

Is Your House A House of God?

Nehemiah declared in 10:39b, “We will not neglect the house of our God.

Throughout the history of Israel, the temple, (or the tabernacle before that), was called “the house of God.” God signified His presence in those buildings by the very visible the Shekinah Glory, which God sent to “brood” over those structures. This glorious presence was the visible sign that God was present there and that He was actively working and communicating with the people of Israel. This presence settled over the Ark of the Covenant which was located in the Holy of Holies.

Today, living by the New Testament, no building is called the house of God. This has been ignored by some churches throughout the centuries. Temples, cathedrals, tabernacles, and many church buildings have all been called the “house of God.”

If you look at the teaching of the New Testament, however, you will find that it is not a building that is the “house of God,” but the saints who meet in many kinds of places are the household of God. God’s presence is not in buildings. Buildings can be dedicated by people to use for God’s glory. (And they should.) But God is not present within buildings when congregations are not present. God is present in local congregations who are committed to Christ. These congregations are in reality the only legitimate church and the house of God is not a building they meet in, but who they are.

Perhaps we should change our signs to reflect this truth. Where they once gave the name, we are known by, we could add the words “meets here.” We may never change culture’s way of addressing our churches, but we who are “the saints” should change our thinking and our perspective to see how very essential it is to meet together on the first day of the week for congregational unity of worship and education. We are God’s Temple. In truth, it is not the building that is the church; --it is the people who are regularly gathering. They, corporately, are the household, the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3)

Each believer needs the ministry of other saints. And each believer needs a vigorous commitment to serve the needs of the corporate church. Paul prayed that the Ephesians may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18-19). You cannot do that without the ministry of other people, or without your ministry to others.

Hebrews has a specific admonition to that end: “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are already in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one

another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). The writer is referring to the return of Jesus. As we see the darkening of our world and we grow in our anticipation of His return, we should meet often. His coming is nearer today than any time in history. Today, we need even more to gather because we need each other's support.

The gathering of the congregation provides a laboratory for personal sanctification. Let me illustrate. Two people of widely different temperaments choose to work together. Normally they would not get along very well. They might not even like each other. But they work together for Christ and for the Church He loves and which He is building. Both agree that having to work with someone with whom they do not particularly have an affinity has turned out to be a blessing to them. They have learned how to appreciate someone different from themselves. They have learned by testing that love is tolerant and patient, that grace for service is learned by experiences. They genuinely learn to love one another. Though this kind of work is often a struggle and they have had their moments of testing, they both agree that God has used this common work within the congregation to teach them how to grow and become more Christ-like. So even those who naturally annoy or irritate us can become God's tools to benefit us. You are needed! ... and you need others for your maturity.