announce this peace and to make this peace possible by His death and resurrection. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Christ explained to His disciples that this message of peace was for all people. Christ said in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” Then, He said in Acts 1:8, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” Christ wants us to take this message of peace to the end of the earth.

The result of this message of peace is that whether we are Jews or Gentiles we both have the same access to the Father. This access to the Father is by the Holy Spirit who is placed in our lives at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:14-17 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Every Christian is a child of God and has access to the Father by the Holy Spirit.

Because we have this free access to the Father, Ephesians 2:19-22 says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 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, we see that as Christians, we are no longer strangers and foreigners to one another once we become Christians. Instead, three different words are used to describe our relationship. First, we are fellow citizens, because Philippians 3:20 says that our citizenship is in heaven. Second, we become fellow saints with those who are already saints. Third, we become members of the household of God. We are one family.

We see that this spiritual family is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. In Acts 1:21-22, we read, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Here, we see that the apostles are part of our foundation because they gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Then, 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning

star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Here, we see that the prophets gave us the written Word of God. That is why the apostles and prophets are called the foundation.

However, the most important part of the foundation is the chief cornerstone because everything is measured from that cornerstone. That is why Christ is called the chief cornerstone. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 1 Peter 2:5-6 where we read, “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’” This verse is quoted from Psalm 118:22-23 where we read, “The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes.” Christ is the chief cornerstone by which we must measure our lives.

It is important to understand that Christ is the standard by which He is building the church. He is the One who holds us as Jews and Gentiles closely together and makes us one in the church. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, we read, “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.’” Here, we are reminded that all true believers both Jews and Gentiles are the temple of God and that God is living both with us and within us. All true believers become a part of the building which the Lord is building as He builds the church.

We also see why it is the plan of God to build us together as Jews and Gentiles. We see that God has built us together as a permanent dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, we read, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom 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.” As Christians, every one of us has the Holy Spirit living within our lives. The temple in the Old Testament and during the time of Christ was a temporary building which was eventually destroyed. However, we see here that our bodies as Christians are the permanent temple of the Holy Spirit. That means that everywhere we go as Christians, the temple of God is present.

We want to help both our physical and spiritual children understand that the Lord is building His church and that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit whether we are Jews or Gentiles. That is why we want to show them by our own example the importance of modeling Christ in both our body and in our spirit by the lives that we live so that others can see Christ in us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how the Lord is building His church in their lives.