

# The Temple Of God

*"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye" (1 Cor. 3:16f).*

This passage follows on the heels of Paul's exhortation that brethren take care how they build on the one foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Since the apostle had already said of Corinth, *"Ye are God's building,"* it is not surprising that he identifies that building as *"God's temple"*. In a later letter to Ephesus, he will speak of Jew and Gentile growing *"into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Eph. 2:21). This *"holy temple"* was for *"a habitation of God in the Spirit"* (Eph. 2:22). In his second letter to Corinthians he again declared, *"For we are a temple of the living God, even as God said, I will dwell in the and walk in them"* (2 Cor. 6:11). The Old Testament passage Paul quoted was found in Leviticus 26:12, Exodus 29:45, Ezekiel 37:27, and Jeremiah 31:1. When God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle it was that God might dwell among His people (Ex. 25:8). Such language was figurative as Solomon showed, for when the temple he built was dedicated he said, *"But wilt God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heavens cannot contain you. How much less this house I have built"* (1 Kings 8:27). God's nature has not altered since Solomon's day: He does not dwell in temples on this earth; they cannot contain Him. Still, the church is God's temple and as such, is holy. We dare not tamper with the temple of God for just as the tabernacle was erected according to God's design, so was the church. It reflected God's manifest wisdom and cannot be improved upon (Eph. 3:8-11). Those who destroy -- mar -- ruin God's temple will themselves be destroyed. It is not just the church which is identified as the temple of God. The body of the Christian is also said to be God's temple. *"Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have from God. And ye are not your own, but ye are bought with a price. Glorify therefore God in your bodies"* (1 Cor. 6:19f). Some think this passages teaches there is a literal indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian, but Christ no more dwells literally in the Christian than that He dwells literally in the church. Just as the temple of old was a memorial to God's name, so both the church and the Christian are a memorial to the name of God.

*"If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy."* God's temple can be destroyed in a variety of ways: by departure from truth, by corruption, or by division. Yet the end result to one who destroys the temple is the same: him shall God destroy.

We must always maintain a reverent regard for holy things. Israel was to respect the holy objects of the tabernacle and none but designated men were to touch and carry those objects. Uzziah (the man who stayed the ark from falling in 2 Samuel 6) had every good intention and likely acted by natural reflection, but his were "unholy hands" and he lost his life as a result of his thoughtless act.

Because God's church is his temple, we must respect the ordinances that surround it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

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