

The Church's Sacred Space

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John 2: 13-17, 1 Kings 6-8, 1 Chronicles 22, 2 Chron. 3-4, Various Others

God's people have always centered worship around a sacred space. Logical and practical reasons for a sacred space are: 1) An ugly space repels people and doesn't accurately reflect the beauty of Christ and the Gospel message. 2) It is a push back against over pragmatism which might include only a roof and four walls. 3) A facility creates stability and roots in an area. 4) In our culture events and gatherings happen in buildings.

The passage: John 2:13-17:

- V13, Passover had come in remembrance of the Israelites exodus from Egypt. Worship in the temple would have a required a temple tax (Ex. 30:11-16).
- V14, money changers and merchants would have been exchanging coins to pay the tax and selling animals for those who came to sacrifice. This was happening in the outer court where the Gentiles could assemble with Jews as merchants haggled with those needing to purchase animals for sacrifice.
- V15, Jesus made a whip and (1)drove out the sellers and their animals, (2) overturned the money changer's tables, and (3) ordered those selling pigeons to leave.
- V16, Jesus defends His Father's house. The holiness of the temple area was turned into a county fair. Jesus did not go to the High Priest to complain about the trading, nor did He picket or protest, and He didn't try to talk to them to try to persuade them to stop.
- V17, the disciples saw that Jesus demonstrated His zeal for the Lord. He was whipping cattle and people. The temple was His Father's house, and they were defiling the pure worship of God and the place of God made like His throne in heaven (Heb. 9, Is. 6).
- In the coming new covenant, the center of worship is Jesus. The temple is for Israel. The people are the place God's Spirit dwells.

Using an IF/THEN statement: IF sacred space doesn't matter because we are the church wherever we are, and IF the church isn't a building, and IF the soon to come New Covenant the center of worship is Christ and not the temple, and IF the temple was just for Israel, and IF the temple was to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, THEN why did Jesus care so much for this sacred space?

1 Chronicles 21:15, The threshing floor of Ornan was purchased by King David for the location of a future temple that his son Solomon would build (1 Chron. 21:24-25, 1 Chron. 22:7-10). This was the place where Abraham would offer Isaac called Mount Moriah. It was the place where Melchizedek would minister in Salem as the priest of the Most High God (Heb.7:1).

- David appointed stonecutters, 1 Chron. 22:2. Prepared iron and bronze, V3. Timber, V4. V14, gifts of gold and silver for all the work that needed to be completed.
- The temple was ornate and glorious. Would God dwell on the earth? 1 Kings 8:27. The furnishings are described in 1 Kings Chapters 6-7.
 - The temple showed the majesty of God. Symmetry, harmony, royal colors, & gold.
 - The temple represented the salvation of God: the courtyard was enclosed and controlled by the Levites. Worshippers saw the lavers for washing, light stands to see inside.
 - The temple represented the Kingdom of God: God's throne on earth was a tangible expression to see that God would dwell with men.

Why did Jesus care so much for the sacred space of the temple? A sacred space is a tangible expression of the majesty and glory of God and that He is our highest priority.

Further Discussion and Application

Does the temple represent God communing with man or God remaining aloof from man? How did temple worship reveal the need for man to prepare to meet God? How does the temple represent the ability of man to encounter God and search for Him? How did God make Himself available to be found?

Christians are commanded to come boldly before the throne of grace, Heb. 4:16, because we have a High Priest that can sympathize with our weaknesses. How does the Father through Jesus show us we now have fellowship and peace with Him? Read Heb. 10:19-25. What are other aspects of this boldness now that we washed in the blood of Christ? Why is assembling together more and more the proper response of this grace we have received?

It is likely that most of us in our lifetime have gathered in buildings to worship. Certainly, there are times that we gathered in tents, or open spaces. Why is a sacred space the natural response to a growing church? How did ministry excel and increase in that new space?

King David was extravagant in his giving to the Lord for the temple construction. What did David understand that we could also practice in our lives? What were the motivations of David's heart in 1 Chron. 22:1-7, 14-16, 17, 18, 19? Why was the name of the Lord the attribute of God that he wanted to show to the world?

What can one generation pass on to the next? What do we pass along as we are faithful to proclaim the truths of Scripture and the Gospel? What does a building pass along to the next generation? Does passing along a sacred space demonstrate our faithfulness or Gods? Unless God builds the house, those that labor, labor in vain. What does a building help us do to accomplish the preaching and teaching of God's word?

What are our priorities in life? What do we want to accomplish for the Lord? What do we want to pass along to the next generation? How do we make that happen? What more can we give?