

JESUS TEARS DOWN A WALL—AND BUILDS A KINGDOM!

Presented by

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As Blake explained to you in his lesson, “The Never-ending Kingdom,” for the past several months in our Sunday morning Bible class we have been studying about the life of Christ and the beginning of the church. For example, we learned from Matthew 16:18 that Jesus said He would build “His church,” and that “the gates of Hades would not prevail against it.” We also learned from that same chapter that Jesus gave one of the twelve apostles—Peter—“the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” through which the church would be introduced to people when the time was right. Then, as we studied Acts 2, we saw Peter use those “keys” to present the first Gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost following Christ’s resurrection from the dead. As a result of that powerful sermon, 3,000 people were baptized on a single day. And, as Acts 2:47 tells us, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

But in order for Christ’s church to be effective and successful, Christ had to do some “tearing down” before He could do any “building up.” What do I mean by that statement? As I think we all recognize, sometimes walls exist that no one can see or touch, yet everyone knows they are there. These walls quite often separate one group of people from another group of people. Sometimes they separate popular people from unpopular people. At other times they separate rich people from poor people. On occasion, those invisible walls separate people of one skin color from people of another skin color, or people who speak one language from people who speak another language.

In Christ’s time, however, there was an invisible wall that separated one group of people on Earth from every other person on Earth. You see, the Jews were God’s chosen people during Old Testament times. In fact, in Genesis 12:1-3 God promised Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, that through him He would bless “all families of the earth.” God chose the Jews to be a people devoted unto Him so that through them He could reveal both Himself and His mission—the redemption of humankind—to all people everywhere. The trajectory of that mission eventually would go from Abraham, to the patriarchs, to Moses, to Joshua, to the judges, to the kings, to the prophets—and ultimately would culminate in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, through Whom all of God’s promises would be fulfilled, and by Whom humanity would be saved from its sin. Along the way, the Jews were to serve as a faithful witness to all peoples of the Earth concerning God’s presence, power, purpose, and plan. The prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, referred to the Israelites as “**My chosen people**...the people whom I formed for Myself, that they might announce My praise” (Isaiah 43:20-21).

At that time, everybody who was not a Jew was a Gentile, and thus was not a member of the chosen race of Israel. The Jews were supposed to be good examples to the Gentiles so that the Gentiles would want to serve God correctly. But instead of the Jews being the examples they were supposed to be, they

began to look down on everyone who was not a Jew. They began to think that they were better than everyone else in the world because **they** were “**the chosen people of God.**” By thinking and acting in such a way, they erected a huge “invisible wall” between themselves and the rest of the world.

But God never wanted the Jews to look down on other people or consider others as somehow being less important or less worthy of God’s love. Rather, He wanted them to show the world how to do the right thing. Unfortunately, however, the Jews were not doing that. God therefore enacted a plan that He had created before the foundation of the world. He sent His Son Jesus to choose a new group of people. This new group would not be separated by nationality, skin color, language, or gender, but instead would include **anyone** who was willing to obey Jesus. In the book of Acts, we see both Jews and Gentiles obeying Christ’s commands and being welcomed into His new group of chosen people, known simply as “the church.” By allowing all people to become members of His church, Christ destroyed a wall that was bigger than the Great Wall of China. In fact, in Ephesians 2:14 Paul explained how Jesus “is our peace, has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. Paul made it crystal clear that the Jews no longer were the **only** “chosen people of God” when he said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus**” (Galatians 3:28). Jesus Christ **tore down the wall** that existed between Jews and Gentiles, and in doing so was able to **build a church for all people everywhere.**

And, as Blake explained to you so clearly in his lesson, Christ’s church is the one kingdom “that shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). In Genesis 3:15 God promised Adam and Eve that He would “bruise the head” of Satan. When Jesus rose from the dead three days after having been slain, God fulfilled His promise to our forefathers. Christ was victorious over Heaven’s Great Adversary, because, as the apostle John wrote, “for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). It was through the power of Christ’s death and resurrection that He was able to “destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). When Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18), **He meant every word of it.** And because God and Christ kept their promises to us, we today have the incredible privilege of being members of “the kingdom that shall last forever.” Can you think of **anything** more exciting than **that?!**