

# DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

MARCH 2026 | EPHESIANS 1:8-10

*With all wisdom and insight  
he has made known to us  
the mystery of his will,  
according to his good  
pleasure that he set forth  
in Christ, as a plan for the  
fulness of time, to gather up  
all things in him, things in  
heaven and things on earth.*

*Ephesians 1:8-10 NRSV*

## TOWER OR TEMPLE?

Last month, we discussed the current confusion about the purpose and role of the church in the world. Many interested people are shopping for a church experience that meets the needs they have identified for themselves. This approach and attitude can be expected in a consumer society. Like at grocery stores or restaurants, we want to be served well - and conveniently. If we aren't sure about the purpose of the church, we can feel as disappointed as a person shopping at a hardware store for groceries. The myths regarding the purpose of the church have confused the matter, and we're left dissatisfied and frustrated. In this study, we shall begin to discover the purpose of the

church as proclaimed and practiced in the New Testament.

Before we begin, let's remember how Scripture is interpreted: Old Testament shadows point to New Testament substance. Only after respecting how Scripture is to be read can we seek to apply it to our own situation. Assuming the eternal truth of scripture is always relevant, we reject all contemporary attempts to "force" the scripture to be relevant to today's culture. Instead, we concentrate on hearing what God said to the human writers and, through them, to us.

In Genesis, we find a contrast between the tower and the temple that can help us understand the challenge of worshipping God as fallen but religious human beings. The tower was built by humans who wanted to reach heaven and concluded that there was something they could do to reach it. In the story the Bible tells, after the flood and the scattering of the descendants of Noah, the people had one language and a common desire to elevate themselves to a higher realm of experience, authority, and significance. They joined forces to build a tower that would get them to heaven. They had a common passion, a common vision, a common language, and complete commitment. God Himself said their potential was unlimited, so He confused the language to stop them.

The tower represents humanity taking the initiative in getting to a higher level of spirituality. We conclude that there are qualifications we must reach to get to heaven. Whatever those qualifications are become the fundamentals of our doctrine. Sadly, in recent centuries, much of the church has been about the "plan of salvation" rather than the proclamation of the gospel. The recognized church at large is a loosely related people divided by debates on who is in and who is out. When getting to

heaven is the goal, the steps to get there are prominent. Getting to heaven or to a favored place with God becomes an overwhelming passion and creates a religion of beliefs, rituals, and regulations.

The story as told by the Bible is not about us getting to heaven, but about God bringing heaven to us:

*With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

Ephesians 1:8-10 NRSV

The temple is a contrast to the tower. It wasn't man's idea. God gave instruction to Moses so that there would be a way for God to come to us. How amazing that He would want to be with us! But that is His pleasure and purpose. He has always desired to have a people on earth who enjoys Him and displays His glory in all creation. That was the desire in the garden of Eden. It was His desire with Abraham and his family. It was the same with Moses and the people of Israel. In fact, the whole story of Israel is about God having a people

who were different from their contemporaries because they lived with Him. The temple was about clearing the way for God to dwell with mankind, not about getting us ready to go to heaven. The role of sacrifices was to point to a mediator who would make the union of heaven and earth not only possible, but actual. Priests were God's idea. They were called of God and assigned to play the role of mediator. It didn't go well with any human who assumed the role of priest on his own. Ask king Saul.

The tower was a type of the man-centered church. Built on human ingenuity, fueled by human will power, and appealing to human cries for significance, it points to much of the visible religious structures that we call "the church." The temple is a shadow of the authentic church, which is the community of people who are living out the gospel with each other and fulfilling the mission of Jesus. What is the gospel? It is the proclamation of Jesus as the completion of the story of the Old Testament. The New Testament gospel demands a fulfillment dynamic. It is not a statement of belief nor a standard for behavior. It is a story. Jesus read the scriptures as being about Him. All that happened before Him pointed to Him. He alone is the star and substance of

Biblical history. Though it is true that one cannot hear the gospel without being confronted with a decision to believe or not, the gospel is not the persuasive method used to gather the crowds. When told, the story of God's actions in history that culminate with Jesus as the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord has the transforming effect of being raised from the dead. Our attempts to promote it better only serve to dilute its power. When people hear the undiluted gospel, they, like the crowd at Pentecost, ask, "What must we do?" The answer now as then is simply to look at what God has done in Christ and believe. He has done the work. He is not imploring us to work to get a better place with Him.

Gospelized people make up the church. Those who have heard that Jesus is the completion of the Old Testament story and have believed are united in a community that, according to theologian N.T. Wright, is the working model of the new creation that will surely involve all creation. Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and Lord of the world. As Messiah (the one Israel hoped for), Jesus did what the prophets said He would do. He defeated the enemy of God and His people (see Psalms 2 and Psalms 110). Just like He promised in the garden of Eden, the Seed of

woman crushed the head of Satan. The Law was fulfilled. Sin was canceled, death was defeated. Just like the prophets had said, the people were liberated (see Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19).

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Isaiah 61:1-2, NRSV

Just like the prophets had said, Jesus redefined the temple and the covenant (see Malachi 3:1-2). He declared that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament temple. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19, ESV). Then He transferred the role of the temple to His followers. We are the body of Christ, living stones in His ultimate and final temple. The temple in Jerusalem had become an idol for Israel, and it was forever destroyed by the invading army of Rome. No need for the shadow when the substance has fulfilled it. Just like the Old Testament story foretold, justice was assured. When Jesus bore the injustice of sin in His own body, He guaranteed that not only will all in Christ be justified, but that all creation will be

restored. All wrongs will be made right and all sadness will become untrue.

The New Testament church is the community of new creation people carrying out what the Messiah began. We are demonstrating the reality of this creation that began at the resurrection, and we display the true nature of the God who made it happen. We are not just waiting to go to heaven. We are moving through the earth, declaring by word and deed that history's hope has been fulfilled in Jesus. Though the physical creation still groans, it does so with the assurances of this fulfilled hope.

**KERYGMA VENTURES**

P.O. Box 2022  
Colleyville, TX 76034  
(817)267-9224  
Email: [Contact@kerygmaventures.com](mailto:Contact@kerygmaventures.com)  
[www.KerygmaVentures.com](http://www.KerygmaVentures.com)