

God's House, the Church

Mark 11:15-17
Charlie Brackett

When Jesus strode through the temple in Jerusalem, He found merchants buying and selling. He charged them with making God's house of prayer a den of thieves, and He drove them out. The lesson for us today should be obvious: God's house is not a place for men to pursue secular interests, but a place to worship God.

Under the law of Moses, the temple - a stone and mortar building - was the house of God. His presence was there over the mercy seat in the inner chamber, a place known as the Holy of Holies. Since Christ's death on the cross and the institution of His church shortly after, God's presence has not been in that temple. Since then the church has been His house. Not a building made with hands, but a spiritual house built of the souls of those who are saved.

Several passages of scripture teach this. Notice Acts 17:24,25. "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives all life, breath, and all things." Peter wrote to early Christians in 1 Peter 2:5, "...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." And Paul, in writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:15, spoke of "the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

On every hand today, we hear people speak of the building in which the church worships as the church. But the church is God's family, His disciples, not the building in which they meet. The church is His household. He dwells in it. Listen to Paul again in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." That's pretty plain language, and pretty serious business.

God's church was established by Him for the specific purpose of glorifying Him through teaching of His word. We dare not distort the Lord's purpose nor His dwelling for our own pleasure.