

“A House Of ...”

Introduction. When Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem and began to drive out the merchants and money changers, He said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13). What would the Savior say today when walking into modern structures claiming to be houses of God? Would He consider them houses of prayer, or something else? Would He likewise call them “den of thieves” because they house those using “religion” as a place of hiding while taking others’ money? Or would He just call them:

I. A House Of Pluralism?

- A. Because the notion that there is one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and one God has become foreign to them (Ephesians 4:4-6)?
 - 1. “Pluralism” exists when people are together in some association, but each maintains his own traditions, beliefs, and interests.
 - 2. This is clearly not the Lord’s desire for His house (cp. Philippians 2:1-2). Our Lord did not align Himself with any party or division.
 - a) There were four principle divisions among the Jews: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Zealots, the Sicarii, and the Essenes.
 - b) Although each advocated some truth, our Lord did not identify Himself with any of them.
- B. And yet, hungry for memberships at all costs, many churches have cast aside the truth of God’s word for what will be acceptable or popular with the masses. They stand for nothing and bow to everything (1 Timothy 4:1-6).

II. A House Of Payers?

- A. Since those in charge always seem to be asking for more money? There are two issues here requiring attention. The first is the authorized collection of funds and the second is the authorized expenditure of funds.
- B. Paul authorizes only freewill collections on “the first day of every week” — not “tithing” or asking for money every time there is an assembly (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; cp. 1 Chronicles 29:1-9).
- C. Churches typically need more and more money because they have more and more programs to support, which are usually not authorized by the New Testament in the first place. Obviously, there are expenditures associated with securing a place to meet for worship and study, but beyond this, what else does the New Testament authorize?
 - 1. The New Testament church used collected funds to support needy saints (Acts 4:32-35; Romans 15:25-27) and to financially support those preaching and teaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12-14).
 - 2. That’s it — period. If churches today would collect and spend money the way the New Testament authorizes, perhaps less would be needed.

III. A House Of Programmers?

- A. As there is a seemingly endless supply of new ones? This house is often a duplex with the house of payers!

1. Paul gave Timothy inspired instructions on how churches could and should be the purveyors of God's word (1 Timothy 3:15).
 2. Read both letters to Timothy and the rest of the New Testament to see if the programs, which seem so necessary to man, were a part of God's plan.
- B. While the Lord's church may have some modern-day programs (such as Bible classes for various subjects, i.e. new members classes and marriage/parenting classes) that resemble what denominations provide, most programs are simply unheard of in the New Testament nor can they be defended by expediency:
1. Camps/conferences/retreats.
 2. Singles/divorce recovery ministries.
 3. Christian school or day care programs.
 4. Music ministries.
 5. Weight loss seminars.
 6. Dave Ramsey Financial Peace seminars.
 7. Youth ministries with most of the attention given to recreation.
- C. What spiritual need exists that cannot be care for by teaching and preaching the gospel in public or private (Acts 14:1; 17:10, 17; 18:4, 7-8, 19; 19:8-9; 20:20)? Why have these programs that cater to the outer man in hopes of

IV. A House Of Players?

- A. Due to their emphasis on athletic teams and sports-related activities? Many churches now have not only basketball courts and playgrounds, but full workout centers with treadmills and water aerobics. They sponsor basketball, softball, football, and soccer teams to regularly compete in leagues with other churches.
- B. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul used athletics as an example to teach the importance of:
1. Obeying the rules (v. 24).
 2. Self-control (v. 25).
 3. Avoiding disqualification, vv. 26-27).
- C. He did this to teach spiritual lessons, not to authorize church sporting events or athletic programs.
1. Jesus did not come to train or entertain (Luke 19:10). The church of our Lord has a spiritual function (Romans 14:17; John 18:36).
 2. We have to respect the silence of the scriptures (1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9-11). The Lord only stated what He wanted, not everything He does not want. The assumption that we can do whatever is not expressly forbidden opens the doors for literally anything.
- D. Unfortunately, churches today are more interested in healing the sores on Lazarus than changing the heart of the rich man. Jesus did not come to get the people out of the slums, but the slums out of the people.

Conclusion. If you fear God, you will respect what He wants. Why not clean house and return God's house to being a spiritual one, rather than one of pluralism, payers, programmers, and players? If we do not, He will (Matthew 15:13).

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