

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Many in the world today have a mistaken concept of what the church really is. I have been around people in a church building when someone said something they should not have said. Inevitably, someone will turn to that person and say, “You should not say that in church,” as if to say that it is alright to say that as long as one is not in a church building. Others would say that it is a sin to eat in the church building. Because of a mistaken concept of what the church really is, many have come to regard church buildings as some sort of “holy ground.” But how does the Bible portray the church? Is the Biblical concept of the church that of a building? Does the Bible show the church to be holy ground? The Bible answer may surprise you.

First of all, the Bible does portray the church as a building (1 Cor.3:9). However, the church is not a physical building made of steel, wood, brick, etc. The church is a spiritual building comprised of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). These living stones are Christians. The church has as its foundation Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20). Laid upon this foundation are the building blocks of the apostles, and to this is added every individual Christian (2:20,21). This is the “church building.” This spiritual building is known as Christ’s house (Heb. 3:6), which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). The Bible makes it clear that the church is not a physical building. Rather, the church is all of those who have rendered obedience to the gospel.

Second, the church is holy. Remember that we speak of the people, not the building. As followers of Christ, we are to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:15,16). Christians comprise the temple of God, and, as such, this temple must be holy (1 Cor. 3:17). Christians make up the Israel of God today (Gal. 6:16), which nation is an holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). Christ shed his blood that the church, the temple of God, the Israel of God, should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). Christians are a holy people, not “holier-than-thou.” Holiness is the idea of being set apart for a specific purpose. The church is to be separate from the world in order to serve God. We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world. The church is to be holy, not sinlessly perfect, but holy.

The Bible does indeed show that the church is a building, and that this building is holy. However, this building is a spiritual building made up of individual Christians. There is nothing holy about a “church building.” It is merely an expedient to help the church fulfill God’s command to assemble (Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:24,25). The church is the people!

*Patrick Morrison*