



*...ye have made it a den of thieves...*

*12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,  
13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.* (Matt 21:12-13)

The Temple of God needs a stark cleansing from time to time. When we become sedentary in our faith, we resemble that which we were before Christ came to abide in our hearts. The great English and Continental Reformations satisfied an urgent need for the Temple to be cleansed. Just as the shedding of Divine Blood followed the first Temple cleansing, there was a blood-letting that followed that of the Reformation. Those who professed a sound biblical faith were tortured, strangled, and burned at the stake if they failed to bow the knee to the Papacy, and anti-Christ.

The church today stands in the place of the Temple, and it has become sodden with the wine of modern apostasy, wealth (filthy lucre), and the new institutional 'magisterium' that places tradition and 'success' above truth and Light. Our Lord would feel no more at home in most of our modern churches than He did in the Temple that day in Jerusalem when He cast out the greedy vendors, turned over the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those who sold sacrificial creatures. It seems certain to me that such a rebuke as He issued to those vile men applies at least as much to the church of today: *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

Last year we traveled to a Church in Africa at which an auction was conducted so connected with the worship service we had trouble distinguishing when the service ended and the auction began. There was obvious pressure heaped upon the people to purchase the wares that were made available. Those who bid large numbers received much praise from the minister. Needless to say, that church was not received into the AOC.

But there is also a profound difference in the Temple of the time of Jesus and the Church today. The Temple represented the very seat of God to the people of Israel. It is the place that men carried their animal sacrifices to atone for sin. The modern Church

(in fact, no church) offers animal sacrifices as in days of old before the redemption of Christ. The animal sacrifices were only a shadow and figure of that Holy sacrifice of the Lamb of God to come in the process of time. In the Wilderness Tabernacle, the Holy Place was provided with a Table of Shew Bread on the right side facing the Most Holy Place, and a Candelabra on the left side. Positioned just before the curtain separating the Most Holy Place was the Table of Incense. The prayers offered yearly by the High Priest in intercession for the people were represented in the rising smoke of the incense rising to God. This followed the Passover sacrifices. In order to approach the curtain of the Most Holy Place, the officiant must pass between the Light of Christ (represented by the Candelabra) and the Bread of Life (the Shew Bread Table). The High Priest stood before the Most Holy Place separated therefrom by a curtain. Behind the curtain was the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments and the Manna. Above the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat (representing the works of Christ). So what has this to do with the Temple of God? The curtain of the Temple was ripped from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death and at the moment of the sacrifice. This demonstrated that there no longer was a separation of the people from the Mercy Seat of God. There also is no need for the designation of a High Priest because Christ has become BOTH our Passover *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* (1 Cor 5:7), but also our High Priest *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.* (Heb 9:11) Did you see the beauty of this last verse? The Tabernacle of God is Jesus Christ. He is also the Temple. And we are part of that Temple if Christ lives in our hearts.

What do you suppose Christ meant when He told the Jewish rulers: **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** (John 2:19) He was not making reference to that Temple made of stone and the artisans chisel, but to that Temple of His Being which is *not made with hands*. Christ has a legal claim on the Temple of Worship for He purchased it and is, in fact, the Temple of God. Every building needs resources for the building. The Temple of God is constructed of stones of a variety of sizes and shapes, and precious stones of great beauty. Within are vessels of wood, stone, silver, and gold - each with its own purpose. Every elect Christian is a stone of the Temple of God, and a prized vessel of whatever nature in that Temple. There are empty spaces in God's Temple which can only be satisfied by that particular stone that the individual believer represents. Every servant of God, of whatever nature, is a vessel to honor of God. But Christ is the whole of the Temple of God, and we must be IN Christ if we will be part of that Temple. *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* (2 Cor 6:16)

So Christ cleanses the Temple. He did not cleanse the Temple by washing the outward walls and white-washing them. He began its cleaning from the INSIDE in the same way He cleanses and sanctifies us. Remember the hyssop of Psalm? *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* (Psalm 51:7) Hyssop is a purgative intended to cleanse the alimentary canal - the INSIDE of the body. Once we are cleansed on the INSIDE of our hearts, we shall be cleansed on the OUTSIDE to appear whiter than snow, and our behavior will represent that cleansing.

So, what happened to the Temple of God? It was destroyed on the cross - and three days later, our Lord had rebuilt it. The old man-made Temple was also destroyed but, being merely brick and mortar, could not rebuild itself. It was corrupt and failed to rise to the standards for which it was constructed; but Christ is our All-in-All. He is the perfected Temple that shelters all of true faith.

What should a devout Christian do if he finds himself in a church that , like the old Temple, has become *a den of thieves*? There is an answer for every dilemma in Holy

*Scripture. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:17-18)*

There is a chilling warning implied in the above verse from 2 Corinthians - unless we come out from ungodly churches and become separated from them, He will NOT receive us and will NOT be our Father, and we will NOT be His sons and daughters! Any church that follows the modern trend in apostate teaching on homosexual marriage and abortion is unclean to the believer. He has no business being there, and no more than the nephew of Lot in living among the sinning sodomites of Sodom and Gomorrah. I hope no one reading this devotion will need to be dragged out from among them as Lot was dragged out from the fire and brimstone destruction of Sodom.

If the churches are to be cleaned out today, that task falls to you and me - we are the janitors of God, if we are His children. If the rot and filth is beyond repair, then we have no choice but to come out from among them.

Where do you stand in this equation, my friends?