

God's Legoland

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-5 Larry - R&R. F&F. Church Bap/Fam Fun Day. Steve McQueen Movie.
- B. Slide6 Israel Info Mtg #2. Next Sun after 3rd.
- C. Prayer: *For many they see only a hopeless end, but we as Christians rejoice in an endless hope.*

II. Slide7 Intro:

- A. Growing up there were 2 main building sets I played with as a child: Lincoln Logs & Legos. As way of introduction to our topic I'd like to read you a Lego parable.
- B. A Parable from the Land of Lego's (from Eph.2:11-22)
- C. Once in the land of Lego's a builder decided to construct a house to dwell in, using only blue blocks. Slide8a It wasn't that he didn't like the other colors, matter of fact he longed for each & every color *to desire* to be a part of his home. When the blue building was complete the builder moved in.

But quickly some of the blue blocks decided they enjoyed their former freedom & decided to not be a part of the blue house any longer. Others complained of it being too bright once HE moved in. Others left as they wanted to *form their own little house...* a little less warm, & a little more religious. The house became a house full of holes, rather than a holy house. This eventually caused it to *topple*.

The builder came up with a new design. He used blue blocks that wanted to be a part, Slide8b but he also chose from every color of block. There was one difference this time, Slide9a he took block by block & painted them a beautiful deep red. That was the one requirement to be a part of his new home.

Grace was the nozzle which sprayed each block red. Faith was used as the mortar to put each in its perfect place. Slide9b The 1st block placed was called *Stone/Block of the Corner*, which lined up the rest of the entire house. Slide10 The builder then moved into his new house, as that's what houses are for. And this time it became not only a house, but a home; and not only a home, but a very Holy and Homey Home.

D. Slide11 Title: God's Legoland

1. Last week, God's gracious search for man, in reconciling him to Himself. Now, the broader scope of God's reconciliation.

1st what God has done for *sinner*s in general; now Jews/Gentiles in particular.

III. Slide12 FAR OFF BY SIN, BROUGHT NEAR BY GOD (11-13)

A. ONCE FAR OFF (11,12)

B. Gentiles were scorned by the Jews & called them **Uncircumcised**.

1. They were stating w/pride here's what you are **not**, & here's what **we're against**.

C. **Where does God live?** - The story of the Bible is about *God dwelling amongst us*. With Moses (face aglow). **Then** in the Tabernacle, in the *Holy of Holies*. **Then** same/same in the Temple. **And** then in the NT, Jesus came to earth, **and God dwelt on earth**.

1. **Where does God live?** In the **ancient world**, if you asked...

2. **A Greek**, they would respond...*Which God? We have hundreds*.

3. **The Ephesians** would respond...*have you not seen standing right over there, 1 of the 7 wonders of the ancient world, sitting on 70,000 acres of land, that's where God lives, She lives right there. And great is Artemis of the Eph's* (Diana)

4. **The Jews** would respond...*God is everywhere, but He makes His Holy residence w/us*.

a) So, the **Gentiles** would say, *God lives with us*. The **Jews** would say, *God lives w/us*.

D. **Where does God live?** - The Bible reveals only two groups of people. **Jews**...and *everyone else* (Gentiles, people on the outside).

1. **The Jews** thought God was with them because they were...**awesome**. **And others** were just...**less less than awesome**. [but maybe God dwells w/us for some *other* reason]

2. Obviously then these 2 groups did not like each other:

a) The **Jews** thought, *you're different, and I don't want you to be around me*.

The **Gentiles** thought, *you're different, and I don't want you to be around me*.

b) If a **Jew** & **Gentile** got married...on the day of the wedding, the Jews would hold a **funeral** for the Jewish person.

c) A popular phrase of the day was, *the world needs more gentiles because they are fuel for the fires of hell*. [at best Gentiles were seen as **dogs**]

d) And for millennia, the world has shown *anti-Semitic* hatred towards the Jews.

3. We've all been made to feel *we didn't fit in, we didn't belong. Excluded* from the cool kids (esp Jr.High).
- E. What some commentators believe is that, *since there was a large Jewish population in Ephesus*, Paul might just be *dignifying gentiles* to the Jewish audience there.
- F. **Circumcision** - Mark of God's covenant people.
- Gentiles you've been called the **UNCircumcision**, by a group with a very clever handle, *#theCircumcision*. [*lit. the so-called circumcision*]
 - They're trying to **exclude** based on that mark. Saying, *you're not part of us*.
 - Slide13a** But in vs.15,16 there is *an act of hostility* that ended *hostility...the cross*
 - There He absorbed all hostility. *You who* were once separated. *You who* once had no reason to ever sit next to each other. *You who* couldn't enter each others house. *You Jews*, who after traveling a distance, would wipe the Gentile dust from their feet. *There now, will be no hostility*.
- G. **Slide13b** *They were **without Christ**. They were **without citizenship** in Israel. They were **without the covenants of promise** in Israel. They were **without hope** of future glory and blessing as Israel did. They were **without a personal Messiah-Deliverer** and the Messianic Age. They were **without God** in the world. (*atheos/atheist, even though they had many gods*)
- So, the Gentiles were in a desperate situation: with no Christ, no citizenship, no covenants, no promises, no hope, no Messiah, nor God. **Thus, no purpose, nor direction in life.**
- H. **Slide14a NOW BROUGHT NEAR** (13)
- (13) **But now** parallels *But God* in v.4.
- J. Vs.13 sums up the Gentiles' condition in 2 words: *far off*.
- The problem of **sinners in general** (1-10) was **spiritual death**, the problem of the **Gentiles in particular** was **spiritual distance** from God & His blessings.
 - Note**, in the Gospels that whenever Christ helped a **Gentile**, He did it at a **distance**.¹

¹ Warren Wiersbe

- K. **Once were far off** – These are the kind of people God **receives** & shows **mercy** to:
1. **Those who are Helpless** He will **help**. **Those who are Homeless** He will **house**.
Those who are Hopeless He is the **Hope** of those who have no other confidence.
- L. **Been brought near** – once excluded **now** included.
1. This is **reconciliation** – to bring together.
 2. God not only **reconciles** us to **Himself**, **but** to **each other**.
 3. Reconciliation **is not a process**, **but an act** by which we are delivered **from estrangement to fellowship w/God**.
- M. **Slide14b** Jesus, shed blood that *sees no color*, but **red** itself.
- N. Those who were **separated** from the covenant have been **united**. Those who were **alienated** have been **reconciled**. Those who were **far off** have been **brought near**.
1. **Far off by sin, brought near by blood**.
 2. **Only in Christianity...a just Ruler dying for unjust rebels**.

IV. **Slide15 1 WALL DOWN, 1 NEW MAN, 1 BODY, 1 SPIRIT(or access) (14-18)**

- A. **ONE WALL DOWN** (14)
- B. When I 1st visited up-state New York, what surprised me was that there was **no walls or fences** between neighbors yards. [**all walls aren't bad**. *Separation vs. Protection*]
- C. (14) **He Himself is our Peace** - He didn't only make peace, **but** He Himself is our Peace.
- D. **Christ is that bridge** of Peace. **We...were His Peace Mission**.
1. **He** brings harmony and wholeness to people's relationship with God **and one another**. This fits well with Paul's theme/purpose of **unifying Jews & Gentiles**.
- E. **Both made one** - The external distinctions between Jews & Gentiles are no longer grounds for **hostility** and **division**.
- F. **Slide16a** Show wall of separation at Temple sight.
1. **Low wall 4 1/2' tall, 13 openings**. Block found in 1871 that read: **Slide16b No stranger is to enter w/in the partition wall & enclosure around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue**.
- G. **Jesus Christ tore down the wall...**

1. **The physical wall**, **for** in Christ all are made one.
2. **The spiritual wall** **and** brought the *far off* Gentiles *near*.
3. **The legal wall**, **for** He fulfilled the Law in Himself **and** ended the reign of the Mosaic law that separated Jews & Gentiles.

H. **Slide17a ONE NEW MAN, CREATED** (15)

- I. He rendered the Law **abolished** (inoperative) *It was rendered inactive in believers' lives.*
[**Like** my *credit card* this last week...**as** a precaution/possibly compromised *Rendered Inactive*]

 1. **Jews** sought to keep the Law with its commandments and regulations, **Gentiles** were unconcerned about them.
 2. This **difference** was like a **barrier** between them. **But now** the Law is inoperative, *Christ, the end/fulfillment of the Law.*

- J. **One new man** - The word **new** means, **new or fresh in character or quality**, **rather than new** in the sense of *recent in time*.
 1. Jesus **didn't** Christianize the Jews **or** Judaize the Gentiles.
He **didn't** create a half-breed. **He made an entirely new man.**

K. **Slide17b ONE BODY, THROUGH THE CROSS** (16)

L. **Slide17c ONE SPIRIT, WHO GIVES ACCESS** (17,18)

- M. Here is the critical part of all of this. **It was such a subversive & controversial statement of that time.** **Both have access to God.**
 1. Now **the Church** has blown this over the years, saying, *if you look & act like us you can have access to our God.* **Otherwise** you can join that church down the street that looks and acts more like you. [**the church struggled with:** not long ago it was a long hair/short hair issue. A Tattoo issue. A head covering issue. A pants vs. dress issue]
 - a) But here Paul reminds us, **Anyone** who wants access to God...**it's yours!**
 2. **Note**, throughout this book, **you** isn't used for **individuals**, **but** to **the corporate body**. It's written to a **group** of people. **Thus...**
 - a) We are now **fellow citizens** (19), of the same heavenly country.
 - b) We now live in the **same house** (20), we're family. **It's someone with refrigerator rights** (go to frig w/o asking).

- c) We are now together God's **Holy Temple** (21). **Where does God dwell?**
Here, with us, in us.

V. Slide18a **GOD'S LEGOLAND/FAMILY/TEMPLE** (19-22)

- A. **GOD'S LEGOLAND** (19a) *One Nation Under God*
- B. We are God's new society.
- C. Slide18b **GOD'S LEGO FAMILY** (19b) *One Family Under God*
- D. (19) This does not mean that **Gentiles** are incorporated into **Israel**, **but** that **believing Jews and Gentiles** are incorporated into *one new family*.
1. **Now**, can you imagine if we could do that with *denominations*, & with all our *ism's* that separate us?
 2. What new walls & barriers have **we** erected since that 1st century in church-ianity?
- E. Slide18c **GOD'S LEGO TEMPLE** (20-22) *One Building Under God*
- F. 1 Pet.2:5 *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.*
- G. Slide18d **Cornerstone** - Christ Jesus Himself is the chief Cornerstone, that is, He is part of the foundation.
1. In ancient building practices *the chief cornerstone* was carefully placed.
It was crucial because the entire building was *lined up* with it.
- H. **The goal** of this temple is to become *a dwelling in which God lives*.
- I. Who cares what a house **looks like**, **if** you can't **live in it**.
- J. (21) Paul closes by picturing **the church** as a temple.
1. **But** this isn't just a clever metaphor. **No**. **You are a holy temple**. **You are fit together** with this group of **Jesus** lovers/followers.
 - a) **Where does God live?** amongst His *fitted-together* people.
 - b) A *fitting* image not only for **the Jews**, who revered **their holy temple** at Jerusalem, **but** also for **the Ephesians**, who had **the great temple of Diana** in their city.
 2. **But** the word for **temple**? (*ieron* or *naos*?) **naos** = inner sanct.
- K. **Christianity is not a private practice of individual spirituality.**

1. To be a **Christian** **without** a church family, is to be an **orphan**. [nothing wrong w/being an orphan, **but** an orphan naturally longs to be in a family]
2. To say, *I have a relationship with God but I have no family*, is to say, *I'm missing out on something*.
3. People **joined together**, do something they cannot do when they're separated out. Together, Gods presence is made known in a real & unique way...*It's Why we gather*.
 - a) **Slide19 Legos** naturally, the way they're built, go together. There's something about a Lego that **wants to be** connected to **the other Legos**. You can tell by the way it's made. *It's designed to be connected to another piece, and that piece to another piece*. You and I in the body of Christ have been made the same way.
 - b) We were not intended to be by ourselves (oh it's not bad to spend time alone, **but it is something to be in the community of Jesus people**). He made us social beings. **Slide20** Think about it, *Legos by themselves...can do more damage* (ever step on 1?)
 - (1) People are dying to experience **something sacred, something transcendent, something beyond themselves**.
- L. (22) **A dwelling place for God to reside** – Wow, *Peace, access, one, one new man, Hope, nearness, fellow citizens, members of the household of God, part of His holy temple, & the dwelling place of God*.
- M. **Remember this is all of God** (from vs.4)
- N. **Slide 21** Oh yah, don't forget there's a baptism today.