

1 Corinthians 3:16–17

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

<sup>17</sup> If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

*"What Is This Thing Called the Church, Part 2"*  
*1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

INTRO:

In our study of the local church we have discovered in **Matthew 16** the church is His church. It is His creation. He is the source of its existence and its ministry. He is the object of the church's existence and the focus of its worship. The church exists for Him, and not He for the church.

We will look today at the description of the church in **I Corinthians 3:16-17**.

*I. Who We Are As God's Church (v. 16)*

*II. What This Means to Us (v. 17)*

*I. Who We Are As God's Church (v. 16)*

A. The context is vitally important to our understanding of this picture. In the beginning of **chapter 3**, the Apostle wrote about how they were to view the different teachers whom God had given the church.

1. He said in **verses 6-8**;

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor."*

He then summarized everything he said in **verse 9**.

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building."*

2. What kind of building were these folks who are the church of God at Corinth?

The answer is found in **verse 16**.

*"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"*

They are God's New Covenant Temple. The Greek word translated Temple is an important one it is the word for the place God dwells. When we think of the Old

Testament tabernacle or temple we think of a building with a large court yard and a building with two rooms, the holy place and the holy of holies. It is the holy of holies where God promised to dwell with His people between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. The place that God dwells is the naos.

B. Do you remember in **1 Kings 8** when Solomon dedicated the first Temple? God did something special to demonstrate that He was going to dwell in a special way in that Temple?

1. **1 Kings 8:10-11**

***“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD”***

2. God did a similar thing in the establishment of His New Testament Temple, the local church. We read about it in **Acts 2**. This time it was not a cloud, instead it was a rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues of fire, marked the beginning of the unique presence of God in His New Covenant Temple, the church.

C. The events of the first Pentecost marked the beginning of the Holy Spirit's New Testament ministry of indwelling each believer individually. Pentecost also was the beginning of God's indwelling His church.

1. We understand that God is everywhere present. There is no place that He is not. King Solomon, in his prayer of dedication for the first Temple, acknowledged this reality.

**1 Kings 8:27** ***“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built?”***

Although God is everywhere present, there is a special sense in which He was present in the naos of the Temple. He demonstrated that with the cloud of His Shekinah glory!

2. So, also it is with the Lord's local church. In **Matthew 18:20** we read:

***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”***

While the Lord Jesus uttered this promise in the context of church discipline, still the principle applies. When the Lord's local church gathers, the Lord's presence is with them in a special way. The Apostle John saw this in a visual way in

**Revelation 1:12-13.**

***“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man.”***

John saw the exalted Lord Jesus in the midst of the seven lampstands which are the seven local church. He is there right in the midst. He is here, right in our midst this morning.

D. Did we, when we prepared to come to church today, recognize that we were preparing to come into the special presence of the Lord Jesus Christ?

## ***II. What This Means to Us (v. 17)***

A. Because the local church is the dwelling place of the living God,  
**v.17** ***“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”***

The first principle that Paul gave us in light of the nature of the church is a warning. God is serious about His local church. He says literally, the one who would ruin or destroy God's church, God Himself will ruin and destroy!

1. What does this mean? It means exactly what it says. If anyone seeks to tear up or destroy God's church, He will not take it lightly. This should make the blood run cold in our veins!

2. What does it mean to ruin or destroy the Lord's church? This letter to the Corinthian church gives us several examples of what might fall into this category. Consider earlier in this book, **3:1-3**. People in the Corinthian church were fostering divisions. Paul labeled them ***“carnal,”*** in effect they were spiritually retarded, a devastating title. The Corinthians tolerated open sin in the church in **chapter 5**. They sued their brothers at court in **chapter 6**. There services were bedlam of tongues speaking and prophesying without any order. These are all things that contributed to the ruin of the place of God's presence.

3. What will God do to those who rend and maim His church? It says that He will ruin them. Some are troubled by such strong language leveled against one who is supposedly a part of the Christian community. However, consider how God had already dealt with some who were disobedient.

**1 Corinthians 11:30** ***“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”***

B. The second principle that Paul lays down is a simple statement, but one that we frequently do not take seriously.

**v.17** ***“For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”***

1. The Lord's church is to be set apart unto the Lord. It is to be the alternative to the pagan society in which we live. The difficulty that we need to address today is how much we are to allow the culture to enter the church and how much are we

to keep it out. These are not easy decisions. This is a good reason to pray for those who are in leadership as we wrestle with these issues. We are not to look like the world to reach the world. We are to be distinctly different from the world because we are holy unto the Lord!

2. We are to be holy in all of our actions and especially our worship, demonstrating that God is in our midst. Beloved, we are God's temple. We must show it in all that we do when we are gathered for the worship of the Living God! Our being holy as a church gathered is dependent upon each of us being holy in our personal lives.

Do we understand that God Himself lives in each of us who are saved?

Are we also aware that when we are together as the church gathered the Lord is here in our midst?

Do we come to church believing we will meet with Jesus here?

Hymn #280 *I Love Thy Kingdom Lord*