

“...the temple begins to expand as its boundaries include Gentiles from around the world. [It] will continue to expand to include more and more people until God’s presence will pervade the entire earth at the end of the age....” (106-107)

7. The same idea is found in 1 Cor. 3 where God’s people are a Temple (3:16) that **grows** by the word of God which Paul planted, Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the “**growth**” (*auxanō*).
 - Paul is a “master builder” and that same Greek description is used of Bezalel wise builder of the tabernacle (Exod. 35:31-32).
 - There is a foundation and the building must have costly materials for building – gold, silver and precious stones – just like the Temple (cf. 1 Chron. 29:2).
 - In the wider context of 1 Cor. 3, Paul builds not with human words of wisdom, but with the “words... taught by the Spirit”.
 - God’s word is compared to gold and silver (Ps. 19:10, 119:72; Prov. 8:10) and it is by God’s word that his Temple grows.

“God’s dwelling place grows by the ministry of the word of God. This obvious truth bears repeating, since the desire for quick results in the church often trumps the arduous demands of the faithful ministry of God’s word. Myriads of books and conferences prescribe the latest method and program to bring people to church. However, such methods and programs are only effective insofar as they connect people to the riches of the word of God.” (108)

B. Growth in a Context of Suffering

- We grow by God’s Word but often it is through **trials** and **suffering**.
- Suffering strengthens God’s Temple (the Church) and reveals **God’s power and glory** through us (2 Cor. 4:7ff.).
- Suffering reminds us of our **eternal hope** and future glory (2 Cor. 5:1; 4:17–18).
- The Church often grows most through **faithful suffering**—“*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*”
- Faithfulness in suffering is essential to the growth of God’s Temple (the Church).

Based on: *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* by G.K. Beale and Mitchell Kim (Crossway, 2014)

Review

- Jesus judged and cleansed the Temple because it had failed its purpose as God’s house of prayer.
- He foretold the Temple’s destruction and identified **his own body** as the true Temple, rebuilt in three days.
- Jesus became God’s dwelling place among humanity—the fulfillment of the Temple (Jn. 1:14).
- He is **Jacob’s Ladder** (Jn. 1:51), the **source of living water** (Jn. 4 & 7), and **greater than the Temple** (Mt. 12:6); Temple veil torn at his death.
- Jesus is the **Cornerstone** (Mt. 21:42) of God’s new Temple.
- As the **New Adam**, Jesus defeated Satan and began a **new creation** through his death and resurrection.
- In the **Great Commission**, Jesus gave the Church Adam’s original mission: spread God’s kingdom and presence to **all nations**, fulfilling Old Testament promises.

“The outward walls of the temple in those days were covered with so much gold that they were blinding in ‘fiery splendor’ at sunrise [Josephus]. Its beauty was so well known that ‘no one has seen a truly beautiful building unless he has seen the temple’ [Mishnah]. How could God’s people be identified with this beautiful architectural structure and temple (1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 2:5; Eph 2:22)?” (99)

I. Reconciliation & Purity in the True Temple (the Church)

A. Reconciliation is possible in the Church as it brings Jew & Gentile together in worship – Eph. 2:11-22; cf. Isa. 56-57.

1. Reconciliation and a creation of one new people (new man) was possible through salvation by Jesus’ blood (1:7; 2:1-10).
2. This brings peace with God (v. 14) & each other (v. 17-18).
 - Paul alludes to Isa. 57:19 “Peace, peace, to the far and to the near”, in a context (56:6-8; 57:14-19) about the Temple where Jews & Gentiles are reconciled and restored in God’s presence.
3. The Church is “being joined together” to grow “into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21-22).

“In the ancient world... mortar [wasn’t used], but... each stone was chipped away and refined to fit into [a building]... God [likewise] shapes and forms each believer (sometimes painfully) to be ‘joined together’ into something far more glorious, the ‘dwelling place for God’ (Eph 2:22; see also 1 Pet 2:4-5).” (101)

- To endure this process we must depend on the Holy Spirit.

B. Purity and Holiness is Required of the Church since She is God’s Temple – 2 Cor. 6:6-18; cf. Lev. 26:11-12, Ezek. 37:26-27.

Lev. 26:11-12 “I will make my dwelling among you... I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people.”

Ezek. 37:26-27 “I... will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

1. Both of these OT prophecies emphasize “not an architectural temple but one whose essence was the end-time presence of God with his people.”
2. The Church fulfills this and is called to be pure & holy (2 Cor. 6:17).

II. Growth (of the Temple-Church) Through the Word of God & Despite Suffering

“The church ‘grows’ (auxanō)... into a holy temple in the Lord’ (Eph 2:21).

Buildings are naturally static, but living organisms grow. So how can a building grow? The church as a temple fulfills God’s intention for the expanding Garden-temple seen in Genesis 1:28 (in the context of Gen 2-3).” (104)

A. Growth by the Word

1. In Eden, growth would come by obedience to God’s word.
 - God’s mission for Adam & Eve was to “increase” (translated into Greek as *auxanō* “**grow**”) and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28).
 - Disobedience to God’s word led to expulsion & failure; and it was God’s word was twisted by Satan and later Eve.
2. In Acts, the Church’s mission is also to expand & fill the earth (1:8).
 - As the mission is fulfilled, it is described as the Word of God “**growing**” (*auxanō*) – Acts 6:7; Acts 12:24; 19:20.
3. Also, in Col. 1:5-6, the word grows:

*“the word of the truth, the gospel... has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing [auxanō ‘**growing**’] —as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.”*

- God’s word multiplies disciples and causes the church to grow.
4. In Eph. 4:15-16 **growth** (*auxanō*) comes from “speaking the truth in love” causing the body [the body of Christ, the Church] to **grow**.

“Our growth into maturity in Christ is only possible by constant and ongoing exposure to the word of God through one another.” (105)

- The growth of the body in Eph. 4:16 is linked to the growth of the Church-temple in Eph. 2:21.
 - Our corporate spiritual growth through the Word is part of the fulfillment of the promise that the Church “being joined together, **grows** (*auxanō*) into a holy temple in the Lord.” (2:21)
 - 4 word pairs emphasize the connection between these verses.
 - **2:21** ... **4:16**
 - “whole” ... “whole”
 - “structure [building]” ... “builds itself”
 - “being joined together” ... “joined and held together”
 - “grows” (*auxanō*) ... “grow” (*auxanō*)
 - The expansion of the Edenic Temple finds partial fulfillment in the Church “growing” through God’s Word (spiritually growth as well as evangelism).
5. 1 Peter 2 also connects growth through the Word of God.
 - 1 Pet. 1:23 indicates believers are born again through “the living and abiding word of God”.
 - Believers “long for the pure spiritual milk [of the word], that by it [they] may **grow** (*auxanō*) up into salvation.” (1 Pet. 2:2)
 - Such believers are “being built up as a spiritual house” as “living stones” to form a Temple.

“This ‘spiritual house’ is the temple in which we serve as priests to offer our sacrifices, and we grow by the spiritual milk of the word of God.” (106)

6. The growth of the church in Eph. 2:21 and 1 Peter 2:5 is understood as the growth and expansion of God’s temple.