

THE CHURCH

2 CORINTHIANS | WEEK 3: JAN 24, 2016

PAUL'S NARRATIVE AND THE CHURCH

But a word like *ekklesia* is only part of the picture for understanding how Paul describes the church in his epistles. So, just because the word *ekklesia* does not occur cannot solely be the basis for determining whether the passage is part of Paul's theological understanding of the Church.

A better approach is to recall Paul's narrative as it relates to the Church:

1. Creation: aka The Garden of Eden as a Temple (Genesis 1-2)
2. Humanity (Adam): aka God's priests in the Temple/Garden (Genesis 1:26-28)
3. Israel: aka God's assembly (*qahal/ekklesia*) and a nation of priests (Ex 19:6)
4. Messiah: aka Jesus...or all of the above. (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

These parts of Paul's story inform how he understands "The Church." So even if "church" does not occur in a passage, Paul may still be referring to a theological implication for the Church. Often Paul uses *Ekklesia* to refer to number 3, Israel. Yet, for Paul all of the parts are necessary.

2 CORINTHIANS

Paul's continued discussion in the temple in 2 Corinthians suggests further that he compares the church to a temple because he understands it to be the inaugurated fulfillment of the expected latter day temple.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:16-18 (THE CHURCH AS THE END TIME TEMPLE)

Read 6:16a. Paul cites several texts from the OT to support this declaration about the Church being the temple:

2 Corinthians 6:16b

1. Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:26-27 (cf. Ex 29:45). Christians are the beginning fulfillment of the actual prophecy of the end-time temple.
2. Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 11:17; 20:34, 41. Intriguingly, Ezekiel 11:16 says that when Israel was in captivity God 'was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone'! This assertion is made in direct connection with Ezekiel 10:18, in which 'the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple' in Jerusalem (similarly Ez 11:23). It is likely not coincidental that God's glorious presence departed from the temple and then is said to be with the remnant, who have gone into captivity. His presence would return with the restored people and would once again take up residence in another temple. It is likely that

this did not occur in the second temple that was built after Israel's return. God's tabernacling presence expressed itself in the coming of Christ, who 'tabernacled among' Israel, and they 'beheld his glory' (Jn 1:14). Those who identify with Christ become like the Corinthians, part of the true temple.

2 Corinthians 6:18

3. 2 Samuel 7:14; Isaiah 43:6; 49:22; 60:4. Son has been expanded into sons and daughters under the influence of three passages in Isaiah, the last of which includes in its context the promise that Israel will again worship at a restored temple (Is 60:7, 13). 2 Samuel was climactically fulfilled in Christ's kingship and his resurrection as the inaugurated creation of the ultimate temple. Here we find that the church also forms part of the temple foretold in 2 Samuel. Expanded to include Corinthian Greeks. New temple is another way of speaking of the new creation that resulted from Christ's resurrection (2 Cor 5:15-17). Christ and his people have become what the microscopic symbolism of the old temple foreshadowed.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTEXT TO 6:16-18

2 Corinthians 1:20 and 7:1 include the temple as prophecies fulfilled in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:5 (THE CHURCH AS THE INAUGURATED AND CONSUMMATED END-TIME TEMPLE)

That Paul has the temple image in view here is apparent from the phrase 'not made with human hands', which virtually everywhere else is a technical way of speaking about the new eschatological temple (Ex 15:17; Is 66:1-2; Dan 2:34, 35; Mk 14:58, Acts 7:48-49; 17;24; Heb 9:11, 24; Col 2:11).

In addition the reference to 'building', 'house', and 'dwelling' occur in Paul elsewhere with respect to Israel's temple or the church as the temple.

The Spirit is the beginning evidence of the new creation, wherein is resurrection existence and the abode of the cosmic temple. The Spirit is not merely an anticipation of the promise of these realities but is the beginning form of them (2 Cor 5:5).

References:

Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004.