



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

# Paul's Great Temple Prayer Bible

Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

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## SUMMARY:

Solomon's prayer dedicating the Jerusalem Temple was a high point in Israel's history. God responded by filling his house with glory. Echoing that event, Paul tells the believers they are God's dwelling place, then he prays for the believers as God's Temple, especially that they would grasp the dimensions of the church as God's multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-generational household. Realizing that we are God's NT Temple has major implications for us.

## Solomon's Great Temple prayer (2 Chron. 6:13-14) ;

### A. Paul's Great Temple prayer (Eph. 3:14-21)

- "The great 'Temple Prayer' of...Ephesians (3:14-19)"—Samuel Chadwick
- "Paul prays for the church...[He echoes] Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the Temple."—Robert MacArthur

### B. Links Between Paul's Prayer & the Temple (Eph. 2:21)

- "There are *obvious connections between the temple* [Eph. 2]...and *the prayer of Eph. 3*"—Grant Macaskill
- 1. "For this reason"—because the church is God's Temple (Eph. 3:1, 14; 2:19-22)
  - "'For this reason'...we're carried back...to the *spiritual temple*...in Eph. 2...This [is] *the key to the...[prayer]*"—John Eadie
  - In "Eph. 3...Paul...is praying...in light of the reality that God...made *the church to be his new temple*" —Tim. Gombis
- 2. **Apprehend the Dimensions—the Prayer's Central Point**
  1. The Symmetric Structure of Eph. 3:14-21 [John Paul Heil]
    - <sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before **the Father** <sup>15</sup> from whom **every** family in heaven & on earth is named.

- 16 I pray that he may grant you...to be strengthened with **power** in your inner being through his Spirit,
  - 17 that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts thro' faith...that you, being rooted &...established *in love*,
  - 18 may *have the strength to comprehend* with all the saints...*the length & width, height & depth*
  - 19 & to know **Christ's love** that...passes knowledge, so...you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
  - 20 Now to him who has **power** to do...beyond all we ask or think according to the **power** that works in us—
  - 21 to **him [the Father]** be glory in the church & in Christ Jesus to **all** generations, forever & ever. Amen.
  - [John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love...*, pp. 25, 149]
2. In “the dimensions...in Eph. 3:18...these adjectives *modify no substantive noun*, leaving the reader wondering ‘the breadth, width, height & depth of what?’ –Mark Stirling
  3. “*length & width/breadth, height*”—architectural dimensions refer to: o God's House—Tabernacle/Temple & their furnishings (Ex. 25-27; 2 Chron. 3-4; Ezek. 40) o God's City—Jerusalem (Zech. 2:2) & New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:16) This suggests:

**C. Apprehend with all the saints the dimensions of God's spiritual temple (Eph. 3:18)**

1. Christianity not individualistic
2. “*with all the saints*”—Comprehend in Community
3. “*With all the saints*”—multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-generational, etc.
  - Dimensions “point back to the...temple...If this is the case ‘comprehension’...is to be made in concert with the multi-racial saints”— Richard Cozart
4. “*With all the saints*”—locally & universally

**D. Prayer for Filling God's Cosmic Church-Temple (Eph. 3:19)**

1. Prayer's Climax— “...so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:19b)
2. As God's Glory *filled* the Tabernacle/Temple (Ex. 40:34-35; 2 Chron. 7:1-2; Ezek. 43:5; 44:4)
3. Now Paul Prays that the Church, God's Cosmic Temple, will be filled (Eph. 3:19b)

**E. Paul's Doxology—“to him be glory in the church...” (Eph. 3:20-21)**

1. “Eph. 3:21...is the only place in the NT that mentions the *glory of God 'in the church'*.”—Tim. Gombis
2. “The church *does not exist for itself but for God & his glory*”— van Aarde
3. “Ultimately, the church exists for the glory of God...” —Milfred Minatrea

**F. Implications of the Church as God's Temple**

1. Tabernacle/Temple –Central Reference Point for God's People
2. “The Church is God's Temple (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16)
  - “*You [pl.] are God's temple*” (1 Cor. 3:16) “The building...belongs to God...[it is] God's Temple. The church does *not* belong to any *apostle or teacher*, but to God alone.” –E. Schnabel
  - “The church...is...created...to participate in God's mission...The *church's nature, ministry, & organization must be put in the correct sequence.*”—J. T-K Chai

**QUESTIONS:**

- o Please read through Paul's “Great Temple” prayer & praise (‘doxology’): Eph. 3:14-21.
- A. 3:16-17 are a pair of requests; what tasks is Paul asking the Spirit & Christ to do? How might these tasks be related to one another?
  - B. 3:18-19 are also a pair. Paul prays that the believers “may have the strength” to do two things. What are the 2 things? [1.] .... ? [2.] .... ?
  - C. 3:18 talks about dimensions—“breadth/width, length, height, depth;” what is the object of these dimensions? Compare Eph. 3:18 in different English NT versions (e.g. ESV, CSB, NIV, etc.) Do you see any differences?
  - D. If you have easy access, do an online search of the Bible for the terms—“length, height, breadth (width)” or “long, high, wide.” In the Bible, what do these dimensions typically describe? What does this suggest Paul has in mind in Eph. 3:18?
  - E. Can you detect the symmetric structure of this passage (Eph. 3:14-21)? Focus on the key terms “Father,” “every/all,” “Christ,” “love.” Notice that, tracing these successive terms takes us from the ‘outer layers,’ towards the prayer's center. Based on this, what is *the central element* of Paul's prayer? [Is that the element we typically focus on?] Discuss

F. Looking at Paul's "Great Temple Prayer," in the context of the Church as God's Temple (Eph. 2:19-22), what does this imply? Some readers might apply the prayer strictly to themselves as individual Christian believers; what are they missing? What additional considerations are suggested by viewing Eph. 3:14-21 as Paul's "Great Temple Prayer"? Discuss.