

“The Chosen and Consecrated Temple” (2 Chronicles 7:11–22)(10.30.22)

2 Chronicles 7:11–22 (NIV84)

The Lord Appears to King Solomon

¹¹ When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, ¹² the Lord appeared to him at night and said:

“I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

¹³ “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. ¹⁶ I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

¹⁷ “As for you, if you walk before me as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, ¹⁸ I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.’

¹⁹ “But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰ then I will uproot Israel from

my land, which I have given them, and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. ²¹ And though this temple is now so imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?' ²² People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why he brought all this disaster on them.' "

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"The Chosen and Consecrated Temple"**

INTRODUCTION:

What day is tomorrow? It is Reformation Day. On October 31st 1517, the German monk, Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the church doors. This was a watermark day for a break from the Roman Catholic Church and the birth of the Protestant Church.

D.L. Moody refers to Martin Luther in a sermon about revivals:

"Then where did the Lutheran church come from, if it wasn't born of a revival in the days of Martin Luther? How any Lutheran can set his face against revivals is a mystery to me. **And God have mercy on a Methodist who doesn't believe in revivals, because that church sprang right straight out of a revival almost in our own day.** Where did Methodism come from, if not

from the revival under Charles and John Wesley and George Whitfield? Wasn't the nation stirred mightily under the preaching of these men?

Where did the Quakers come from if not from a revival under Fox? Is not our Young Men's Christian Association a result of the revival of '57? All our best institutions have sprung out of revivals; and yet many people are afraid of them, and bring up objection after objection against them."¹

"Methodist Churches are those which acknowledge their origins in a revival and reform movement begun by John Wesley and his brother Charles in England in the eighteenth century. While studying at Oxford University, the Wesleys, George Whitefield and others formed a "Holy Club" designed to foster greater Christian discipline, devotion, and concern for the poor. Fellow students derided them as "Methodists" because of their disciplined spirituality.

Christian perfection. perfect love, entire sanctification or simply *holiness* became the terminology of choice for a new experience of Christian living. John, the evangelist and organizer, and Charles, the evangelist and hymnist, led the Wesleyan revival **and helped change the face of English society** in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Across the Atlantic **the movement shaped much of American religion** in the nineteenth century and continues to influence contemporary Christianity and society.

¹ Moody, D. L. (1900). *Moody's Latest Sermons* (p. 109). Fleming H. Revell.

Wesley's understanding of regeneration and sanctification emphasized the actual change in the believer, not just a change in status before God. Righteousness was not just imputed but imparted and made real within them through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The end of the process in this life was a perfection in God's own love which extended to fellow Christians and all neighbors—"faith working by love" in the here and now.

For Wesley, a holiness that was not practical and social was no holiness at all. Wesley's chief contribution to the Christian church was his insistence that biblical Christianity must ultimately be tested by whether or not it restores the moral image of God in the lives of men and women, thus producing the Christian life promised and commanded in Scripture."²

Out of the Methodist movement, Wesleyan Theology has spread across the globe. Today, there are over 100 of these different expressions or denominations in the world. In fact, just this past May 1st, a new methodist denomination was launched. It is called the Global Methodist Church. You can read about it on page 6 of the bulletin. It is mostly populated by those who have left the United Methodist Church over grave concerns about current leadership and neglect of the Holy Scriptures.

BODY:

² Reid, D. G., Linder, R. D., Shelley, B. L., & Stout, H. S. (1990). In *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. InterVarsity Press.

So, what does all this have to do with today's scripture? This scripture is extremely relevant today as it has been throughout Church History. As the Temple of the Lord was chosen and consecrated by Almighty God so is the Church, the Body of Jesus Christ. The Church is always evolving. And amazingly enough, with all the human flaws and sin, even in the Church, The Almighty God is ensuring that the good news of Jesus is still being promulgated to the four corners of the earth.

Now, this week's memory verse is our 14th verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV84) if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. It is often cited and is well known.

Most often we hear it applied to the United States of America, to the nation. This is a slight misuse of the verse. Instead of hitting the bullseye, it strikes one or two rings off dead center. Remember that America is not Israel. Israel was a PEOPLE before they were a nation. They were The Chosen People; thus, Israel the nation was "chosen."

Deuteronomy 7:6 (NIV84) For you are a **people** holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. Deuteronomy 26:19 (NIV84) He [God] has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the **nations** he has made and that you will be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised.

One reference explains: "By virtue of being chosen, the object becomes precious to the one who chooses it, even if to no one else. When God chose Israel, He placed His blessing upon them. The names of His people were given a special role in His redemptive purposes. Through them He would reveal Himself in Christ."

Twice God speaks here about choosing:

First: choosing the place of the temple, which would include the Temple itself. It was chosen as a place of sacrifice.

Of course, we understand that the Jerusalem Temple was the center of the sacrificial system. "As an integral part of the life and worship in ancient Israel, the sacrificial system is a focus of much of the legal material in the Old Testament. For instance, the first seven chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy chapters 17 & 18 give guidance. The system included not only sacrifices of animals, but also other offerings that were presented at the altar, including grain and wine.

The sacrificial system offered a way for the people to atone for sin, to give thanks or praise to God for blessings, to complete purification rituals, and to dedicate themselves in worship to God. These were all means for the community to maintain relationship with the Lord."

Because of the Lord Jesus, that sacrificial system has been superseded. Hebrews 10:11-14 (NIV84)

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when

this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Second: In the second instance of God choosing it says, the Temple was chosen so that God's Name may be there forever.

To understand the significance of God's name we must remember that the Jews would not speak the name of Yahweh out loud because He is so Holy, Holy, Holy that no human being was worthy to have God's Name on their lips.

The other day while I was playing pickleball with someone I had just met, they cursed a couple times after missing shots. I didn't say anything. When he used the name of "Jesus Christ" as a curse, I said simply, "No blasphemy." He replied, "Right no blasphemy." What does that reveal to use God's name as a curse?

"There was power, reputation, and respect attached to God's Name. To merely refer to "the Name" was a clear reference to the proper Name of Israel's God." To give some good insight into the significance of God's Name, and especially as related to the Temple, let us read what King Solomon says in 1 Kings 8:41-43 (NIV84)

⁴¹ "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your **name**— ⁴² for men will hear of your **great name** and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when

he comes and prays toward this temple, ⁴³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your **name** and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your **Name**.

As Christians, we understand the significance of Jesus' name. We are told in several places that when we pray in the Name of Jesus, our prayers will be heard and they will be answered.

Additionally, Paul proclaims in Philippians 2:9–11 (NIV84)

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the **name** that is above every **name**,

¹⁰ that at the **name** of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

My friends, you and I bear the name of Christ because we profess to be Christians. We have a hymn: "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" that repeats these phrases:

1 Lord, I want to be a Christian
in my heart, in my heart.

2 Lord, I want to be more loving
in my heart, in my heart.

3 Lord, I want to be more holy
in my heart, in my heart.

4 Lord, I want to be like Jesus
in my heart, in my heart.

The LORD warned Solomon and all of Israel that He is sovereign – He commands locusts, brings plagues, controls the weather, moves nations, and brings disasters. And, that God would be watching and listening to ensure His people were not falling into idolatry or forsake the Lord their God.

At the same time, God hears the prayers of His people, those called by His name. First, we must come humbly, confessing our sins, repenting of our sins, in complete sincerity. We must turn from our wicked ways and turn from them and seek God's face. That means God's presence; and recognize Who the Lord is according to the scriptures. Then, God will forgive sin and heal the land.

My friends, that is the order of things. When the chosen people of God are revived, then the nation will be healed; the literal land and the figurative land. I tell you now that when the Church gets right with God, then the outer rings of the bullseye will be strongly influenced too. It happened in England in Wesley's day and it can happen here in America in our day and time too.

The Apostle Peter makes it clear that we Christians are the people of God that bear His name. Acts 15:14 (NIV84) Simon [Peter] has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking **from the Gentiles a people for himself.**

1 Peter 2:5 (NIV84)

⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Four verses later - 1 Peter 2:9–10 (NIV84)

⁹ But you are a **chosen people**, a royal priesthood, a **holy** nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are **the people of God**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

AND, because of that, we bear a serious responsibility. We should not be surprised by the dramatic decline of Christianity in our nation. The LORD warned King Solomon and the nation of Israel that even though His Chosen and Consecrated Temple was extremely important, it would unfathomably become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples if they forsook the LORD their God.

1 Peter 4:16–17 (NIV84)

¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that **you bear that name**. ¹⁷ For **it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God**; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

At the same time, let us not miss that the LORD our God said that His **heart** will always be in the chosen and consecrated temple. Consider that for a moment. What happens in the Church is intimately connected to the heart of God. It is the desire of God's heart that the

people He has chosen would be consecrated for the Kingdom of God.

Here is my devotion from *October 11th*

REVIVE US AGAIN by William P. Mackay, 1839–1885

Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? (Psalm 85:6)

The most desperate need of our day is a spiritual and moral renewal. This revival must begin with God's people, you and me—the Church. It must be more than a mere increase in church membership and attendance. There must be an individual resurgence of God consciousness, moral righteousness, and Christ-like living.

It must include the elements of humbling ourselves and turning from our wicked ways (2 Chronicles 7:14). Although spiritual renewal cannot be “worked up” by human effort, we can prayerfully desire and seek it. We can ask God sincerely for a fresh touch of His love and the desire to represent and serve Him more effectively.

Let none hear you idly saying, “There is nothing I can do,”

While the souls of men are dying, and the Master calls for you.

Take the task He gives you gladly. Let His work your pleasure be;

Answer quickly when He calleth, “Here am I, send me, send me!”

—Author *Unknown*

The author of this [hymn] text, William Paton Mackay, was a Scottish Presbyterian minister. After his education at the University of Edinburgh, he practiced medicine for a number of years before being called to the Christian ministry in 1868. Written in 1863 but revised four years later, this hymn text was based on **Habakkuk 3:2: "Lord, I have heard of Your fame; I stand in awe of Your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."** The hymn was included in Ira Sankey's *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs* of 1875, under the title "O Lord, Revive Thy Work."

We praise Thee, O God, for the Son of Thy love, for Jesus who died and is now gone above.

We praise Thee, O God, for Thy Spirit of light, who has shown us our Savior and scattered our night.

All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain, who has borne all our sins and has cleansed every stain.

Revive us again; fill each heart with Thy love; may each soul be rekindled with fire from above.

CONCLUSION:

There is this natural tension in scripture about the nature of the Church. On the one hand, we are called to unity. On the other hand, we are called to obedience. We are called to love and also to righteousness. We are called to be set apart from the ways of the world. We are called to live as the chosen people of God.

As in Wesley's day, the Church and the nation are in need of renewal through the pursuit of scriptural holiness and obedience to God's Holy Word. We need to come humbly before the Lord and He will hear our prayers. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us here at Emmaus Church of Smithville.

Anna Higbee has written a history of our church. Here are some excerpts:

"The early history of the Smithville Methodist Episcopal Church was written by Anna C. Collins in 1892. It is with very grateful appreciation of her efforts that this writer [our Anna] is able to even begin to consider the responsibility of compiling an updated History of the Emmaus United Methodist Church of Smithville. We are thankful she had the desire to make known to future generations some of the circumstances regarding the establishing of a Methodist church in our community. Her book, entitled History of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Port Republic and Smithville Charge, was published in 1892, when our congregation was 102 years in existence.

Although the Methodists are now the oldest congregation and have the oldest church building in Galloway Township, the Quakers of Leeds Point/Smithville were the first religious organization in what is now Atlantic County. When we were first organized, the Friends Society [the Quakers] was nearly 100 years old. They **ceased** their meetings and **closed** their meeting house around 1843.

The years during the 1780's and 1790's saw a period of rapid growth in Methodism in Southern New Jersey. The

class (congregation) at Smithville was founded in 1790 and was a part of the Salem Circuit, as reported to me by the Commission on Archives and History.

Prior to 1844, Smithville was called "Leeds." The villages now known as Leeds Point and Smithville were one, named for Daniel Leeds, Surveyor General of west Jersey. The class had about twelve members and, indications are, they met in private homes for a short time, until a church building could be obtained.

The Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church and the Methodist Protestant (M.P.) Church merged in 1939 to form the Methodist Church. The Evangelical United Brethren Church merged with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form what is now the United Methodist Church."

Is it time for Emmaus Church of Smithville to move to a new expression of Wesleyan theology? Is that actually a move to original Wesleyan theology based on the One Book, our Bible? Does the Global Methodist Church meet those standards? Is the Global Methodist Church the Chosen and Consecrated Temple of God?

Lord, may it be so. Lord, show us the way. My brothers and sisters, your elected leaders of Emmaus Church of Smithville ask you to pray for them, for wisdom and discernment.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.