

The Church: God's Temple

Joe Slater

As a small boy, I thought the building was the church. Since it was God's house, I wondered in childish innocence if we could stop in to see Him!

The church really is God's temple. To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16). Paul referred not to the individual Christian as a temple, but to the church as a whole. He used the plural "you" (in the older versions it reads "ye," which is plural, as distinguished from the singular "thou").

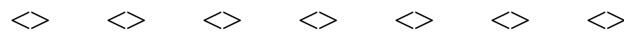
Of course, Paul refers to the church (1 Corinthians 1:2) as the collective group of Christians, not as any material structure in which they might meet. The true God *"does not dwell in temples made with hands"* (Acts 17:24). His temple is a spiritual one. Individual Christians are *"living stones"* within the walls of this spiritual sanctuary; together, they *"are built up a spiritual house"* (1 Peter 2:5). Paul described members of the Lord's church as *"having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit"* (Ephesians 2:20-22).

God's Spirit dwells within us both collectively (1 Corinthians 3:16) and individually (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). We know this by faith (because God's word says so), not by goose-bumpy feelings or still, small voices. Knowing God is always with us ought to encourage us and keep us from feeling alone.

Yet, God dwelling within us can also be a frightening thought, for *"if anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"* (2 Corinthians 3:17). Just as the Law of Moses required the Jews to reverence the Jerusalem temple and keep it holy under penalty of death, so God requires us to keep ourselves collectively and individually pure. Keeping the church pure involves doctrinal soundness and unity among members. The church at Corinth was plagued with false doctrines and corrupt practices, as well as divisions among church members. Today, many are corrupting the church with denominational doctrines and distortions of worship. Such things dishonor God by polluting His temple.

Individually, Paul especially warns us not to defile our bodies with fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18). Any impure behavior renders us unfit for God to live within us, as well as making us liable to His wrath.

What an honor it is to serve as host to our Creator, Lord, and Savior! We ought to be thrilled beyond words! Let us keep the church and our individual bodies holy so that God may be pleased to dwell within us.



What If It Had Been Real?

The Kilgore, Texas, *News-Herald* reported of a motorist removed unconscious from his wrecked car and carried to a nearby gas station. He came to, opened his eyes, and began to struggle violently. Eventually he was subdued and taken to a hospital. When asked why he had struggled so hard to get away from his rescuers, he explained that they had taken him to a SHELL station, and somebody was standing in front of the "S."

--via Buchanan Dam, TX

Remember

Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility (Ecclesiastes 11:8 NAU).

Sometimes we create more problems for ourselves by not learning from history, or not recalling truths that we have learned. There are some definite advantages to remembering those events or those truths. Solomon offers three admonitions to "remember":

First, in 11:8 he exhorts us to remember *"days of darkness"* – those times in our lives when things are not going well. We need to remember those days of sickness or struggle because it will help us appreciate more fully the good days.

Second, he exhorts us to remember *"your creator"* (12:1). It is important, especially in light of 11:9, that we do not forget our God. He is going to bring us to account for all that we have done in the body, whether good or evil (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:11-14).

Third, he exhorts us to remember Him *"before the silver cord is broken"* (12:6). While some of these words have to be supplied, they are certainly implied in the Hebrew. Death isn't going to keep us from thinking (cf. Luke 16:23-31), but it will be too late to think about following God. If one didn't make such a choice during his life, it will be too late after death. Therefore, Solomon urges all to remember God now – before death ends all opportunity.

Have you been remembering your God? Have you learned anything from the dark moments in your life? The wise man Solomon says you are a fool if you fail to keep these in mind.

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