

BECOMING *OUR TRUE SELVES*

DECEMBER 11, 2021

MOVING TOWARD INCLUSIVITY

HI REVIVE FAMILY,

This week, we're taking a closer look at Ephesians 2:11-22 and how Paul's vision of the people of God being built into a holy temple invites us to challenge our current systems and structures and move us towards greater and greater inclusivity. See Paul's words below:

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

"CONSEQUENTLY, YOU ARE NO LONGER FOREIGNERS AND STRANGERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH GOD'S PEOPLE AND ALSO MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD, **BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION** OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, WITH CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF AS THE CHIEF **CORNERSTONE**. IN HIM THE **WHOLE BUILDING** IS JOINED TOGETHER AND RISES TO BECOME A **HOLY TEMPLE** IN THE LORD. AND IN HIM YOU TOO ARE BEING **BUILT TOGETHER** TO BECOME A **DWELLING** IN WHICH GOD LIVES BY HIS SPIRIT."

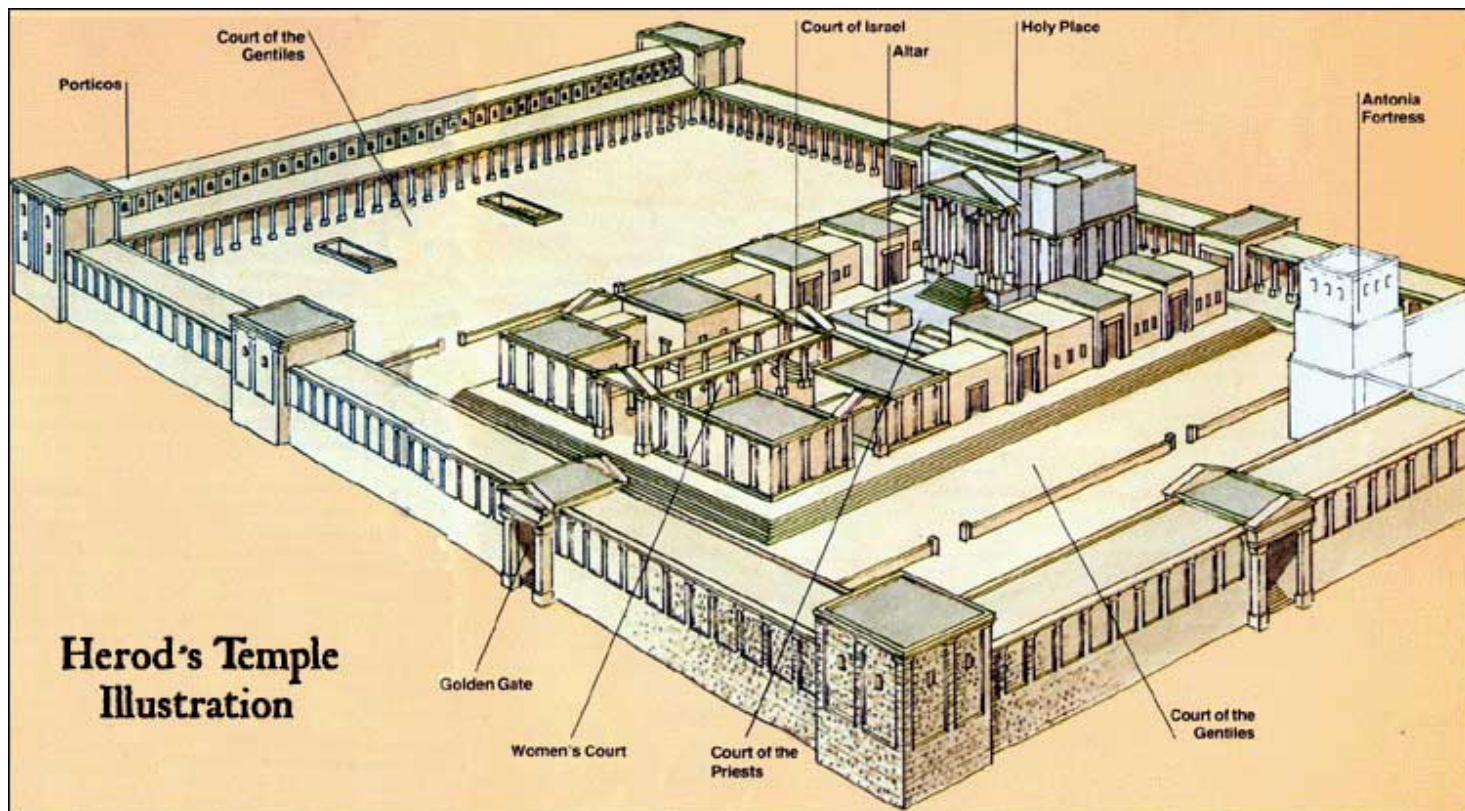
Paul's comparison to the Temple would have brought up a tangible picture of the divisions in that time. Back then, to draw near to God meant to come near to the Temple and to the Holy Place and to offer sacrifices. However, there were different courts to the Temple which you could enter in to depending on who you were.

THE COURT OF GENTILES was the outer court area where Jews and Gentiles who wanted to worship the God of Israel could both come and make offerings and sacrifices. The moneychangers were also in the outer courts to make the exchange to temple currency to buy the animals to make sacrifices.

THE COURT OF WOMEN was the next level in the Temple, and only Jewish people could enter this court. If you were a woman, you could go no further than the Court of Women.

THE COURT OF ISRAEL was reserved for Jewish men, and the Court of Priests was reserved for Jewish male priests, and only the High Priest could actually enter the Holy of Holies, and it was once a year on the Day of Atonement.

What is important to remember is that the Temple was originally meant to be a way for people to draw near to God. By the time of Jesus and Paul, it was having almost the opposite effect - it was keeping people from feeling close to God. The significance, then, of Paul describing the people of God as a Holy Temple was that he was essentially reclaiming what the Temple was supposed to be - the union of God with people. But to fully embrace the New Humanity, the system and structures of the current Temple had to be challenged. For us to live as the New Humanity today, we must remember that the point of our church is to bring people into union with God.



**Herod's Temple
Illustration**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT OUR STRUCTURES OR WAYS OF DOING THINGS ACTUALLY LEAD TO DIVISION AND SEPARATION FOR THOSE WE ARE TRYING TO INVITE IN?

2. THINK OF THE PEOPLE YOU ENCOUNTER IN YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF CHURCH - WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR THEM TO FEEL WELCOME IN OUR COMMUNITY?