

The Three Temples Of Early Christian Church

Three forms of worship, two old and well-established and one newly created, each had its temple.

The Temple of the Gentiles –

Paul caused great conflict among the supporters of the goddess Diana who had a temple in Ephesus and followers throughout the Asia and the rest of the world. This is what Paul and the other apostles referred to when they mentioned the Temple of the Gentiles, [Acts 19:21-41].

The Temple of the Jews –

This is referring to the temple made by Solomon with its foundation being found in the tent of meeting at the time of the exodus.

These two temples were part of the barrier between people.

The trade based on the temple of Diana was disrupted by Christian belief as preached by Paul in Ephesus.

The Jewish temple also was a place of divisions, different parts for men and women, also parts with access limited to priests.

Also handicapped people were not allowed to enter the temple at all, and gentiles only the outer court.

There was no place for reconciliation found in either of these temples.

Jesus Christ was the only one who could break through these barriers.

John 2:13-25 [New King James] *“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’ So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”*

Jesus Christ did this physically in the Jewish temple when He cleansed the Court of Gentiles of all its traders.

Through the teaching of the apostles, Jesus Christ began to build a new temple where there is no divisions.

The Temple of the Holy Spirit –

Stephen reminded his audience of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple built by Solomon, then introduced the new Temple of the Holy Spirit, that cost him his life as the first martyr, [Acts 7:54-60].

Acts 7:44-50 [New King James] *“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, who found favour before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?’”*

The temple is created in human beings as they accept the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 [New King James] *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”*

An active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives when we submit our lives to Him and follow His lead.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [New King James] *“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.”*

We are bond slaves of Jesus Christ having been purchased by His sacrificed blood, [Acts 20:28] that we may glorify the Eternal Creator in our physical bodies, [Matthew 5:13-16].

The apostles addressed themselves as slaves of Jesus Christ, using the Greek word “*dōulōs*” which means bond slave, [Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1].

Ephesians 2:19-22 [New King James] *“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 fitted 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.”*

All true Christians are part of this new eternal temple that is being created by God.

Galatians 3:27-29 [New King James] *“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

This temple has no divisions.

1 Peter 2:4-5 [New King James] *“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 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.”*

The thought this provokes is that living stones are not to be kept in isolation. By constant communication true Christians will become like the Living Stone, Jesus Christ, all created to a holy house and priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone [foundation] of this temple.

Ephesians 4:7-16 [New King James] *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’ — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, **Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**”*

With the help of prophets, pastors and teachers, all gifts from Christ through the Holy Spirit, in the construction of spiritual body with Jesus Christ as the head, Paul, like Peter, speaks of created temple of the Holy Spirit, all parts joined together to fulfil the work of God among created human beings.

This “temple” or “body” is the end product of humans filled with the Holy Spirit working together, one stone is not the complete temple, one body part is useless without the other parts.

In our individualistic society, it is easy to forget our interdependence with other true Christians.

When God calls you to a task, remember that He is calling others to work alongside you.

Another analogy used is that of a pillar, the part of a building that shares the load with other pillars, [**Galatians 2:9; Revelation 3:12**].

All these point towards individuals working alongside other individuals to complete one task, each essential for the successful completion of that task.

There is strong evidence that there was more than one elder leading the people in a church fellowship at the beginning of Christianity, [**Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5; James 5:14**].

Philippians 2:1-7 [New King James] *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”*

This is the key to success in the work that every true Christian has now and is preparing for eternally in the Kingdom of God.

Develop now the “mind of a servant,” the same mind that Jesus Christ has always had, [Matthew 20:25-28; Galatians 5:13-14].