

# The spiritual temple

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Part of that prayer that we read of Solomon says the following.! As you're probably aware the temple was very important in Jewish worship.

And so it's natural that Jesus himself as well as Paul and John in the passages we read and in others use temple imagery in their teaching. Now in order to get our heads around this, when I started it I thought this was maybe a bit more complicated than I'd realised.

So in order to as it were get our heads around it I'd like to first of all think a bit about the Old Testament temple and the concept of a temple generally.

And then we can get some handle perhaps on what Paul and John mean in these temple passages and in particular how they would apply to us. So this is the way I want to handle it.

First of all I want to ask three questions although the first one is a kind of compound question. The first thing is what is a temple and why would you particularly want to build one? The second is what is the important design brief for a temple?

[ 1 : 38 ] What is it that's, you know, if you're designing a temple what's the main thing you have to think about? And the third thing is what are you going to build it out of? Because that's the other important thing you have to think about of course.

If you're building any building you've got to get the right construction materials otherwise it ain't going to stay up. So we'll think about those three questions and then by way of application I called it the church a new concept in temple design.

I hope that doesn't sound too flippant but I thought it is what it is. The church is a new concept in temple design. And so we'll look at that. And then actually I haven't put it on the slide here but just to finish we'll look at the Bible's last word on temples because this isn't quite the last word on temples actually.

But we'll look at that just to finish. So first of all what is a temple? Well that's easy enough to answer in one sense. A temple is a house for a god or a goddess.

In the Old Testament there are actually two Hebrew words that are translated temple. One of them is baith which is simply the ordinary everyday word for a house.

[ 2 : 52 ] It's the word you use to describe your own house. And in fact if you look at some of the older translations like the authorized version they just translate it as house. They don't call it a temple at all. They just call it a house of the Lord or a house of Baal or whatever.

The other word that's used sometimes is keikal which appears to have something of the meaning of a slightly grander house with a courtyard or perhaps a palace. It's interesting that this is the word that's used in 1 Samuel in Samuel's early days when of course it talks about the temple in translation.

But of course the actual temple hadn't been built yet. There was a house in Shiloh which may well have just been Eli's own house. We don't know but that's where Samuel spent his early years.

And that is described there as keikal. Mostly in the historical books the word baith is used with the keikal just referring perhaps to the courtyard of the temple or something like that.

But in the later prophets they tend to talk about keikal. So the words are pretty well interchangeable and they both basically mean a house. And the context tells you whether you're talking about a house or the king's palace or whether you're talking about an actual temple.

[ 4 : 14 ] A temple is a house for a god or a goddess. But there of course is the problem. Gods and goddesses don't naturally live in houses.

Certainly not those built by humans. So why do you build a temple? Well it's not really so much for the god's benefit is it?

It's for your own. You build a temple because you want to ensure the presence of your god. To constrain if you like your goddess to a time and place.

So how are you going to do that? You saw we're all building a building. But how do you assure that your god or goddess takes up residence there?

Well one popular method that was popular in the ancient world and it's fun places it's still popular today. Is to have an image of the god. An idol in other words. Now actually an idol does offer certain advantages.

[ 5 : 12 ] As Isaiah and Jeremiah both point out. We didn't look it up. But they both point out when talking about idols. An idol has the advantage you can nail it down. In some ways you're sort of making sure that your god stays put.

Now of course in theory. There's a distinction between the god himself and the idol isn't there? I mean I suppose that the priests of Diana in Ephesus didn't really believe that Diana was restricted to their temple.

But in practice the point is pretty well moot. Basically where your idol is there your god is. And so you ensure that your god stays within the temple, within the city where you want him to be.

And you know he's the god of your land perhaps. And you want to make sure he stays there. And you can if you have an idol. Of course sometimes you might want your god somewhere else.

But that's okay too. Perhaps it's a national emergency and you're going to fight a war. So what do you do? Well you can either pull the nails out and take your god with you. Or if that's not practicable.

[ 6 : 26 ] You can just build a small replica. And you can perhaps dedicate it in the temple. And you can take that with you. And then you know that your god is going with you to war.

I think it's a bit like the way I can log this iPad into my server at home. And can get my music if I want to. You have a sort of portable god. An idol is a portable packaged god.

The ultimate inconvenience religion actually. And of course a temple gives you a convenient place to keep him. The idol there ensures the presence of the god.

But of course what Isaiah and Jeremiah were really going on about. They were making fun of the idea of course. You can't nail a god down. It just doesn't make sense. And when Solomon built his temple.

That idol option was not open to him. Of course forming an image of the Lord was expressly forbidden. In the Ten Commandments by Moses. And why was that?

[ 7 : 31 ] Well of course for precisely that reason. God did not want to imply. That you know he is constrained by some image or idol.

Because you know as I say though in theory you know there is a distinction between an idol and the god himself. In practice the line soon gets blurred.

And the idol becomes the god. And so Moses had specifically forbidden that. And why was it the reason.

Well the reason that the living god could not be constrained by a statue. Or confined to a. Could not be constrained by a statue. Or confined to a building. Solomon as we saw understands this issue very well.

As he tells us in that prayer. That verse I quoted at the beginning. 1 Kings 8 27. Will God really dwell on earth. The heavens even the highest heaven.

[ 8 : 29 ] Cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built. And you will notice the other bits of the prayer he actually read. He's quite careful.

He says when people pray towards this temple. Lord answer from heaven. And the only way God at all could be said to dwell in a building. Was if he graciously consented to do so.

And that of course is what the prayer that we read is about. Solomon is asking God to do just that.

God had promised that Solomon would build a building where he would put his name.

And the name there does of course signify the presence of God. And that's exactly what Solomon is praying. He's asking God to do just that.

And God did indeed consent to do just that. But as I say only up to a point. Solomon was well aware that really of course God was in heaven. In another sense of course God is everywhere.

[ 9 : 30 ] And that when God answers he doesn't answer from the holy of holies. He answers from heaven. But still that's the basic solution.

You build a temple. You build an idol. For the presence of your God. You can build a temple. For the presence of your God.

And to ensure the presence of your God. You can either build an idol. Or you can appeal to the grace of your God. As Solomon does. And say will you consent. To be present with us.

In this place. So that's what a temple is. And that's why you build one. But why is it. When you're designing a temple. What is it you need to think about?

If you're designing any building. Form follows function. Doesn't it? Indeed if you're designing anything. Form follows function. We think about the flow of the building. Do you like that program.

[10:29] Homes under the hammer. I like to watch that sometimes. And when they go and look at the house. The presenter will go into the house. And say. Yeah this house doesn't work for me. Or it does. He said. But if you move that wall.

Then it would be so much better. The house would work. It would flow. A house has to work. A house has to have some.

Intention. So the question is. Do the spaces. And do the walls that define spaces. Actually enhance the activity. That takes place there.

In which case. The house will work. The house will flow. As we say. Or if it doesn't. Then the house doesn't work. The building doesn't work.

And we need to do something about it. And change it. So. How does that apply to building. A temple. Well if we think about the purpose of a temple.

[11:25] We can see how that applies. Because the purpose of a temple. Is to make your God accessible. But not too accessible. If you visit.

An old. Ancient palace. Like say the one at Hampton Court. You find that it's designed. As a series of rooms. So the outer room. Pretty much anyone.

Can get into. But as you move through the building. Access is more and more restricted. So to get into the next room. You have to be a nobleman.

And to get into the room after that. Perhaps you have to be one of the. Privy council. Or something like that. And actually get to the presence of the king. You either have to be a very important person yourself.

Or you have to be there. On very important business. And so that's the way. A palace is often designed. And.

[12:22] That's actually the way the temple in Jerusalem. Was designed pretty much as well. There's a plan of it there. And as you can see. See it's made up of a series of rooms.

With an entrance at one end. And as you go through the rooms. You get sort of. Into holier and holier. Places. The outer courts.

Around the building itself. Pretty much anybody was allowed in. It was described as a. Court for the Gentiles. To get in the building itself though.

You had to be Jewish. And to get a bit further in. You had to be a Levite. Or a priest. And to get right into the inner sanctum.

The holy of holies. As it was called. The holiest place. Which was the place. Place where God's presence was focused. You had to be the high priest.

[13:19] And you were only allowed. Even then. To do it once a year. On the day of atonement. So it's very much the same principle. You want access to God.

But there must be some separation as well. Now why is this? Why do we design it that way? And I think it's actually twofold. If we think again of a palace.

Then this design does two things. For one thing it protects the king. From having too much contact with the unholy masses. Isn't it? The proletariat.

As it were. But also actually. It protects the said unholy masses. Actually from the wrath of the king as well. A certain separation is the thing.

We want access. But not too much access. Total access. Will be destructive. Because God will be provoked to anger.

[14:19] By the sin of the people. And the people would find themselves destroyed. Burnt up by the holiness of God. So this elaborate temple was set up.

To provide access to God. But only under very controlled conditions as it were. When it would not either provoke God to anger. Or submit the people to destruction.

The only problem though. Was that it never really quite worked. In Zechariah the prophet. Has a vision of the high priest.

Who at that time was called Joshua. Who was about to enter the holy place. And of course the high priest would have gone into the holy place. He was wearing special robes. And with a headdress that said holy to the Lord across the top.

And with all sorts of symbolic garments on. We saw a photograph this morning of the garments that some Catholics wear. Didn't it? But really in a sense the high priest would have had far more even than that.

[ 15 : 25 ] All sorts of symbolic garments he had to wear. But Zechariah has a vision of Joshua the high priest. As he's about to enter the holy place. And he realizes that Joshua is not dressed for the occasion.

In fact Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes. And Satan standing there. And so you can't go in there dressed like that. And he's quite right. And of course the filthy clothes represent.

Not that he was really in filthy clothes. Of course this is a vision. And the filthy clothes of course represent the sins of the people. And indeed the sins of Joshua himself. Even the amount of separation and sort of holy things that were attached to the temple worship.

Were not really enough. They never quite worked. Because even Joshua. Even the high priest. Even these special clothes that he would wear.

Were really not enough to making it acceptable to God. So access to that way was quite problematic. And as Solomon had understood and mentioned in his prayer.

[ 16 : 36 ] God would sometimes remove his presence from the temple. And when that happened. It was bad news all round. Because the protection of the people would be taken away.

The most holy place contained the Ark of the Covenant. And was surmounted by carvings of two cherubim. And so that was where. As it were the presence of God. The glory of God was regarded as being focused.

That was where the Shekinah glory was. When the temple was dedicated and so on. And with God to leave that place. That mercy seat as it was called. Trouble was inevitable.

And one example of this. Is found in a vision of Ezekiel. I've got my numbering wrong.

That's what the trouble is. Sorry I've got my slide numbering wrong. But I think I can sort it out. In a vision of Ezekiel. Ezekiel 9.3-6.

[ 17 : 42 ] You can look at it if you like. But I'll read it out. It's not too long. Now the glory of the God of Israel. Went up from above the cherubim. Where it had been.

And moved to the threshold of the temple. I haven't got a pointer. But he moves from the Holy of Holies. Out to the vestibule. And the steps up there. And the Lord called to the man clothed in linen. Who had the writing kit at his side. And said to him. Go throughout the city of Jerusalem. And put a mark on the foreheads of those. Who grieve and lament. Over all the detestable things that are done in it.

As I listened. He said to the others. Follow him through the city. And kill without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men. Young men and maidens. Women and children. But do not touch anyone who has the mark.

Begin at my sanctuary. So they began with the elders. Who were in front of the temple. The context was that the elders had been conducting. Some idolatrous worship.

[ 18 : 44 ] In front of the temple. And in this vision. Ezekiel says that is not good news at all. The Lord himself will come and avenge it. And when the Lord leaves the mercy seat.

And comes out as it were. Among the city. That's very bad news indeed. It's going to cause all sorts of trouble for the people. And later on actually.

Ezekiel describes the Lord leaving Jerusalem altogether. And coming over towards where the people are in Babylon. And then later. Still is a vision of the glory of the Lord.

Returning to Jerusalem. Jerusalem. So when God leaves the temple. That is bad news. But this was a problem that never really went away.

While there was a temple in Jerusalem. It was always a problem. How could access to God be provided? But just.

[ 19 : 41 ] We'll come back to that in a minute. But before we look at that. I just want to address the last question there. What do you make a temple out of? If you're going to build a temple. What do you use?

And you've got two basic considerations in mind. First of all. You want it to last a long time. Presumably. God is immortal. So as far as practicable.

You want the house to last as long as. As long as it can. As long as you can make it. So what do you do? Well you build don't you.

From dressed stone. You don't use timber at all. Or if you do use timber. If you do use wood. You use something. A wood that's very long lasting.

Not something. That is rock resistant. And Solomon in fact used cedar. In verse 36. Of 1 Kings 6. It says that Solomon built the inner courtyard.

[ 20 : 41 ] Of three courses of dressed stone. And one course of trimmed cedar beams. The building was designed to last. It wasn't a temporary structure. By any means.

The tabernacle of course. Had been a temporary structure. It was a building that was designed. To be portable. But the temple. It was designed to last. And you use metals.

And if you use metals. You're going to use metals. That won't rust. Metals that will resist corrosion. So you use silver and gold. And of course.

While you're building it. You build carefully. You employ the best. Craftsmen and builders. You can get. Because you want it to be built properly. And so you want to build the building.

So that it will last. But of course you also want to. Build the building for beauty. You don't want to give the impression. That your. God is ugly.

[ 21 : 38 ] Do you. I'm sure the people who. Built the temple in. Diana. Who's a goddess of love. I think. Wanted to make the building beautiful.

Because they certainly didn't want to imply. Their goddess was ugly. And certainly. Solomon didn't want to imply. That his God. The Lord. Was ugly. And so he built for beauty. Now fortunately.

In fact. The materials that give long life. Also lend themselves. To attractive construction. So it's possible. In many ways. To meet both those criteria. Gold and silver.

Not only long lasting. But they're beautiful too. And a building built from stone. Often looks better. Than buildings built from other. Construction materials. Especially if it's.

If it's well. Built and carved. By a craftsman. And an expert. Stone mason. Can make a stone building. Look really beautiful. Much more difficult.

[ 22 : 35 ] To do that in brick. Or in many ways. Even in wood. You can carve wood. But it doesn't last. So what do you build a temple of? Well the materials you use.

To construct your temple. Are supposed to reflect. And display. The attitudes of the God. That it houses. That's almost the point of it. So that's how you build a temple.

You build it. To ensure the presence of your God. You build it. To provide the. Right kind of access. The controlled access.

So that neither the. The God is not offended. And the people are not destroyed. And you. Build it. So that it's both durable. And beautiful.

So those are the things you think about. If you're setting out to build a temple. I asked David if he'd ever built a temple. And he said designed a temple. And he said not. So that he has. Designed a church extension. But. Not perhaps quite the same thing.

[ 23 : 34 ] But that's what you need to think about. If you were building a temple. But the only problem was. That it never really worked. Solomon's temple.

Lasted several hundred years actually. But was destroyed in the Babylonian invasion. When the people returned from exile. Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple.

We don't know how long it took. We do know he had some problems. Because the temple mount was in a mess. And it was too much. Digging out required.

And God had to say. Not by. Might nor by power. But by my spirit. And then they started leveling the temple mount. It was a fairly modest thing apparently.

From my all accounts. Compared. To the temple of Solomon. But it did survive several wars. And in fact. It even survived. Including the conquest by the Romans.

[ 24 : 39 ] When the Roman general was surprised. He went into the. Actually into the holy place in the temple. And was surprised to discover. That there was no image there. In fact.

There was probably nothing there at all. Because it's likely. That the Ark of the Covenant had been lost. During the exile. There's no reference to it. After the return from exile. Well. So Zerubbabel's temple.

Actually. Did quite well for longevity. And so. Survived into Roman times. But that wasn't actually the temple.

That Jesus knew. In 19 BC. Herod the Great. Wanting to. Make himself popular. He was kind of. Only sort of half Jewish really.

And he wanted to make himself popular. With the Jews. And so he commenced. A complete reconstruction. Of the temple. Completely flattened. What was left as a Rubbabe's temple.

[ 25 : 34 ] And the temple mound. And started all over again. They had to make special arrangements. Like we did. When we were having work done. On the. The building. We had to make special arrangements. To meet somewhere else.

And carry out the sacrifices. Somewhere else. And they organized all that stuff. And. Herod started building the temple. Well. Not personally of course.

But he funded it. And organized it. And set it happening. In 19 BC. So effectively. Although we talk about. Second temple Judaism. This was really the third temple.

In fact. But it was not to prove. Third time lucky. Herod's temple. Was the one Jesus knew. And in some ways. It was the grandest of the three.

But it will also be. The least successful. Of the three. Because of the old problem. The outer court.

[ 26 : 27 ] Of the temple. Was supposed to be. A house of prayer. For the Gentiles. Or the Gentiles. Could come. And seek the Lord. But as we read. In John 2. It hasn't. It has found another.

Purpose. So Jesus went into the temple. In John 2. 14 to 16. And we read this. In the temple courts. He found men. Selling cattle. Sheep and doves.

And others. Sitting at tables. Exchanging money. So he made a whip. Out of cords. And drove all. From the temple area. Both sheep and cattle. He scattered the coins. Of the money changers.

And overturned their tables. To those who sold doves. He said. Get these out of here. How dare you. Turn my father's house. Into a market. The affairs of this world.

The trading of this world. They didn't need to trade in animals. For the sacrifices of course. But. The house of God. Was becoming a cattle market. And so the place.

[ 27 : 24 ] Where the Gentiles. Were supposed to pray. It wasn't available for them. This basic problem. Of integrating the sacred. And the profane. Had still not been addressed.

And Jesus has several discussions. Actually. With the Pharisees. Over the temple. And at one point. They remark. That it had been 46 years. In the building. Well.

We know it was started. In AD 19. So that makes the date. Of this conversation. AD 27. If you think. That doesn't quite add up. It's now thought.

That Jesus was actually born. Not at. A. BC. Or AD 0. But actually about. BC 6. To BC 4. So. As. Has. Usually been held.

Jesus was around. 30 years. 30. 31 years old. At this time. So this conversation. Must have taken place. In AD 27. And in fact.

[ 28 : 20 ] Herod's temple. Wasn't even complete. At that time. 46 years on. It still hadn't been finished. Solomon. I say. I think. Managed to finish. It's in seven years. But this. Was still under construction.

46 years. After it had been. Started. But Jesus was to go on. To predict. That this. Temple. Herod's temple. Was not going to last long.

He made several predictions. Of the destruction. Of the temple. In one way or another. And it was indeed. Destroyed by the Romans. In AD 70. So in.

Though in some ways. Herod's temple. Was the biggest. And best temple. It was the least successful. From foundation. To destruction. Was 90 years.

Only 90 years. The other two temples. Had both lasted. Much longer than that. And the temple experiment. Had failed.

[ 29 : 18 ] The basic. Contradiction. That Solomon. Had understood. That Isaiah. And Jeremiah. And Zechariah. And the other prophets. Had pointed out. Could not be resolved.

You cannot really. Make a God. Live on earth. In a building. However much separation.

You put. Between the God. And the. People. It's not enough. You want access to God. But access to God. In a sense. Is not possible.

Through such a. A mechanism. So. That had three goes at it. But the temple experiment. Ultimately. Failed. But.

The reason for the temple. Was still there. The need for the temple. Was still there. There still needed to be. A house. Where could. Mankind.

[ 30 : 16 ] Could meet with God. We still needed. Such a thing. So. What was the solution. What was needed. Was some. Sorry.

That's the wrong slide. What was needed. Was some new thinking. And what the new thinking. Was is this. Why not build a house. Out of people. Hang on.

That doesn't sound like. A very. Brilliant idea. Does it. I mean. Humans are not. Very long lived. And. Spiritually at least.

They're not very beautiful. Most of us. Are not beautiful at all. And even if some of us. Are more beautiful physically. We're all pretty ugly. Spiritually. And if a lot of people.

Are involved. Well surely that. Makes the whole problem worse. How could the separation. Between God. And the profane. The world outside. Be. Maintained.

[ 31 : 15 ] But it turned out. These problems. Could be addressed. And Jesus himself. Led the way. So as part of that discussion.

In John 2. Jesus says the following. Jesus answered them. Destroy this temple. And I will raise it again. In three days. The Jews replied.

It's taken 46 years. To build this temple. And you're going to raise it. In three days. But the temple. He had spoken of. Was his body. And after he was raised. From the dead.

His disciples. Recalled what he had said. And then they believed. The scripture. And the words. That Jesus had spoken. Jesus was speaking here. Of his own body.

And the presence of God. In him. But. That wasn't the total solution. Because. Jesus had to leave the earth. He was going to leave the earth.

[ 32 : 10 ] And go to the father. In heaven. So the idea was expanded. To include. His disciples. The people of God.

The church of Jesus. Who was the first born. From the dead. Would form the temple. And. In that idea. Of resurrection. Was.

And the death. Of resurrection. Of Jesus. Was the. Solution. To the problems. Of building a temple. The resurrection. Would solve the issue. Of permanence. For instance.

In fact. Humans can be made. More durable. Than mere granite. And that's what John says. In that passage of Revelation. We read. Isn't it.

To him. Over comes. I will make a pillow. In the temple of my God. Never again. Will he leave it. A pillow. In a real temple. Is going to fall down.

[ 33 : 05 ] Eventually. And somebody. Will go and look. At the ruins. But in. The temple. Built by God. The pillar. Is there forever. And who is the pillar.

Well it is the one. Who over. Jesus said. Who overcomes. In other words. The. The disciple. Who overcomes. The world. And it will have.

All the right accreditation. I will write on him. The name of my God. And the name of the city. Of my God. The new Jerusalem. Which is coming down. Out of heaven. From God. And I will also.

Write on him. My new name. So he wouldn't have. The problem. That. The priests of old had. That they. They needed all these. This special stuff.

And they needed the name. Holy to the Lord. On their forehead. But because it. Wasn't right. They weren't really. Holy to the Lord. The pillar in the temple. Will have it stamped on. Written into the stone.

[ 33 : 59 ] As it were. So this temple. Will be constructed. Out of people. The church. Of God. The disciples.

Of Jesus. Would be. The temple. But still. These principles. Of temple construction. Have still got to apply. Haven't they. Basically.

There must be. A resident God. For a temple. To be a temple. And not just a house. Or. A synagogue. Or something. There has to be. A God. In residence.

A church. And so that's why. Paul tells us this. In Ephesians 2. 19 to 22. That. Passage we read.

You are no longer. Foreigners and aliens. But fellow citizens. With God's people. Members of God's household. And you're part of the building. You're built on the foundation.

[ 34 : 53 ] Of the apostles and prophets. With Christ himself. As the chief. Cornerstone. In him. The whole building. Is joined together.

And rises to become. A holy temple. In the Lord. And does. God take residence there. Yes. In him. You are being built together.

To become a dwelling. In which God lives. By his spirit. God builds the temple. Of this church. Of the church. As a place to live. A place.

To be. On earth. And where. People as it were. Can come. And meet him. And so God lives.

By his spirit. In this temple. Signifying the presence. Of Jesus. Jesus is there. As the chief cornerstone. God died. this is a much better solution than confining God to the most holy place because here God is present in the whole building in the suffusing as it were the very walls the stones from which the building is built the whole temple is holy not just the holy place every brick and every component every carving and pillar displays the presence of the holy one well okay but hang on a minute what about this business of the separation between what is holy and what is not how is that going to work then if the whole temple is holy if God is present in the whole of the temple how is that going to work well Paul has a simple solution to that problem at least one that's simple in principle perhaps more difficult to do in practice the unholy must simply be driven out and so this wasn't a passage we read but in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 16

[ 36 : 54 ] Paul writes this what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols certainly not you can't have the Lord and an idol present in the temple that won't work at all and so the idol has to be driven out what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols for we are the temple of the living God as God has said I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people and as you might expect he's quoting there from several Old Testament passages actually from Leviticus, Jeremiah and Ezekiel you can build a multi-faith chapel if you like like there's one at Gatwick Airport but you can't build a temple which admits other gods besides the Lord because the Lord is a jealous God he tells us who won't give his glory to another so if idols are infiltrating the temple as they were in Ezekiel's time then they must be driven out because if they're not then the Lord himself will leave and as we've seen that spells trouble for everybody so we cannot allow temples we must allow idols in the temple of the Lord in the church and of course I think

Paul is talking not so much about actual idols in this case I mean we don't some churches have statues in them and people argue about whether they're idols or not but I don't think that's primarily actually what Paul is talking about here he's talking about the things that hold the first place in our heart the things that we worship and we need to drive those out from amongst us well as I say I think Solomon's temple took seven years to build Herod's we don't know how long Zerubbabel took Herod took at least 46 years at least the temple did he was well dead by that time of course but this temple is still under construction 2,000 years later it's still not finished why do I say that well because

Paul tells us that doesn't he in that passage we read from 1 Corinthians we are God's fellow workers you are God's field God's building by the grace God has given me I laid the foundation as an expert builder and someone else is building on it but each one should be careful how he builds for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is Christ Jesus it's no good going doing your own thing and saying I'm going to build over here you've got to build on the foundation that's there and that foundation is Jesus and then Paul talks about the materials doesn't he if anyone builds on this foundation using gold silver costly stones wood hay or straw his work will be shown for what it is because the day will bring it to light it will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each man's work if what he has built survives he will receive his reward if it is burned up he will suffer loss the implication being that presumably it won't make it into the final building as it were but it does say he himself will be saved but only as one escaping through the flames don't you know that you yourself are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you if anyone destroys

God's temple God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple so what does Paul say here he says that you are both the builders and the material that it's built from I suppose probably as the builders he's talking particularly about church leaders and preachers and so on but I don't think it's restricted to that I think he's actually saying that each of us is involved in building the temple because each of us wants our work to endure wants our work as it were to be part of that final temple so we are both the builders and the material and the construction is still going on it's not finished yet but nonetheless God has already taken up residence in his temple in one sense it doesn't have to be finished because as I've said God is everywhere in this temple and Peter has a

similar idea 1 Peter 2 verse 5 he says the following sorry I didn't put this one on the slide but it's 1 Peter 2 verse 5 you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ Peter mixes here the house itself and the priesthood the people who offer the sacrifices but he says you are living stones you are being built into the temple the spiritual house where business with God will be done so what does that mean for us it means doesn't that we need to make sure that our lives are suitable components for the temple they need to be fireproof as Paul puts it they need to be holy so that they will not be burnt up by the fire of the Lord's anger so what is the advice that Paul gives to temple builders they should build carefully should build to last and they should build beautifully now I could stop there but I thought it's worth reminding ourselves this isn't quite actually the Bible's last word on temples the Bible's last word on temples we actually find in [ 43 : 22 ] Revelation in chapter 21 again I can't read the whole thing I haven't got time but I'll read Revelation 21 2 to 7 and it might not be immediately obvious to you that this is about the temple but in fact if you think about it we'll see that it is and in this temple the distinctions that make building a temple so different are going to be swept away so difficult I mean so Revelation 2 20 yes sorry I didn't mean 27 I meant 2 to 7 I beg your pardon it's Revelation 21 verses 2 to 7 there's a hyphen got missed out there sorry Revelation 21 verse 2 I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God he will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away he who was seated on the throne said

I am making everything new then he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true he said to me it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end so we know from that this is Jesus speaking to him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life he who overcomes will inherit all this I will be his God and he will be my son and later on it goes on in this passage to tell us that there is no sun or moon because there's no need for one because God himself is the light the dwelling of God is with men but did you pick up the bride reference we're going to come back to that later this is the bride of Christ the holy city the new Jerusalem it's described as coming down from heaven and yet in some sense at least it must be the church but whatever exact meaning of that is and maybe there's a bit of a mystery there the main thought is clear now the dwelling is God is with men and he will live with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God so what do we find in this passage that all the distinct distinctions all the barriers all the separations have all been declared void there is no more separation this is the new

Jerusalem the world is the city and the city is the temple and the temple is the holy place where you meet with God all the barriers have been removed access is direct and everyone in that city can come directly into the presence of God there will be no special priesthood we won't need lots of complicated courtyards I should say there will be no priesthood well of course there would be a priesthood because the Bible says we are all priests we will all have access to God no courtyards to make your way through to go through into the more holy place because everywhere is holy it's all a holy place and the people will have access to God directly and so that is the temple we're building it is an entirely new sort of temple a temple that doesn't have this separation between man and God so let's make sure we build carefully and well and Revelation warns us that no unholy thing can enter the city he says the gates will always be open it's not going to be closed at night or for a siege or something the gates will always be open and yet no unholy thing is going to get in and so let's again remember

Paul's warning that if our building is slipshod it's not going to pass Jesus' quality control it won't make it into the final building as Paul warns us I don't quite know how that works Paul reminds it says that the person will himself be saved but his work will be destroyed I'm not sure how that works quite but that's what Paul says but certainly if we want our work to endure if we want our to be able to say almost as it were that this is my bit of the temple this is me and this is the bit I built then we need to make sure that it passes the quality control why is that well because the reason for the separation is that the Lord is holy and there's words we find earlier in the book of Revelation we find these words holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come this is a holy temple for a holy God who was and is and is to come so let's stop there so so so and is so so

so so so so!