

## **The Ephesian's Temple**

By Jim Codd, one of our Band of Brothers who included in this "vision" the Wild at Heart themes

In 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul writes of being "caught up to the third heaven." He describes it as a paradise where he hears inexpressibly wonderful things that are so special man could not possibly describe them here on earth. In Ephesians, it is quite possible that Paul attempts to elaborate on such things as he speaks of all our heavenly blessings in Christ. He breaks out into a state of ecstasy as he describes what Christians have awaiting them in heaven and the purpose God has for the church while on earth. He talks of a living organism with many parts and Christ as its head, which rises "to become a holy temple in the Lord." Imagine the chapters in Ephesians as a description of rooms in that spiritual temple. Come on a tour of this magnificent place and delight in the promises that are yours to embrace and the passionate adventure they call you to live.

You stand staring at an exquisite building made of the most unusual bricks that seem to consist of the finest refined gold you have ever seen. The sun shines off them in brilliant arrays of all the colors of the rainbow. As you move closer, you notice a name engraved on each and every brick. You read through name after name until something stops you in your tracks. You stand staring at a brick with your name on it. The feelings flowing through you are unlike any you have ever felt before. You know you are a part of something much bigger than yourself and that reality sends a feeling of awe flowing through your body.

You hurry towards the grand front doors and enter with anticipation. You prepare yourself to experience things in a new way that will change you and the way you think forever. Your stroll through the front doors leaves you standing in the Anteroom, or waiting room, if you like. You can feel the holy presence of Christ in this place. A feeling of intense peace overcomes you as your eyes span across the immense beauty of the entire room.

The wall to your left is covered with exquisite tapestries and works of art proclaiming the love of God the Father. One says in large letters, "You were chosen before the beginning of the world." Another says, "You are holy and blameless in My sight." An adoption decree adorned in gold sits in the center of the wall surrounded by all the magnificent works of art. It states that you are an adopted child, fully loved, and guaranteed the full benefits of one of His children. In another place it states, "You are forgiven and all I

have is yours.” His words of love go on and on all over this wall. You feel His love so strongly that your heart fills with a joy and happiness that seems to remove even your greatest hurts and feelings of rejection. You try to let it sink in that you are a child of God as you walk across the beautiful marble floor.

On the wall at the other end of the room is written out the wonderful work of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the plan of the Father. You know the Father chose you, but now you see in a new light how the Son followed through with His father’s desire. He came and lived a perfect life only to willingly give it up to die on a cross as payment for your sins. A terrible death meant only for the most hideous criminals. All this just so He could spend eternity with you. Everything on this wall assures you that you were included when you heard the words of the gospel and believed them. They go on to explain that the Holy Spirit sealed you the moment you believed. This work of the Spirit guarantees your inheritance, which is waiting for you in heaven. An inheritance beyond anything you could ever imagine or desire. Greater than any treasure a person could receive while here on earth. The messages written on the two walls leave no doubt of the tremendous love God has for you. A love that is easily seen in His amazing plan.

You turn to your left where the inner wall is covered in a magnificent prayer which says, “Pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may fully give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him more intimately. Pray that He will also enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may know in a more powerful way the hope to which you have been called and the incomparably great power available for those who believe.” You let these words sink into your head and flow into your heart. They become your passionate cry to heaven. There are so many wonderful truths poured out all over these walls that it is hard to move on. A tremendous need arises from deep within you. A need for you to know Him more and to experience His delight more powerfully every day of your life.

Your thoughts are interrupted when a mighty angel calls your name. He instructs you that your time has come to move on. You look towards the entrance of the next room with a sense of wonder. Moving slowly toward the door, your heart overflows with joy, love, and acceptance. As you go, you hear, “I love you” over and over again! You have experienced the love of God unlike ever before.

You slowly enter the next room, which is called the Room of Equality. The first words you read send a jolt of humility running through your veins. In large letters it says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” You look around and see many different people from all walks of life.

Some look like former kings and others like beggars and slaves. There are many different nationalities and many varying ages. Everyone seems to be humbled by the truth of the same words you have just read.

To the right of those words is a gigantic wooden cross and to the right of the cross is another set of words. They say, "But because of His great love for you, God, who is rich in mercy, made you alive with Christ." You now understand more than ever that the cross is the bridge between the words of death on the left and the words of life on the right. There is no place for pride in this room. It is made clear that salvation is the gift of God simply out of His grace by faith in His Son and what He did. It is never by works so that no one can boast.

The effect is quite powerful. All present in the room sing a song of worship to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Never have you heard so many sing with such passion and joy with one accord. No one sits in boredom or refuses to sing along. They can't help but sing. The passionate cry of their hearts will allow nothing less. Everyone in the room is on equal ground before the cross and all feel a sense of unity to each other and to their King. Christ's abolishing of the law has broken down the dividing wall of hostility that rises between men.

As you let this magnificent truth sink in, you walk towards the entrance into the next room. A beautiful work of art sits over this doorway. On it are written the words, "All are His masterpiece." The words touch your heart because you can feel the work of God in your life and know He has a plan for it. As you move on, the word "unity" continues to run through your mind. You know the Father delights in the unity of His children and you hunger to delight Him by living it out.

You stand ready to enter into the next room while listening to the singing that continues behind you. An angel stands at the doorway telling you to prepare your heart and to bow low because this is the Throne Room of Christ. You are awestruck by the mighty appearance of this messenger, but that feeling does not compare to the one you feel for your Lord. Your heart jumps as you feel your devotion to the One who sits on the throne rise up from within. You are filled with excitement and fear all at the same time. You long to see Him, but worry that He will be disappointed with your life. He loved you enough to pay the price for your sins and you deeply love Him for what he has done. Your love for Him is greater at this moment than ever before. The verses you once just knew and took for granted now mean more than ever.

You enter with your head bowed low, but the overwhelming force of Jesus' majesty sends you crashing to your knees before Him. In a mighty

voice, the One on the throne calls to you and says, "Do not be afraid." His mighty voice flows with words of love and delight as He tells of His love for you. You look up with tears of joy flowing from your eyes and see that He has come to your side. He continues to speak to you with one of His hands on your head and the other on your shoulder. The loving touch of His hands removes the foolish notion that He is disappointed with you. His appearance is beyond earthly description and His eyes are filled with a tremendous and indescribable love for you unlike anything you have ever seen before. He assures you that your faith in Him allows you access to the Father with freedom and confidence because He continually intercedes for you. He understands all your struggles and knows how draining the temptations of the evil one can be.

You stand listening to Him who is the Alpha and the Omega for as long as you are permitted. You hear many of the truths you have read so many times in the Bible, but hearing them straight from His mouth is so much more powerful. You desire to remain there for eternity, but many others wait for this same experience. Soon you are ushered towards the door to the next room. You look back to get one more glimpse of your Lord and strain to meet the gaze of His eyes one last time. You promise yourself that you will remember the feeling you felt while He looked into your eyes and affirmed you with His touch.

You turn and move on. Along the wall to the doorway is another prayer. It says, "May you be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may be fully at home in your heart through faith. May you also, being rooted and established in love, have the power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. May you know this love that surpasses knowledge itself and be filled with all the measure of the fullness of God." You stand for a minute reading and pondering the prayer and echoing its words to the Father. They mean so much more to you now since you have stood in the presence of His perfect love. A love you know can only fully be grasped by a heart that is fully alive and open. You pray for a heart like this because you know such love could never be fully understood by a persons mind alone. You hunger to be filled with this fullness so that you might share it with those who do not understand such love.

Everything you have seen and understood stirs your heart to live a life worthy of such a calling so that you might be His light. Not so that you can deserve what you have been given, but rather out of a passionate love for the One who first loved you. Out of your heart come the words, "What once was done because of the law is now done simply out of love." You know

everyone needs to experience the magnificent gaze of His eyes and the words of life that flow like sweet music from His lips so that they might know this truth as well.

You walk through the next door into The Sanctification Room. In all of the first three rooms the blessings have been poured out so that they might saturate your very soul. Now the call is to passionately walk it out. You stop to read the first words within the room. They encourage you to be humble and gentle with tremendous patience and to do all in love just as you have been loved. Everything you have experienced so far makes this so much clearer. You know that this love is the key.

You go on a little farther and read that you are to always be pressing on towards perfection in Christ. Towards a maturity that will allow you to fully use your gifts for the growth of the entire body of which you are part so that the wisdom of God might be revealed through His church. No one part can function alone. All of the parts must work together so that God might be glorified.

In another part of the room you are encouraged to put off your old self and your old ways, which are being corrupted by deceitful desires. Instead, you are to put on your new self, which has been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. You know this will require a change in how you think, but you truly hunger for such a change. You want to bring glory to God and know it is your flesh that stands in the way.

You go a little farther where it states, “You are a new creation.” You know this means you are to stop speaking lies and only speak truthfully. You are not to sin in your anger or to steal anymore. You are only to allow wholesome things to come out of your mouth. You are to rid yourself of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and every other form of malice. None of these can be done in love so they can’t define you.

Instead of these, you are to be kind and compassionate. You are to forgive others just as you were forgiven in Christ. You are to let love lead the way. There is to be no sexual immorality or other impurities such as greed. No obscenities, foolish talk, or coarse joking because you know these would be out of place in your new life.

A large masterpiece sits above the others. It says, “Find out what pleases the Lord and do those things.” How you desire to walk this out. You see your calling and hunger to live it well so that you might bless the heart of God like a child longs to bless his parents. As you move towards the entrance to the next room, your heart fills with the truth that He is your strength and that He will enable you to walk in such a way! The statements

“Live in the light” and “Be holy because I am holy” echo through your soul over and over.

You know that all of the sinful things you have been commanded to lay down can no longer be a part of your life. Not because you are called into some form of legalism, but because those things simply are not who you are. You are a new creation and no longer a slave to sin. You are a child of the most high God. As you move along, your heart cries out, “For you Lord and for your glory,” until you feel it might explode.

You enter the next room and find it is filled with all types of musical instruments. The name of this room is The Melody Room. A brilliant banner hangs down in the center of the room with the words, “Be continually filled with the Spirit.” You know that the life you have been called to live must be done by the guidance of no one other than the Holy Spirit. You are not to live unwisely, but rather by the wisdom that comes from God through His Spirit.

All that you read just a minute earlier about being careful with what comes out of your mouth or heart is made clear as you turn and read the following words, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Instead of the unwholesome speech of the old self, there is to be the wholesome speech of the new self that edifies and encourages those who hear what you say.

You turn and read that you should sing and make music in your heart to the Lord with continual thanks for everything. You understand that this is what it means to be filled with the Spirit. You hunger to live in a state of continual praise even through hard times filled with disappointment. It seems impossible, but the joy of everything you saw in the first three rooms takes over and a song fills your heart. You move towards the door singing that song to the Lord.

Above the doorway, you read that the next room is the Room of Relationships. The sign as you enter calls for submission to one another out of reverence for Christ. One section of the room is the Family area. Here you read that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. This means so much more to you now that you have so dramatically experienced that love along your tour. You realize how important it is for a husband to really know the love of Christ in order to love his wife in such a godly and unselfish way.

Your thoughts take you back to the Throne Room where you heard the love in His voice and saw it in His eyes. The intimate knowledge of that love must be what strengthens and leads a man. There is no other way that such a command could be possible.

As you read on, you read that wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. You know when a woman allows herself to be under her husband's authority that it is really the wife obeying her Lord. You wonder how scary such a command would be if the husband was not submitted to Christ. It is easy to understand why so many marriages in the world today, that do not follow this pattern, end in divorce. The sacrificial love needed by both husband and wife must come from their intimate relationship with Christ and nowhere else. Then and only then can their marriage be fully glorifying to Him.

On a work of art below the others is a command to children. It makes a clear statement that cannot be misunderstood. It says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." A promise comes with this command. It states, "If you will honor your father and mother things may go well with you and you may enjoy a long life." Here you realize that children have a responsibility before Christ and are under His authority just like their parents.

You pause to think of all the children you see everyday that come nowhere close to honoring this command and wonder if they even know such a command exists. You wonder if parents know it is their duty to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord instead of making unreasonable commands that only frustrate them. Your heart is saddened as you think of all the abused and unwanted children in the world who have never had a chance to fulfill this command.

It is clear in your mind that the hope of any home depends upon the level of intimacy each of its members has with Christ. They must desire to listen to His direction in life and follow it. You decide in your heart that you and your house will serve the Lord and seek Him daily so that you might bring Him glory and offer hope to those who don't yet know Him.

You turn to the other side of the room and see examples of many other relationships. It is made clear that you are to honor your boss and do your work unto the Lord. You are instructed to submit to the laws of society and to leaders within the church. People are to love each other and consider others more important than themselves. Every call to submit has its trace back to submission to the Lord himself.

Your mind races to imagine a society where every man, woman, and child loved the Lord so dearly that they followed these guidelines out of a passion and desire to please Him. What an amazing world that would be! You see so clearly how these very concepts go back to the Trinity and how they are depicted in the perfect relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Standing there, you see everything so clearly and wonder what it is that seems to disrupt that clarity so often. You head towards the last door when you hear the voice of your Lord speaking in your heart. The statement, “There is a fierce battle for your mind” makes you stand up straighter and look around intently. You walk quickly towards the last room and stare at its name with wide eyes.

The name written above the door is The War Room. You enter with your heart racing. The first things you notice are hundreds and hundreds of pieces of armor all over the four walls mingled in with all different sizes and styles of swords. The statements, “Be strong in the Lord and His mighty power” and “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the devil’s schemes” cover part of the wall directly in front of you.

To your right you read, “Your struggle is not against people, but against the rulers and authorities of the dark world who are the spiritual forces of evil located in the heavenly realms.” Your mind fills with a vision of a large detestable army of hate that seeks to devour and destroy those created in God’s image. You know they have one desire and that is to completely destroy the glory of God that is reflected in those created in His image and likeness. They hate almighty God and despise all image bearers.

You see with vivid clarity why it is so important for the church to be united and built up. This army loves to divide the church with petty disagreements and unwavering pride, but you know this must stop. You also see that this unity must start in the church and flow out into each home. Then this unity must flow from each home out into the community as a whole. All of the foolish fighting you see between Christians all over the world goes against this need for unity and weakens the fight against demonic forces. It is clear that the forces of evil are behind it all.

As your body starts filling with adrenalin, you turn and walk across the room to where you can actually put on each piece of the armor. An angel stands next to the armor pieces. He summons you over next to him. You can tell he is a mighty warrior angel. He has each piece laid out in order and has a description telling what each is and what it stands for. He tells you that everything you need for battle is before you.

The first piece is the belt of truth that holds everything else in place. It helps remind you to stand firm in the truth of the gospel and who you are in Christ. There is nothing more important than truth when guarding against error in any area. The truth of God is what Satan will try and distort so that you will believe his lie and fall.

Next you take the breastplate and put it over your chest. This piece is very important for the protection of your heart. It is to protect you against

attacks on your righteous standing before Christ. A successful attack against the truth of this standing would be a wound to your heart that could take you out of the battle for good!

The shoes are next. They are quite a sight. They are large leather boots with spikes covering the entire bottom of them. As the sharp spikes glimmer in the light, you gently run your finger over one of them. You know these will help you to cover difficult terrain with ease and also keep you from losing your footing along the way. With these, you are always ready to go out in any situation anywhere in the world with the Good News of the gospel. There is no mountain you can't climb and no valley that is too steep.

You are starting to feel quite prepared, but there is still more. The next piece is a magnificent shield of faith. It is made of two layers of wood bonded together and then covered with leather and iron. This piece will allow you to fend off all of the lies the devil will shoot your way. You are reminded that a Christian's faith is his protective shield from anything the forces of evil bring against him.

After the shield, you take the helmet of salvation. It is made of bronze and leather and serves to protect your mind and keep safe the truth of your salvation. You remember many times when you doubted your own salvation and now realize the warfare that was taking place. You now stand there well protected by all of the defensive pieces you have been given.

One more piece awaits you. You are handed the most exquisite sword with a shimmering razor sharp blade and intricately carved gold handle. It feels powerful in your hands as you swing it from side to side. This is the Christian's only weapon of offense. You are reminded that in the Bible the "Sword of the Spirit" is the word of God. This sword represents the truths of the word of God. Now, more than ever, you realize how important it is to read and memorize the Bible. Without scripture, it would be impossible to stand a chance against all of the forces of evil. Without God's word imbedded in your heart and always on your tongue there is really no way to fight back and take ground from the enemy.

While you are deep in thought you hear a voice calling you to higher heights. It warns you to always be on your guard and to continually pray for everything and everyone on all occasions. You understand that the armor and the sword are not to be used apart from a deep relationship with your Father in heaven, your Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who indwells you. They offer no power and are of little value without the holy intimate presence of God in your life.

Feeling like a true warrior, you move towards the final doors that lead out of this magnificent building and into the world that now seems so much

clearer. You pause to think back over everything you have experienced in this magnificent place. Part of you longs to stay in this place, but another part knows you must take your place in the great battle. The battle to restore God's glory in all the earth awaits you beyond these doors.

You hear the words of your Lord speaking to your heart, "Go and make disciples of every tongue, tribe, and nation. Remember to always be salt and light in the world showing them my love and telling them of my truth. Continually be on your guard because Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour and destroy those who are in my image. Walk courageously knowing that I am always with you even until the end of the age." Filled with courage, confidence, and a passionate love for your Lord, you walk out the final doors and into the world that awaits you.

THE END