

Titles of The Church (#2)
The Temple of God
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

The original meaning of the word “church”

Today we continue to study the titles of the church. First let's look at the meaning of the word “church” :

^{NASB} **Acts 5:11** ¹¹ And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.
(Act 5:11 NASB)

The original Greek word for “church” in this passage is “ἐκκλησία” (*ekklēsia*); it consists of two words: “ἐκ” (*ek*) which means “out of,” and “καλέω” (*kaleō*) which means “to call”. The original meaning of the word “church” (*ekklēsia*) is a group of people being called out. Indeed the Lord Jesus said that he chose us out of the world:

^{NASB} **John 15:19** ^{“19} If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (Joh 15:19 NASB)

When we talk about the church, we are not talking about the church building, but are talking about a group of people who are called out (or chosen out) of this world by the Lord Jesus.

The Church is the Temple of God

Today there is no more physical temple of God, for the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. What then is the temple of God in the New Testament?

^{NAS} **2 Corinthians 6:16** ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (2Co 6:16 NAS)

The Temple of God

Here Apostle Paul is saying to the Corinthian church, “we are the temple of the living God ...” This shows that in the New Testament, the church is the temple of God.

The Temple of God and The Presence of God

In this same verse (2 Corinthians 6:16), Yahweh God Himself says that, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people ...” Yahweh God dwells in the church and walks among the people of the church; it means that God’s presence is in the church.

The physical temple was destroyed, but the church is the spiritual temple of God, and God’s presence is in the church. But the question is whether people, when they come into the church or churches, sense the presence of God or not?

I came from a non-Christian family in Ho Chi Minh City of South Vietnam. My parents worshipped the pagan gods, and I followed my parents to those pagan temples. I recall that when I walked into those pagan temples, I could sense some kind of presence there.

The church is the temple of Yahweh God. When people come into the church, they ought to sense God’s presence regardless of whether they believe in God or not! But in reality most people don’t sense the presence of God in the church. So what should we do?

What should we do?

First of all, we have to recognize that the Lord Jesus is the corner stone of this spiritual temple of God.

1. The Lord Jesus is the corner stone of the temple

^{NASB} **Ephesians 2:19 – 22** ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22 NASB)

This passage says that the Lord Christ Jesus is the corner stone of the holy temple, and Christians

are being built into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

2. Does the Lord Jesus live in us?

Since the Lord Jesus is the corner stone of the Temple, if the Lord lives in us, then we are certainly part of the Temple of God. But how do we know whether the Lord Jesus lives in us?

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰ “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

This passage tells us that only when the “I” has been crucified and no longer lives, then Christ lives in us. If the “I” is still strong and dominant, Christ will not live in us. If Christ doesn’t live in us, then we are not in the temple of God!

We have to ask ourselves:

- Do we live our lives for the Lord or do we live our lives for ourselves? Are the things of the Lord more important or are our own things more important?
- When there is a conflict between our own interests and the interests of the Lord, which one do we choose?
- When our will is different from God’s will, are we willing to submit to His will? Can we say as the Lord Jesus says, “Not my will, but yours be done”?

3. When we come together, we need to have the attitude of worship

If we don't have an attitude of worship, how can we expect non-Christians to respect God? What is the right attitude of worship?

- When we worship God, we humble ourselves and exalt God. If all the time we want to exalt ourselves over other people, and want to show that we are better than others, there’s no worship; we are not worshipping God.
- When we come together we should think of what we can give to God and give to one another; we must not think of what we can get. If we come with the wrong attitude of getting, there’s no worship. Let’s take a look to see what the Lord Jesus says:

^{NASB} **Acts 20:35** “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”” (Acts 20:35 NASB)

4. Are we living a God-centered life or a self-centered life?

If we only think of our own benefits, our own interests, we are living a self-centered life. If God is not the center of our lives, His presence won't be with us.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything we studied today:

1. The church is a group of people being called out of this world by the Lord Jesus. The church is the spiritual temple of God. Yahweh God's presence is in the church. But today most people don't sense the presence of God in the church. What should we do?
2. The Lord Jesus is the corner stone of the temple; if the Lord lives in us, we are certainly part of the temple.
3. When we come together, we need to have this attitude of worship.
4. Do we live a God-centered life or a self-centered life?