
Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5; See, Heb. 13:15-16). The worship of Christians is to be "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). Christians assembled together on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper, sing, pray, study God's word and give to the work of the Lord (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11; 16:1-2). Jesus set forth the mission of his church: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). The worship and mission of the church is far to important, far to urgent, far to holy to profane with the distractions of this world.

The church's function is not common activities! The church of the Lord, its assembly, its purpose and work is to be what the Lord wants, not to satisfy the whims of the crowd. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Paul had to remind the Christians at Corinth that their coming together as a church was not to satisfy their appetites. "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you... Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat (the Lord's Supper), wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come" (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34). Paul warned "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" (1 Cor. 3:15-17).

Sad to say, there are many religious people who have never learned the lesson of Jesus cleaning his Father's house. The motto of today's denominational megachurch is "Food, Fun and Games." Eating, socializing, playing and being entertained has become the method of choice to attract and hold a crowd. No longer is it enough to build a building as a place for Christians to gather, pray and study and worship God. Now many churches use money collected for the Lord to build and maintain kitchens, dining halls, gymnasiums, secular schools, theaters until these megasocial centers satisfy all the desires and whims of the crowd they seek to attract. In many places, the meeting place for the spiritual temple, the church, is

cluttered with the tables and merchandise of the world as the politicians, businessmen, entertainers, recreational leaders and social chairmen ply their goods, each trying to out shout the other gain the support of the church for their own projects. The practice of this "social gospel" has pushed aside the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

Just as there was nothing wrong with the merchants engaging in business in the day of Christ, there is nothing wrong with politics, business, entertainment, recreation or social activities. But the church is not the proper organization to provide or support such activities, nor is the church building the proper place for such. The spiritual temple of the Lord is to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" by coming together to worship God in spirit and truth.

Conclusion

The cleansing of the temple by Jesus brought immediate public attention to Jesus. No doubt the actions of Jesus roused the hearts and minds of many righteous Jews angered at the profaning of the sacred precincts of the temple with the bazaar. Jesus' disciples remembered the words of Psalms 69:9, "The zeal of thy house will consume me." The sight of Jesus striding through the temple courts, scourge in hand, driving out animals and men, brought to life the words of the prophet and personified zeal.

What if Jesus returned today with a scourge of cords in his hand? What holy wrath, what vengeance, what compelling zeal would move him. Into the midst of the churches he would stride, turning over the wares of the merchants of the social gospel, driving out the secular promoters, the game players, salesman and entertainers who ply their trade in the place of prayer. In his zeal he would throw out the gyms and "family life centers" filled with volleyballs, softballs, basketballs and games. Out would go the theaters, the guitars and drums and the entertainment centers. Next to go would be the dining halls with the punch bowls, coffeepots and crockpots. In righteous indignation Jesus would clean house and cry out, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise!"

"What! Do you not have
houses to eat and drink in?
Or do you despise
the church of God..."

1 Corinthians 11:22

Cleaning House!

The Lord's Church & the Social Gospel



Cleaning House!

The Lord's Church & The Social Gospel

“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, ‘Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.’ And his disciples remembered that it was written, ‘The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up’” (John 2:13-17).

When Jesus went to the temple, probably to offer prayer, he found not a quiet place of retreat for prayer but a noisy marketplace full of oxen, sheep, doves and moneychangers. The location of these business transactions was likely in the outer court of the temple, in fact this market became known as the “Bazaars of the sons of Annas.” The function of this bazaar was to sell animals without blemish, approved for sacrifice, to those worshipers who had no proper animals to offer. The moneychangers provided a service for a fee of taking different types of foreign coinage in exchange for the proper Jewish coinage. Every male Jew was required to pay a temple tax once a year of a half-shekel into the temple treasury and this tax could only be paid with Jewish coinage.

What a thrilling sight it must of been! What holy wrath, what vengeance, what compelling zeal he displayed. Jesus strode into the temple, the holy place of worship for the Almighty Jehovah. There in the Court of the Gentiles lay an open market. The market was filled with men exchanging foreign currency for Galilean shekels for Jewish pilgrims to pay the Temple tribute and other men selling animals for sacrifices, doves, sheep and oxen. Jesus made a scourge, a whip of small cords, and, in righteous indignation, drove before him the market mob. A scourge was a symbol of authority, wielded in the hand of him who held all authority.

Out of the temple he chased the men, sheep and oxen, he poured out the money of the changers and toppled the tables. In his indignation, Jesus drove the entire bazaar out of the temple courts. As Jesus cleansed the sacred place of worship, he cried out, “Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of

merchandise!” (Jn. 2:13-17).

Why? What stirred up the righteous zeal of the Lord? Some have suggested Jesus was moved to action because those in the temple were greedy crooks making scandalous profits from their busy trade. This cannot be the reason. Jesus could have seen greedy money changers and crooked merchants on any street corner in Jerusalem or even back in the Galilean countryside. All along the road to Jerusalem, moneychangers set up booths to provide coinage exchange to Jews traveling to Jerusalem. Jesus would have had plenty of opportunity to rebuke greed on his journey or even in the marketplaces within Jerusalem.

Principles Jesus Taught

The temple belonged to God, not to the Jews! The Jews spoke and acted like the temple and its worship belonged to them. If the temple belonged to the Jews than they could do whatever they wanted to do there. If the temple belonged to God, than they should do what God wanted done with it and in it. The tabernacle and later the temple was given by God for God. “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it... And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain” (Ex. 25:8-9, 40).

This is why Jesus called the temple “my Father’s house.” The temple and all in it and all the activities therein belonged to God, not to any man. The temple was a place set apart for worship! The temple was “holy” or set apart for worship to the Almighty God! “For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7). Jesus declared the temple was his Father’s house, a house of prayer (Jn. 2:16; Lk. 19:46).

The temple was not a place for common activities! Under the Law of Moses the priests were “to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Ezk. 44:23). The temple, the articles therein, the priests and the worship offered were all to be holy, set apart from the common activities of the Jews. They were to be dedicated to the worship and glory of God, not for the use of any activity men wanted to use them for.

The example of Nadab and Abihu, priests and sons of

Aaron, stand as a warning for all time against profaning the Lord’s temple. They died by fire from the Lord because they “offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them” (See, Lev. 10:1-4). God warned his people not to profane that which was dedicated to the Lord’s use. “‘Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,’ says the LORD” (Jer 7:11).

Jesus did not drive the moneychangers and merchants from the temple for doing business but for doing business *in the temple*. There was a proper place for business and a proper place for worshipping God. Merchandising was proper in the market but profane in the temple! The temple was his Father’s house, a place of worship and prayer, not a marketplace or a banking center. For this reason he cleaned house!

Principles Applied Today

The church belongs to the Lord, not His people! Today God no longer has a building located on this earth known as His temple. Christ replaced the physical temple with a spiritual temple, his church. “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 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 dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

The church belongs to the Lord, not to any man or group of men. “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men” (1 Cor. 7:23). The Lord “purchased (the church) with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Tit. 2:14). This is why the church is identified as belonging to Christ, “the churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16).

The Lord’s ownership of the church is denied by the belief and practice of many. They want a church that meets their needs. They want a church that serves them. They want a church to cater to their desires. Such people believe the church belongs to them and is to please them, not the Lord. And many “churches” alter their worship and work to please and attract these people.

The church’s worship and work is to be set apart for the Lord! Christians are “living stones...built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus

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