



360 DISCUSSION 11.20.16

BUILT TOGETHER | EPHESIANS 2:11-22



Our family enjoys trying to identify where a movie is being shot by observing the scenery in the first few moments of the movie. We all make our guess. Sometimes the debate is not settled until the credits role at the end of the movie. Sometimes it's immediately obvious. We almost instantly recognized our old neighborhood in Albuquerque in the opening scenes of the popular series "Breaking Bad."

When buildings are involved, it is not all that difficult. If you get a glimpse of the Space Needle, you're in Seattle; the Empire State Building you're obviously in New York; the Transamerica Pyramid you're in San Fransisco; the massive arch on the Mississippi you're in St. Louis; the old Sears Tower, Chicago.

Cities are known for their buildings.

The New Testament Church is to be known by a completely different kind of building. In Ephesians 2, Paul tells us that we are being "built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." So the real question is not what are we building, but what is God building?

A CHURCH THAT DRAWS PEOPLE IN

The chief image that Paul uses in verses 11-13 is people who are far from God. He reminds the Ephesian believers that they were as far from God as they could possibly be, but that Christ has acted decisively on the cross to bring them near.

VERSES 11-13 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

1. What advantages do religious people (the Jews in this case) have over irreligious people (Gentiles)?
2. How can being religious actually be a disadvantage?
3. Why are outward rituals (like circumcision) inadequate for bringing people closer to God?
4. What has Christ done to bring those who were far away near?

A CHURCH THAT TEARS DOWN WALLS

Christ brings those who are far from God near by destroying every barrier that separates us from God, and every barrier that separates us from one another.

VERSES 14-18 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

1. What are some of the barriers that exist between “religious” and “irreligious people”?
2. What has Christ done to destroy those barriers?
3. How is the Law a barrier between “religious” and “irreligious” people?

4. How is the Law a barrier between “religious people” and God?
5. How does the gospel uphold the Law and break down the barriers the Law caused by the Law?

A CHURCH WHERE GOD IS PRESENT

Paul uses temple imagery to describe what God is finally building. This building however is not made up of brick and mortar, but of people who are coming to Christ and being reconciled to one another. While God’s glory was visible in the Tabernacle and then the Temple in the Old Testament, in the New Testament his glory is visible in his people.

VERSES 19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be the chief cornerstone?
2. What are some things we might expect to find in a church that is experiencing God’s presence?
3. What are some ways we might minimize God’s presence (i.e. quench or grieve God’s Spirit)?
4. How can we insure that we experience the fullness of God’s presence?