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TRUTH IN A NUTSHELL

When your neighbors and friends speak to you about "*how great their church*" is and then seek to coax you into following their way of life and thinking, how are we to respond?

What can we say to challenge, or at least set before them real, basic truths to consider?

Hopefully, this brief article will help you to explain the truth as to what exactly is wrong with today's "*religious mind-set*" and how it can be corrected. Always remember though, that without God's Spirit working in the hearts and the minds of people, all the time in the world will not bring anyone to the knowledge of the Truth. The Spirit of God is not something that you or I or any man can give to people.

With that said, here is just one fundamental concern that needs to be addressed. Let's boil it right down to its essence and concentrate on this issue. Here is the "*Truth in a Nutshell*" that you can share with your acquaintances.

When many professing Christians see the word "*church*" (ecclesia) in their Bibles, or hear about "*church*" from speakers who talk about the Bible, they think it means something entirely different than what the word meant in the first century. Many professing Christians are under the **strong delusion** that a "*church*" is a particular organization, an institution, a building, a "*local expression,*" or even some sort of conclave that they attend.

For both the speaker and the hearer alike, their kind of particular "*church*" is basically an object that possesses some very specific and matter-of-fact properties. It has a certain

color and a definite design. It has a budget and salaried professionals. It has a militaristic-type *ranking* of its members.

It operates like any particular business would operate in today's society. It begins at a certain time and ends at a certain time. It shuts down its operation on one day and opens up for business on another day, etc. and etc.

Yet, on the other hand, the “*church*” (**ecclesia**) that we see in Scripture, of course has none of these strange properties; NONE whatsoever!

So what happened along the way? How did we arrive at such a spectacle we see today?

So-called “*church leaders*” in these institutional churches were **so sure** that God wants them to have a church that they eventually had to create a new set of unbiblical terminology in order to discuss and run their unbiblical “*church*” object. Consider just one example of this all-too-common dialogue you hear all of the time about a “*local institutional church*” today:

"Let's get ready for church."

"How many attended church today?"

"We're having church this Sunday."

"Wearing church clothes..."

"Being faithful to the church..."

"Mary is always late for church."

"Worship will begin at our church at 9:30."

"We would love for you to consider applying for membership at our church."

"Were you in church today?"

"We are building an addition to our church," etc.

All of this demonstrates the effect that such absurdities have had on our understanding, or lack of it, concerning **Christ's Ecclesia**. Does it sound normal to you?

How bizarre would this have sounded to the early believers we read about in the New Testament?

Professing Christians are confusing apples with oranges as they think they are talking about the church that is found in the Bible, when they are really talking about an unbiblical, man-made, man-controlled, and man-sustained institutional organization!

Resurrect the Old Testament Practices

Since there was no Scriptural basis for these very strange and matter-of-fact properties for "*churches*" found in the New Testament, they had to invent a new fabricated theology using Old Testament codes and practices.

What had to be done was for men to go back and resurrect the pattern of the Old Testament because they do not possess the Spirit of the New Testament.

Since they do not participate in the true spiritual Temple that Jesus is building, they have built a physical temple in order to take its place!

Instead of having a resurrected Life, they have resurrected a building! And so, they have made the "*church building*" into a Christian reincarnation of the Jewish temple!

And it is not just the "*church building*" that they have relegated to the Old Testament. Since they now have a Christian reincarnation of the Jewish temple, they also must now have all of the other accoutrements that go along with the temple.

These include special clothes to be worn, special titles along with special positions, formulas and rituals that must be implemented, and of course, a special priesthood, separated from the laity. A special priesthood that commands, rules, and controls all of his subjects.

This special priesthood is called "*The Pastor*," the one that conducts ceremonies up front at the altar just like a Levitical priest in the Old Testament, and the one that is also supported by bringing their tithes into their new building and Christian storehouse!

This is the state of affairs today in local institutional churches across the world and it stinks to high heaven! But, does anybody care? By the look of things, many don't.

AS THEN...SO NOW

A similar situation existed back in Jesus' day. Remember John Chapter 2; the incident with Jesus and the Pharisees regarding the temple being destroyed and raising it in three days?

“The Jews therefore answered and said to him, What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things? Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

The Jews therefore said, Forty six years was this temple in building, and you will raise it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body.

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spoke this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”

John 2:18-22

The Pharisees were dead set on “*temple building worship.*” They didn’t understand Jesus. They could never figure Him out and understandably so. They were blind. And Jesus didn’t assist them either. In fact, it’s clear that in almost all of His conversations with them, He spoke to them in parables so that they wouldn’t understand! And here before us is such a case.

All that the Pharisee’s and other religious leaders could ever think about was only the physical, literal temple. Jesus said, “*destroy this temple and in three days I’ll raise it up.*”

They had no idea as to what He was saying. “*Is this guy crazy,*” they thought. “*It took forty six years to build this temple and you’re going to raise it in three days?*”

Temples; Buildings; Houses; Structures; Synagogues,....all physical things. That’s all they thought about. That’s all they yearned for. Having their physical building in place made them very happy and proud as well.

They made the gross mistake (as many do today) of understanding,..... **literally**, which the Scripture speaks of,..... **figuratively!**

Everything was literal to them. But, here’s the Truth. The Scriptures tell us, “***that He spoke of the temple of His Body.***”

Jesus was **not** referring to a physical, literal temple that was standing there in Jerusalem at all! He was referring to His body. He was speaking spiritually or figuratively, of Himself, of His Temple and how He was to be killed. “***He spoke of the temple of His body.***”

And verse 22 reinforces the truth when it says, “*When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spoke this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*”

These figurative and parabolic words that Jesus used here with the Pharisee’s **was such a stumbling-block to them** that it was brought forth in evidence against Jesus at

His trial to prove Him a blasphemer: *"And they said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."* **Matthew 26:61**

Such was, **AND IS**, the hardness of men's hearts who are resolved to dig in their heels against the Truth and succumb to the evil one's deception.

Where is "God's temple" today? Where do we "go to worship?" Where is our "holy place"?

Today we live under a New Covenant and all things have become new. Jesus answers these questions and He could not have made it more clearer as He spoke with the woman of Samaria in John Chapter 4.

This woman recognized Jesus as one of the Jews who said, *"In Jerusalem is the PLACE where men ought to worship."* Jesus then explained to her that the time was coming *"when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such does the Father seek to be his worshippers."* **John 4:21,23**

There is no more a designated site, a building, or a structure to which a person must go to worship and serve God. Oh yes, today there is a "temple of God" on earth. But as you should be aware, God's temple today is **NOT** a physical building made by human hands, whether that be a "church," a synagogue, or some other "sanctuary."

"Howbeit the most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet." **Acts 7:48**

Yet be that as it may, God's temple today **IS** fashioned, composed, and built with "stones," but a very peculiar and different type of stone. If you were to go over to one of these "stones" and kick at it, it will yell and scream for it is a "living stone!"

God is building a temple of living stones, all of different shapes and sizes, but all to be fitted perfectly together by the Master Builder. Peter said, *"You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood.."* (**1 Peter. 2:5**). *"..YOU are God's house..."* **Hebrews 3:6** Paul said to each and every one of the Corinthians, *"You are God's building,"* and a little later down the road, he told them the kind of building they were: *"YOU are the temple of God."* (**1 Corinthians 3:9,16**).

So, when **YOU** think of "church," what should come into your mind?

Is it what we hear coming from the pulpits? Is it what we see on every street corner?

Is it a military camp with paid professionals or maybe a governmental, organizational, institutional, corporate headquarters that is used to house the people of God?

Yes, Jesus is building His Ecclesia and He demands our life and expects us to turn our backs **on all rivals**, pick up our cross and follow Him!

No governmental, organizational, institutional, corporational, directorial, jurisdictional or any official entity will **EVER** recognize "***the voice of the True Shepherd***" who alone is the Head of His own un-institutionalized and un-incorporated body!

It is almost frightening to see how few "*church leaders*" truly believe and understand God's Scriptures, and how fewer yet, obey them!

If you haven't already, see **["The Christian Church: Distorted and Deformed"](#)** for a more detailed explanation and instruction.

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