

WEEKLY REFLECTION

“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” (Rev. 21:22)

We were always meant to have full communion with God. From the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, there was no temple: the Lord God walked with man, and the fullness of His presence was with them. But because of sin—because we chose ourselves, chose control over His providence and paradise—we were chased out of the Garden. Chased out of His presence, because sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God.

There have been multiple iterations of the temple ever since: the tabernacle which traveled with the Israelites through the wilderness. The temple which David yearned to build, that Solomon brought to fruition. The smaller version of the temple that Zerubbabel rebuilt after it was torn down. The same system of elaborate offerings and sacrifices that God devised was used in each one, but it could only do so much to atone for our sin, to allow for God’s nearness and presence—that is, until Jesus.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2 that we are now like living stones being built up as a temple. (v.5) Because of Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross, we can now take on the tasks and responsibilities that Adam and Eve were given: to be stewards of His creation, to help fill the earth with His presence. To proclaim His excellencies (v.9), and to glorify Him especially on the day when He returns for good. (v.12)

John tells us in the book of Revelation that there will be a day when the temple exists no more. Just like the Garden of Eden before it, this new garden-city of the new Heaven and Earth will have no temple, because its temple is the Lord God the Almighty. What are you doing, church, to prepare for that day? What can you do to point others towards that reality?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Is there somewhere you've visited previously (whether a building, a city, or somewhere in nature) that filled you with a sense of total delight and / or awe? What was it about that place that made you feel this way? How might it compare to the new city of Jerusalem as described in Revelation 21?

QUESTION TWO:

Peter describes the followers of Christ in 1 Peter 2:5 as "living stones...being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood." This means that the temple is no longer a physical space that we visit, but a reality that we carry with us.

Knowing that the church is now the temple of God (the space where heaven meets earth), what does it mean for us to be a holy priesthood or to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ? (v.5) How can we act as God's representatives in a world that so desperately needs Him?

QUESTION THREE:

As followers of a holy God, we are called to be holy, to be set apart and different from the world around us. What is one concrete thing you can do this week to be different—to represent and to point others to Christ—whether at your workplace, at home, or with friends and / or family? How can your life group encourage and support, but also keep you accountable in doing so?