

The History of the Church Building

Introduction

Sometimes when we are so close to something it becomes invisible to us. This became apparent to me a few years ago when my family took a trip to Ohio. We were gone for several weeks and when we returned to Corpus Christi I said, "Wow! Look at all the palm trees!" Over the years of living in Corpus I had become accustomed to the palm trees and taken them for granted. As a result, they became invisible to my conscious. This is not only true with palm trees, it can be said about our spouse, our family, our country, and our church. Many people who grow up with a certain religious belief are not aware of its error because it has become invisible to them. The same error can be taught for generations without question because it has become invisible. I have struggled over how some religious groups are so blind about the Biblical teachings of baptism. What prevents them from understanding the truth? Does their background make the true meaning invisible to them? But what about me? Has my background hidden some obvious concepts from my understanding?

Over the next few Sunday nights we will focus our attention on the history of the church building. We will look at...

1. What is our Top Priority?
2. Altars
3. Tabernacle, Temples & Synagogues
4. The First Century Church
5. What Should Our Budget Look Like?
6. Where Did the Church Buildings come from?

What is our Top Priority?

So why this study? What is so special about the church building that it deserves a special study? The truth is the church building is very important to the American church. Look at how much of the budget is devoted to the church building. How many churches have a special building fund? How many hours are devoted to the planning and maintenance of our buildings? How many churches have split over the color of the carpets or whether to have kitchens or not? The church building has great importance to many congregations.

My father is a preacher. When I was a child, my dad's salary was cut so more money could be put into the construction of a new church building. Later we moved to another congregation where they spent the next 25 years planning and raising money for a new building. When members died, memorial funds went to the new church building. They even quit supporting missionaries.

Think about the percentage of church budgets that goes into the building then consider the verse “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21).

Maybe now we are all beginning to see the importance of this study.

Let’s begin with an exercise... how many of these religious buildings do you recognize?

- Parthanon
- Vatican
- Cathedral of Notre Dame
- Crystal Cathedral
- Alamo
- Cane Ridge
- Mormon Tabernacle

These buildings vary in religions and denominations and yet they are recognizable over decades and centuries. Some because of events that occurred there, some because of the years of work and sacrifice that were devoted to their construction. Many Americans know about the Alamo but few can recall names of anyone associated with it. Is it because buildings are more important than people are?

Is it no wonder people confuse the church as being the building and not the people?

Now the question may arise... is it wrong to raise money for a church building? So much of the New Testament emphasizes the motives of the heart. Why do we want a church building? Is it to be like other churches or religious groups? Is it to attract certain types of people? Is it because we are materialistic? So what would be a good reason to have a church building?

The purpose of the church building is to provide a meeting place for the believers. The church is to fellowship and encourage its members, whether it serves as a place where all come together to worship or to socialize. The church building is only a backdrop to the real church. It is not to be the focus.

Let’s start with a more basic question. What priority does the church building hold in our budget, in our time, in our attention? Personally, am I spending too much time cleaning, mowing, and painting the church building and neglecting what I should really be doing as a Christian? Would that time be better spent interacting with people, both Christians and non-Christians?

Several months ago we passed around the sign-up sheet for cleaning the building. As a change, we were encouraging that two families sign-up for the same week. The purpose was to change the focus from being on the building to being on fellowship. From what I heard and experienced, it was successful.

How about Lakeview? When we were first building our church building an outsider might have thought our top priority was the church building. Some of us may have agreed, but in reality it was fellowship. Those of us swinging hammers side by side and those bringing meals and refreshments were growing stronger as a family.

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." Mark 7:5-13

The Jewish leaders had their priorities wrong, but not all of them. Look at the next passage.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Mark 12:28-33

This is an amazing scribe. He was very close to the pomp and pageantry of the Jewish leaders, yet look at his response to Jesus. Love is more important than animals sacrificed on the altar; more

important than incense burned in the temple and synagogues. He saw through the physical to the heart of God's worship.

Bad priorities are not limited to Judaism but Christians can have them as well. Consider what God said to the church in Ephesus.

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

Revelation 2:2-4

They are hard workers, they know the word, they put away false teachers, but they have forgotten God.

Let's see what Jesus says our priority should be.

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:31-34

This sounds like a men's meeting. How many times does the immediate get in the way of what's important? In the last men's meeting, we got so bogged down in topics of the physical matters of the church we didn't discuss discipleship, which was supposed to be discussed. Jesus said to do what is most important, "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" and all the material things will be taken care of.

Is He right? After all someone has to take care of these things. Someone has to clean the building. Someone has to mow the yard. Someone has to pay the bills. Someone has to fix the A/C.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is

needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Here we have a contrast of priorities. Martha was doing some important stuff, right? There are chores that must be done in order to serve Jesus. But look at that lazy Mary, just sitting there while Martha does all the work. But what does Jesus say? Mary has the better priority, to seek Jesus.

When it comes to our own personal religion, our own personal beliefs, what priority do we put on the church building? Now I'm not suggesting that we get rid of our church building. I just want us to think about how much importance we place on it.

We all agree that loving God should be our top priority. But what does that have to do with the church building?

We tend to compartmentalize. When at work I am an employee, at home I'm a husband and father, on the road I'm a driver, at the church building I'm a Christian. The church building becomes that box we put our Christianity and God in. It becomes a barricade between the world and us. We have allowed American culture tell us our religious beliefs belong in a church building. It is time we say No! We are the church not this building. We must seek God everywhere we go, not just here.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Note, Paul did not tell Timothy to instruct the rich to give to a building fund. The only mention of their money is to be generous and ready to share. Again we see having the right attitude. Their wealth is not the concern but their heart. In fact, their monetary standing is not even the issue. He points the priority on seeking God.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

It doesn't matter if we are meeting in a garage or a fancy building. What defines us as Christians is not the building or a sign out front; it is how we love each other. When you are cleaning the restrooms here, are you doing it because "someone has to" or because you love the

people who will use it? So much of Jesus' teaching focuses on the heart.

On one of our bulletin boards we used to display plans for a bigger building. Should that be the goal for this church? I don't think so. Jesus told us to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Our goal for this church should be people not a building. I have asked Vic to pass out some post-it notes. On each post-it I want you to write down the name of one person. This can be a neighbor, a co-worker, or a relative who is not a Christian. This is someone you want to invite to church. Someone you are willing to pray for. Go ahead and write down some names. After the closing prayer I want us to all put them on this poster board.

You might think, "I am a shy person. How can I get the courage to invite them to church?" Try taking small steps.

Let's say you're a teenager. At lunch one day you say, "Hey food is not bad today! But it never will be as good as Leesa's chili." Your friend says, "Who's Leesa?" You respond, "She's a lady at church. You see the first Wednesday night of every month we have Meet and Eat and sometimes Leesa brings her chili." "What's Meet & Eat?" "It's like a potluck dinner. We eat and visit and it's pretty fun. You ought to go with me some time." "Hmmm." A few days later you say "Hey tonight's Meet & Eat, you wanna come?"

Let's say your working in your front yard and you see your neighbor. You say "Hey Mac, do you want to play dominoes tonight?" Mac and his wife come over to play dominoes. You say "You know the third Friday of every month we play games like this at our church building. Do you want to come sometime?"

These are small steps. Meet and Eat, Game Night, and our Home Bible Studies are designed so you can invite friends without being threatened. Once they come to one of these events it is easier to invite them to church.

Altars

Last week we began our study on the history of the church building. We studied about our priorities in relation to the church building. In this study we are taking a fresh look at church buildings and what role they play in Christianity.

Does God want us to have church buildings? Has He ever wanted man-made structures devoted to Him? Where did the church building originate? Let's start by looking in the Old Testament. The first mention of a structure build for worship to God is the altar. In Genesis 8:20 Noah built an altar to sacrifice to God.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

In the account of Noah we don't see a verse commanding an altar be built, so we can only deduce it was commanded at some point. We could also speculate that the sacrifices of Cain and Abel were both on altars as well.

The next mention of altar is with Abraham. At this point we must realize that Abraham was from Ur. Before his time, in that city was a large temple dedicated to the moon goddess, which still stands today. It is contemporary to the step pyramids of Egypt. Also recall that Abraham spent some time in Egypt so he was familiar with the pyramids and temples there. If God desired something more than an altar, it would be technologically possible.

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

Genesis 12:7-8

Again, we not told whether or not he was commanded to build an altar. From what we are told, we guess it was an act of thankfulness and prayer.

So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 13:18

It could be that every time Abraham relocated he built an altar to worship or communicate to God. It may have even served as a reminder to Abraham of the presence of God. We do know of one time that God commanded Abraham to offer a sacrifice.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Genesis 22:9-13

It is unclear if Abraham always sacrificed on the altars or if sometimes the altar acted as a monument.

Many times the patriarch building the altar would name them. This would give us the impression that altars were to be more than a construction of sacrifice, but also serve as a reminder or monument to the people.

There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel
(mighty is the God of Israel). Genesis 33:20

There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel,
because it was there that God revealed himself to him
when he was fleeing from his brother. Genesis 35:7

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my
Banner. Exodus 17:15

And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this
name: A Witness Between Us that the LORD is
God. Joshua 22:34

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it
The LORD is Peace. Judges 6:24

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah
and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has
the LORD helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12

Sometimes a pile of stones was used as an altar to sacrifice and
sometimes was used as a monument.

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart
of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its
border. Isaiah 19:19

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan,
the LORD said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from
among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to
take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from
right where the priests stood and to carry them over with
you and put them down at the place where you stay
tonight." So Joshua called together the twelve men he
had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,
and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the LORD
your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to
take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number
of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among
you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do
these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan
was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD.
When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan
were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the

people of Israel forever." So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. Joshua 4:1-9

So, do we have any occurrence of God commanding an altar to be built? Yes. Let's look at the following scriptures.

Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." Genesis 35:1

"Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it." Exodus 20:24-26

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. That same night the LORD said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering." Judges 6:24-26

When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, he was also instructed about building a tabernacle, which we will study next week. God was very specific about its structure. In the tabernacle were two altars. They were to be built of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. One was for animal sacrifices and the other for burning incenses.

I have often heard people say the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. The God of Moses was legalistic and was not as concerned with our heart. That is a false statement. God has always wanted a relationship with man, even from the Garden of Eden. And when it comes to obedience or sacrifice,

God prefers obedience. Remember when Saul was commanded to destroy everything in the Amalekite town?

Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"
"But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal." But Samuel replied:
"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."
1 Samuel 15:19-22

Consider what David said after being confronted by Nathan for sinning with Bathsheba.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.
Psalm 51:10-19

No wonder David was called a man after God's own heart. He knew a true sacrifice was a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. Not bulls burned on an altar.

Remember the scribe we talked about last week?

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."
Mark 12:33

Animals were sacrificed on altars up to the time of Jesus, yet the scribes and Pharisees as a whole would emphasize following the letter of the law and would ignore the heart of the law. Of course Jesus emphasized the status of the heart over sacrifice.

But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
Matthew 9:13

But what is the purpose of the altar?

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." .
Exodus 24:3-8

This covenant is a foreshadowing of Jesus. Look at what the Hebrew writer said of Jesus.

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.
Hebrews 9:11-15

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to

worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 10:1-4

I have heard visitors refer to this communion table as an altar. If an altar is a structure a sacrifice is made on, then our altar would be the cross. If we look at our communion table as a memorial, you might call it an altar. But it's not the table that is special, but the symbols that we place there. The table could be anything, something fancy or a card table. I have even used a tail gate when camping. We need to be careful not to make this table into something "holy."

So are we commanded to sacrifice today?

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Matthew 16:24

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

We are commanded to sacrifice. But not the blood sacrifices of Moses. Jesus ended that by allowing Him to be sacrificed for our sins. We are to sacrifice ourselves, whether it is our possessions, our time, or our lives.

From this study we have learned that God did command for structures to be built for His worship. But we also learn that the physical and external elements of worship are not as important as worship from the heart. Remember what Samuel told Saul, and later Christ told the Pharisees? To obey is better than sacrifice.

I may be a beautiful singer, but if I'm not singing from the heart, it's not pleasing to God. I may say a wonderful prayer, but if it's not heart-felt, it's not pleasing to God. I may partake of the communion every Sunday, but if I don't do it with the right heart, it doesn't please God. We could have the most ornate church building in town, but if our hearts are not right, if we're not obeying God, it doesn't please Him.

The Tabernacle

This is the third lesson in our study of the history of the church building. The last two weeks we have looked at what priority the church building should have, and we also looked at the altar, which

was the first structure devoted to worshipping God. Tonight we will continue by studying the tabernacle, the temples, and the synagogues.

From the beginning, God has desired a relationship with man. We saw this with the altars, which acted both as an instrument of worship and as a memorial. God has tried over and over to kindle a relationship with man. God is love, and He desires love from mankind.

We sometimes forget that when Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he also received from God other laws, which would govern the Israelites. At that time he also received detailed specifications about the tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood. Listen to how detailed God's plans were.

"Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked into them by a skilled craftsman. All the curtains are to be the same size--twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. Join five of the curtains together, and do the same with the other five... Exodus 26

And it goes on for several chapters. Now let's look at its construction.

They built the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood, three cubits high; it was square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. They made a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar were of one piece, and they overlaid the altar with bronze. They made all its utensils of bronze--its pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. They made a grating for the altar, a bronze network, to be under its ledge, halfway up the altar. They cast bronze rings to hold the poles for the four corners of the bronze grating. They made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. They inserted the poles into the rings so they would be on the sides of the altar for carrying it. They made it hollow, out of boards. They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Next they made the courtyard. The south side was a hundred cubits long and had curtains of finely twisted linen, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The north side was also a hundred cubits long and had twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The west end was fifty cubits wide and had curtains, with ten posts and ten bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The east end, toward the sunrise, was also fifty cubits wide. Curtains fifteen cubits long were on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, and curtains fifteen cubits

long were on the other side of the entrance to the courtyard, with three posts and three bases. All the curtains around the courtyard were of finely twisted linen. The bases for the posts were bronze. The hooks and bands on the posts were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver; so all the posts of the courtyard had silver bands. The curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer. It was twenty cubits long and, like the curtains of the courtyard, five cubits high, with four posts and four bronze bases...

Exodus 38

The LORD had said to Moses: "You must not count the tribe of Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites. Instead, appoint the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony--over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it. Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall do it. Anyone else who goes near it shall be put to death. The Israelites are to set up their tents by divisions, each man in his own camp under his own standard. The Levites, however, are to set up their tents around the tabernacle of the Testimony so that wrath will not fall on the Israelite community. The Levites are to be responsible for the care of the tabernacle of the Testimony." The Israelites did all this just as the LORD commanded

Moses.

Numbers 1:48-54

Look at how specific God was. Why? What was the purpose of all the work and expense put in to the construction of the tabernacle? Is this the same God who wanted an altar made of twelve stones untouched by a chisel? Are the people so materialistic that they need something of value to represent God?

At this point God had ceased a patriarchal relationship with man and has developed a relationship with a national leader as the mediator. God was passing His laws to the people through Moses. The symbol of His presence was being shown through with the tabernacle.

On the day the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. At the LORD's

command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out.

Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out. Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they set out. They obeyed the LORD's order, in accordance with his command through

Moses.

Numbers 9:15-23

So what was the purpose of the tabernacle? We don't read the answer to this until the New Testament.

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Hebrews 8:1-6

Ah ha! Now we see that the extravagance of the tabernacle was to demonstrate to the Israelites the future glory of God's kingdom. It was God's desire that the Israelites would look forward to heaven. So heaven is the true tabernacle and what the Israelites had built was just a shadow. Let's continue.

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:1-12

So the tabernacle was a result of God's desire for the people to know Him better. It stood as physical reminder of God's presence to the Israelites and was to be the focal point of their nation.

The Temple

Remember the Israelites were nomadic people. They wandered in the wilderness, and they moved around a lot during the conquest of Palestine. The tabernacle was designed to move with them. It wasn't until the reign of kings over Israel that a more permanent dwelling was desired. During David's reign, he made Jerusalem to be the final location for the tabernacle. It was even his desire to build a temple to God.

King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have

shed blood.' "Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. Of all my sons--and the LORD has given me many--he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.'"

1 Chronicles 28:2-6

So once Solomon became king, he began construction of the temple.

When Hiram king of Tyre heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: "You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster..."

1 Kings 5

We do not see anyplace where God commanded the building of the temple, but we do see that He allowed it to be built. He accepted it as He would a sacrifice.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD. The temple that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty wide and thirty high. The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is twenty cubits, and projected ten cubits from the front of the temple. He made narrow clerestory windows in the temple. Against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms. The lowest floor was five cubits wide, the middle floor six cubits and the third floor seven. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls. In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built. The entrance to the lowest floor was on the south side of the temple; a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third. So he built the

temple and completed it, roofing it with beams and cedar planks. And he built the side rooms all along the temple. The height of each was five cubits, and they were attached to the temple by beams of cedar. The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel." So Solomon built the temple and completed it... 1 Kings 6

God dwelt in the temple just as He did the tabernacle.

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God. . 2 Chronicles 7:1-5

Solomon's temple was a wonder to the world. People came from all over to see it. But it was not long before the kings of Israel began worshiping other gods and ransacking the temple. Under King Josiah, restoration was attempted, but following kings began to plunder it again. It was during the Babylonian captivity that it was finally destroyed.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. . 2 Kings 25:8-17

Synagogues

The synagogues are believed to have been started about 500BC during the Babylonian captivity. Since they could not worship in Jerusalem and their temple was destroyed, the Jews constructed huts

for worship. After their captivity, upon returning to Jerusalem they began building bigger synagogues. Some Jews disagreed with the reconstruction of the new temple. They thought once Solomon's temple was destroyed, it could never be rebuilt. These Jews emphasized the importance of the synagogue.

There is no mention of the synagogues in the Old Testament, though they are hinted in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Both mention groups of Jews worshiping in certain locations but don't mention a meeting structure.

Synagogues were all built primarily for prayer and for the studying of scripture, however, they were also used as a court of law (Mtt 10:17, Lk 12:11). Synagogues were built so the worshiper would enter and pray facing Jerusalem. Within the building was a chest known as the Holy Ark, which contained roles of scriptures. Also was a candle that burned all the time to symbolize the presence of God. The head of the synagogue was responsible for conduct during the assembly. In fact synagogue means "assembly" or "congregation." The head was responsible for selecting members to lead prayers, read the Torah and preach. The congregation was divided by a screen with the men on one side and the women on the other.

We are really introduced to synagogues during the life of Christ. Much of Jesus' ministry took place in the synagogues. The gospels have recorded accounts of Jesus preaching (Mtt 3:23, 9:35, 13:54, Mk 1:21, 39, 3:1, 6:2, Lk 4:15, 6:6, 13:10) and healing people (Mtt 4:23, 9:35, Mk 1:21-26, 39, Lk 6:6) in the synagogues.

Let's look at one encounter Jesus had with the people in one of His community synagogues.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this

Joseph's son?" they asked. Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian." All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. Luke 4:15-30

The synagogue was close to our church buildings. Instead of having a nationalized building like the temple, the synagogues served as a community location for people to meet three days a week for prayer and study. It may have been that when some of the Jewish Christians tried to transfer some of the traditions of Judaism into Christianity, they may have brought the concept of synagogues with them. We will look more at the church's use of synagogues next week.

So what did Jesus have to say about the buildings of Jewish worship?

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Mark 13:1-2

The Jews would travel great distances to worship and sacrifice in the temple. We even know Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple emphasizing the holiness of it. Yet here we see Jesus foretelling the end of Judaism, the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Something greater is coming. A place of worship in the heart of man. Just as Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, Paul tells the church in Corinth.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

We are individually God's temples. And as a church family we are God's temple.

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

David wanted to build a temple out of his love for God. God had blessed him materially and David wanted to show his gratitude. Possibly the first synagogue builders had the same motivation, to please God.

From this study we see God has always wanted a relationship with man. Whether it is represented as a tabernacle that divides the nation of Israel, a temple in the capital of a nation, or synagogues in every community. God's desire has not been objects, but the love of people. He has used these object to remind the people, to say worship Me, remember Me, love Me.

God wants that relationship with us as well. He wants to dwell in our hearts just as He did the tabernacle and the temple. He wants us to love and worship Him.

The First Century Church

Last week we were studying synagogues within the Jewish religion, but synagogues also played a role in Christianity.

Last week we saw how Jesus found opposition in the synagogue in Nazareth, but He didn't always find opposition at the synagogues. Some of the synagogue leaders were followers of Jesus.

The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." Luke 7:3-5

Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Mark 5:22-23

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. Acts 18:8

It may be that with the coming of the church, some of these synagogues became meeting places for Christians.

As Jesus' popularity rose, He was surrounded by followers constantly. Sometime He had to perform a miracle just to escape and be alone. Jesus didn't restrict His teaching to the confines of synagogues or the temple. He taught everywhere He went. One of His most famous lessons we call "The Sermon on the Mount."

During Jesus' ministry, He was focused on His disciples. Afterwards, the apostles focused on the church – converting and strengthening the body. They also, taught and preached in the synagogues and temple, and anywhere people would listen. The book of Acts chronicles Paul going from town to town preaching in the synagogues.

Why the synagogues? From last week's lesson we learned that the synagogues were not only for worship. The buildings were also used for legal matters and for education. Whenever Paul entered a city, he presented the gospel first to the Jews then the Gentiles. The synagogues almost always had people there. It was a natural place to present the good news about Jesus.

Besides the synagogues and temple, Paul also preached in the market place and the pagan temples of Athens. Now just because preaching occurred in these places, let's not confuse this as where the Christians met. If you search the New Testament you will find very little about this. Let's start at the beginning, at the day of Pentecost.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47

They had taken over the temple. How did the Jewish leaders feel about this? If they felt like they were losing control when Jesus taught there, they probably felt it more now. You will notice that the Christians did not cease being a church when they left the temple. They fellowshiped at their homes as well.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. Acts 5:12

Solomon's porch is to the left of the temple just outside the Gentile's court. The temple seems to be the primary meeting place for the Christians at this time, but later in the chapter we see the persecution begin with the imprisonment of the apostles. Look at what happened after the Sanhedrin released them.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 5:42

Here the apostles declare that not only did they preach in the temple they also taught in homes. On another occasion, Peter was arrested and an angel had released him.

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Acts 12:12

Peter knew where to go. It must have been common for Christians to gather at Mary's home. Now here is another occasion when we are told when the church met. Some people (preachers) refer to this passage to show Paul preached till midnight, but in reality he preached until morning.

But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. Acts 20:6-11

In this case the Christians were meeting on the third floor of a building, possibly to take advantage of a cool breeze.

In some of Paul's writings he addresses churches that meet in homes.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Romans 16:3-5

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

. I Corinthians 16:19

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. Colossians 4:15

to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and
to the church that meets in your home: Philemon 1:2

Some may speculate that they met in homes secretly to avoid persecution. That may be true for some. We do know the apostles spoke with boldness and did not fear persecution. It is probable many Christians had the same boldness.

If we look in the New Testament to find where the church met we find more information on geography than structures. The most common description given to the location of the church is by city.

church at Jerusalem	Acts 8:1
church throughout Judea	9:31
church at Antioch	13:1
church of God in Corinth	I Cor 1:2
churches in Galatia	Gal 1:2
church of the Thessalonians	Thes 1:1
church in Ephesus	Rev 2:1
church in Smyrna	2:8
church in Pergamum	2:12
church in Thyatira	2:18
church in Sardis	3:1
church in Philadelphia	3:7
church in Laodicea	3:14

Sometimes we see a group of congregations referred to as the church (church throughout Judea), and sometimes they are referred to as churches (churches in Galatia). Because of this, it is difficult to tell if the church addressed in a city is really one or multiple congregations. This confusion may be because we think of a church residing in a building, or under an eldership.

The apostles were like father figures to the early Christians. The apostles had a parenting type of relationship in the teaching and conversions of new Christians. The apostles established many of the congregations and help establish an eldership to oversee the Christians. When Paul and the other writers address the church in a specific location, they are not addressing an organization, but individual Christians.

So why is there so little in the New Testament about where they met? We know the Jewish Christians came from a background of the tabernacle, the temples, and synagogues. They have a heritage of buildings to worship in. The Greek Christians had a heritage of

temples dedicated to a pantheon of gods and goddesses. How can Christianity be an organized religion without a special building?

Maybe that's it! Maybe Christianity shouldn't be an organized religion. Judaism and paganism both relied on a priest to intercede on behalf of the worshippers. Christianity broke that barrier. Christians were their own priest. Worshipers could finally have an intimate relationship with God. They could pray directly to God. They were also their own temple. These converts had left an organized religion and entered a new lifestyle. Worship was no longer something they did but something they lived.

The church we read about in Acts was more fluid. Christians broke bread daily. They met in each other's houses. They shared their possessions.

Do we want that for us? Do we want to be that intimate with each other? Isn't it safer to say, church occurs in this building? The church of the New Testament sounds like a commune or a cult. We don't want that for us do we? What would our community think of us if we acted like the church in Acts? It is much easier to have a building to come to so we can come whenever we please.

Could it be the church building has interfered with the fellowship Jesus planned for us to share? Could it be the early Christians needed constant support to help them through all the persecution?

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. (13) Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (15) Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Romans 12:4-5,10,13,15-18

How do we live in harmony together? How are we to be devoted to one another? Paul says a lot about how we are to interact. Does this only apply while we are together in the building or is this a daily thing?

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3:11

Daily? What does that mean? Are we to meet at the building daily? Only if the building was the only place for the church. From what we

studied tonight we know that's not the case. So how do we encourage each other? Visiting... phone calls... a card in the mail... email... there are many ways for Christians to support each other. But to what extent?

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:11-17

Bear with each other? Love each other? Forgive each other? Teach each other? Wait, here's one we're good at, admonish each other. Ah-oh, admonish with wisdom. These are some tough actions.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

From our study we see the early Christians weren't bound by a structure. The church was daily, it was in each other's home, and it was spreading. When we put the church in a box, we limit its influence in the world. We make it a "three times a week" event instead of a daily lifestyle. This isn't the real church. The real church is eating together, visiting each other, helping fix up the house, bringing food to the sick, visiting members in the hospital, writing a letter to someone in rehab. The real church is a sharing of our lives. The real church is not limited by this building it is a lifestyle.

Maybe the reason we aren't growing like we should is because we aren't involved in each other's lives. We can't really know someone by visiting with them here. Let's help put up someone's fence. Invite someone over for supper. Send a card. Let's break down the barriers that separate us and become a New Testament church.

What is the greatest commandment? To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. What is the second? To love each other.

What Should Our Budget Look Like?

In our study of the church building, we have started looking at the New Testament church. Where did they meet? If they didn't have a special kind of building like the temples or synagogues of Judaism, what did they do with their contribution? Did they have a budget?

A lot of the time when you hear about a congregation having a special collection, it is concerning building expenses. Should a congregation ask its members to give to a building fund? How much should we give? What should the church budget be devoted to? These are questions many congregations wrestle with.

But did the early Christians deal with these questions? Where did monetary giving start?

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47

Pentecost brought Jews from many countries to Jerusalem. When these Jews were converted, many stayed until their funds expired. Their fellow Christians, evidently being taught by the apostles the teachings of Jesus, shared their wealth.

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:33-37

All the Christians were in the giving spirit. In the next chapter of Acts we read about the selfish giving of Ananias and Sapphira. They lied about their giving and were struck dead.

The Christians were giving freely but some were being forgotten. The apostles appointed seven men to take care of the widows and orphans. These deacons did not have titles like Deacon of Facilities,

Deacon of Administration, or Deacon of Worship. They were to assist and take care of the finances of the Christians in need.

So where did weekly contributions begin?

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:27-30

This is the beginning of contributions. The church in Antioch started collecting to help their fellow Christians in Jerusalem. Most of the scriptures we have on contributions were devoted to this one goal, helping the Christians in Jerusalem.

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. Romans 15:25-28

The next passage is our reference concerning a weekly contribution taken on Sundays.

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. I Corinthians 16:1-4

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in

keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little." I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it. II Corinthians 8

There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling

them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to say anything about you--would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

II Corinthians 9:1-15

So from this we see one purpose of a contribution, to help the church in Jerusalem. For Lakeview, this would be equivalent to us helping Norton Street, which started this congregation. Or Anthony's church in Ghana helping us. Jerusalem was the origin of all the other churches. It had seeded Christianity throughout the world and now the other churches were helping it.

So what else is said about contributing in the New Testament? From what we have read so far, giving was only to help fellow Christians.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Romans 12:6-8

Now this passage opens the door some. Are we to only help fellow Christians, or should we be giving to any in need? But would some people take advantage of this?

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. Thessalonians 3:7-12

It looks like Christians should not be throwing away their money but use some discernment. This passage also bring up the question about wages. Is it scriptural to pay a preacher's salary?

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. Philippians 4:12-18

Paul received some financial support from the church in Philippi.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.
I Timothy 5:17-19

Here Paul not only says preachers can be supported by the church but elders as well.

So now we have benevolence and salary. Do we have any scriptures that support the financing of a building? If we go back to Moses we see what the Israelites gave for the construction of the tabernacle.

And everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.
Exodus 35:21-22

When Joash was repairing the temple he collected money from the Israelites.

Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money that is brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the LORD--the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily to the temple. Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, and let it be used to repair whatever damage is found in the temple." But by the twenty-third year of King Joash the priests still had not repaired the temple. Therefore King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and asked them, "Why aren't you repairing the damage done to the temple? Take no more money from your treasurers, but hand it over for repairing the temple." The priests agreed that they would not collect any more money from the people and that they would not repair the temple themselves.

II Kings 12:4-8

At some point in Jewish history a temple tax was instituted. Jesus honored the tax, but He did so by performing a humorous miracle.

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think,

Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes--from their own sons or from others?" "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." Matthew 17:24-27

We don't see the early Christians collecting money for a structure, so is it wrong for us to?

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." John 12:1-8

From Judas' comment we can make some assumptions. Jesus and His disciples were frequently given financial support. They would often share their money with the poor. And Judas had the wrong motives for his giving.

Mary used some expensive oil on Jesus. She gave it freely to Jesus and He didn't stop her. She could have used it as Judas said to help the poor, but she chose to use it to show her love to Jesus. From what we know about Mary's character, she probably did help the poor.

We could also spend our entire budget on a church building. We could have stained glass windows, purple pews, and gold fixtures. Our building could glorify God just like Solomon's temple. This is not what Jesus is saying. He is telling us we are free to give to a building fund or other programs to His glory. But He didn't command us to. We are commanded to be generous in our giving. Whether you are giving to those in need or to a building program, the question is, "Where is your heart."

Some people may think they can give their way to heaven by doing good deeds and giving to charities, but what does Paul say?

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

I Corinthians 13:3

Our heart must be in order for our giving to right.

So what should our budget look like for this congregation? From our study we see the primary focus is on fellow Christians. To make sure there are none needy among us. But should a church building be included? There are many verses about stewardship that tell us we must be responsible for our actions. We cannot escape the obligations of paying off our debt.

But what about additional construction? From the example of Mary we see we are free to give to a building project. But we should not escape taking care of the needy. Our first priority is taking care of fellow Christians and those in need. If a building project get in the way of that, it is wrong. The same question applies to spending that we use for giving, "Where is your heart."

What about supporting missionaries? How do we balance that with a building fund? Scripture justifies paying preachers. Paul and Barnabas were missionaries sent from Antioch. Should a congregation ever cut a preacher's salary or missionary support to fund a church building. Personally, I think that is a sin.

What about having the contribution as part of our worship service? Our collection plates share the same table as the communion trays. Many congregations have communion and collection at the same time. This may cause some visitors to wonder if Jesus passed around the collection plate at the Last Supper.

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."

Mark 12:41-44

Here we see a woman who should have been helped by those richer. But Jesus praised her for her generous giving. We also see that giving in the temple was not done with the passing of a plate. It was most likely a box near the entrance of the temple that people could easily put their money in as they entered or left. Maybe we should consider doing that here. It would make the visitors feel less awkward when the

plate came around. It would also remove the awkwardness of those waiting on the table.

After college, I move to California to help the church in Long Beach. During the months I was job hunting, the water pump in my old station wagon died. It was a Wednesday morning and I was broke. That night at church the singles group took up a collection for me and paid the cost of repairing my car. That was generous giving.

So in our giving, be generous and do it with love. We should watch out for each other. In order to do that, we must know each other.

Where Did the Church Buildings come from?

For past few weeks we have been studying the history of the church building. We have looked at the tabernacle, the temple, the synagogues, and where the New Testament Christians met. We noticed the church met primarily in homes. And, we found no reference to a special building being built for the purpose of housing the church. So where did the church buildings come from?

From the beginning the church was being persecuted by the Jewish leadership; Stephen being one of the first martyrs. Saul of Tarsus was one of the enforcers of the Sanhedrin.

After some time, the Roman government began persecuting Christians. They even turned it into a sport. Part of the Coliseum in Rome was dedicated to the housing of Christians. The Christians were brought up from their holdings to be used as entertainment by feeding them to wild animals. Rome had a string of evil emperors including Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. The church was driven into hiding.

The church was persecuted for two hundred years until the reign of Constantine the Great. This Roman emperor embraced Christianity and made the church a legal body. During his reign Christians gained freedom to worship. His influence also marks the beginning of the Byzantine period of art and of the Catholicism. Constantine was also the first pope of the Catholic church. He moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople, which is now Istanbul Turkey. This later created a split politically and religiously. From the split came the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox religions. It is interesting how non-Christian sources view the changes caused by the recognition of Christianity by the government:

We will recognize this pattern as the Christian adaptation of a very ancient heritage, the divine kingship of Egypt and the Near East; if the Byzantine emperors, unlike their pagan predecessors, could no longer claim the status of gods, they retained an equally unique and exalted role by placing themselves at the head of the Church as well as of the State. Nor did the tradition die with the fall of

Constantinople. The tsars of Russia claimed the mantle of the Byzantine emperors, Moscow became "the third Rome," and the Russian Orthodox Church was as closely tied to the State as was its Byzantine parent body. -Jansen "History of Art" (pg. 193)

Before getting into the architecture of the Byzantine period, let's take some time to understand some of the terms used in its design (see fig. 1). This information is paraphrased from Jansen's "History of Art."

Constantine's decision to make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire had a profound impact on Christian art. Until that time, congregations had been unable to meet for worship in public; services were held inconspicuously in the houses of the wealthier members. Now, almost overnight, an impressive architectural setting had to be created for the new official faith, so that the Church might be visible to all. Constantine himself devoted the full resources of his office to this task, and within a few years an astonishing number of large, empirically sponsored churches arose, not only in Rome but also in Constantinople, in the Holy Land, and at other important sites. These structures were a new type, now called the Early Christian basilica, that provided the basic model for the development of church architecture in western Europe. Unfortunately, none of them has survived in its original form, but the plan of the greatest Constantinian church, St. Peter's in Rome, is known with considerable accuracy (figs. 2, 3). For an impression of the interior, we must draw upon the slightly later basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, built on the same pattern, which remained essentially intact until it was wrecked by fire in 1823 (fig. 4). The Early Christian basilica, as is shown in these two monuments, is a combination of assembly hall, temple, and private house. It also has the qualities of an original creation that cannot be wholly explained in terms of its sources...

The long nave, or auditorium flanked by aisles; and lit by clerestory windows, which are small windows high on the walls; the apse; and the wooden roof are familiar features of the earlier structure. But a church had to be more than an assembly hall; in addition to enclosing the community of the faithful, it was the sacred House of God, the Christian successor to the temples of old. In order to express this function, the design of the pagan basilica or temple had to be given a new focus; the altar, which was placed in front of the apse at the eastern end of the nave, and the entrances, which in pagan basilicas had usually been on the flanks, were shifted to the western end...

Before entering the church proper, we would have to walk through a court with many columns, called the atrium, the far side of which forms an entrance hall, the narthex. Only when we step through the nave portal do we gain the view presented in figure 4. The steady rhythm of the nave arcade pulls us toward the great arch at the eastern end (called the triumphal arch), which frames the altar

and the vaulted apse beyond. As we come closer, we realize that the altar actually stands in a separate compartment of space placed at right angles to the nave and aisles, the transept.

There is one essential aspect of Early Christian religious architecture that we have not yet discussed: the contrast between exterior and interior. It is strikingly demonstrated in the sixth-century church of S. Apollinare in Classe near Ravenna, which still retains its original appearance for the most part. The plain brick exterior (figs. 5, 6) remains deliberately unadorned and plain; it is merely a shell whose shape reflects the interior space it encloses—the exact opposite of the Classical temple. (Our view, taken from the west, shows the narthex but not the atrium, which was torn down a long time ago; the round bell tower, or campanile, is a medieval addition.) This plain, anti-monumental treatment of the exterior gives way to the utmost richness as we enter the church (fig. 7). Here, having left the everyday world behind us, we find ourselves in a shimmering realm of light and color where precious marble surfaces and the brilliant glitter of mosaics evoke the spiritual splendor of the Kingdom of God...

Another type of structure that entered the tradition of Christian architecture in Constantinian times was round or polygonal buildings crowned with a dome. They had been developed as part of the elaborate Roman baths... Similar structures had been built to serve as monumental tombs, or mausoleums, by the pagan emperors. In the fourth century, this type of building is given a Christian meaning in the baptisteries (where the bath becomes a sacred rite) and funerary chapels... The finest surviving example is Santa Costanza (figs. 8, 9, 10), the mausoleum of Constantine's daughter Constantia, originally attached to the (now ruined) Roman church of St. Agnes Outside the Walls. In contrast to its pagan predecessors, it shows a clear separation of the interior space into a domed cylindrical core lit by clerestory windows—the counterpart of the nave of a basilican church—and a ring-shaped "aisle" or ambulatory covered by a barrel vault. Here again the mosaic decoration plays an essential part in setting the mood of the interior.

-Jansen "History of Art" (pg. 195-197)

With the passing of time the church building became more elaborate and the basilicas became cathedrals. After the Byzantine period came the Medieval period and the Romanesque period. This is a jump in time of about 600 years (see figs. 11, 12).

The most conspicuous difference between Romanesque architecture and that of the preceding centuries is the amazing increase in building activity. An eleventh century monk, Raoul Glaber, summed it up well when he triumphantly exclaimed that the world was putting on a "white mantle of churches." These churches were not only more numerous than those of the early Middle Ages, they were also generally larger, more richly

articulated, and more "Roman-looking," for their naves now had vaults instead of wooden roofs, and their exteriors... were decorated with both architectural ornament and sculpture. Geographically, Romanesque monuments of the first importance are distributed over an area that might well have represented the Catholic world, from northern Spain to the Rhineland, from the Scottish-English border to central Italy. The richest crop, the greatest variety of regional types, and the most adventurous ideas are to be found in France. . -Jansen "History of Art" (pg. 262)

For an example let's look at St.-Sernin in Toulouse France. It took 40 years to build (1080-1120). This example of Romanesque architecture is in the form of a Latin cross. It has a long nave and transept with two aisles on either side. Groin-vaults, arches, engaged columns, transverse arches, and barrel vaults support the structure. It has crypts in the west end. It also has different roof levels with a crossing tower above the intersection of the nave and transept.

So what does all this art history have to do with us? Our church building is not that fancy or spacious.

Many of the architectural elements of these structures are still being used in many church buildings today. Many church buildings have huge wooden beams arching up the auditorium. In some cases they are not functional for support but are used as a design element. The apse was carried over to be a raised area in the front of the auditorium. The altar is now a communion table.

The baptisteries are no longer a separate building. We didn't install our baptistery until about a year after the building was built. During that time, visitors would ask where our baptistery was. After all, you can't have a church building without a baptistery.

The chapels around the perimeter of the building are now classrooms. And many denominational buildings have a choir area in the same place.

One thing I found odd was the idea of having crypts within the building. But we are not too far from that. How many times do you see small country church buildings with a cemetery in the side yard? We even have a stone outside that acts as a memorial.

The beginning of constructing church buildings shares the same beginning as Catholicism. If you study the Reformation and Restoration movement, from Martin Luther to Campbell and Stone, you might assume the New Testament church has been restored. You may think we have removed all the influences and traditions of early Catholicism. But have we?

So what is wrong with having a church building? In our first lesson, we learned a church building should not have top priority. During

Constantine's time, great time, money, and sacrifice were put into the basilicas and cathedrals. In our last lesson we learned it is not wrong to glorify God with material gifts like a building. But where do we draw the line? When "church" no longer indicates the people, but refers to the building. When the real church is neglected because of the building.

The church building is not the real home for Christians. Jesus has planned a special place for us.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:1-3

We mentioned Stephen the first martyr for Jesus. Listen to what he said to the Jewish leaders.

"Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him. "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?" Acts 7:44-50

From Stephen we see God did not truly live in the tabernacle or the temple. He is too great for that. We think of our planet as being huge, but to God, it is like a footstool.

For Christians, our home is not a church building but heaven. Peter focused the Christians on this eternal home.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of

God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. II Peter 3:9-13

We know Paul's profession was making tents. He uses that insight to make the following correlation.

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. II Corinthians 5:1-7

Whether the tent he refers to is either a building structure or our physical body, the point is still the same. Our focus should be on heaven and not our "tent."

The apostle Paul often spoke of being a citizen of Rome, but he was more proud of his eternal citizenship.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is

destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

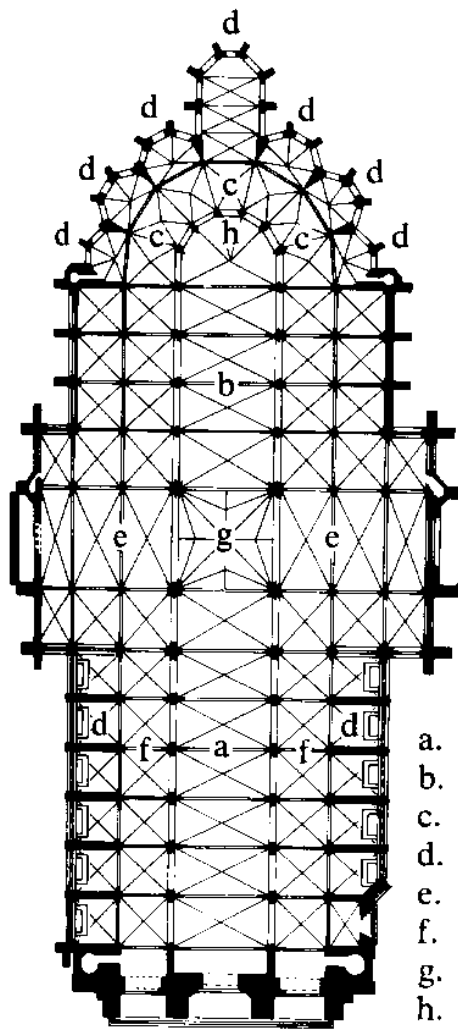
Philippians 3:10-21

Our citizenship is in heaven. This building is not that important. Someday it will be just a pile of rubble. This earth will pass away. What truly is important is whether we are ready for our home in heaven, and if we are preparing our friends and family.

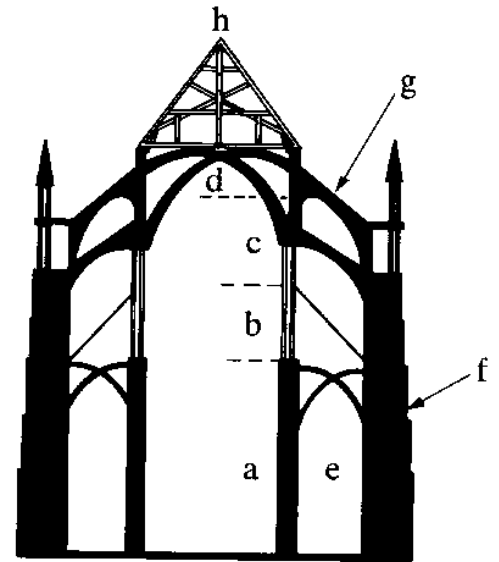
So what have we gained from this study?

When Lakeview met in a garage it was easy to say “church” and be referring to the people. Now that we are in a church building, we sometimes slip and call this structure the church.

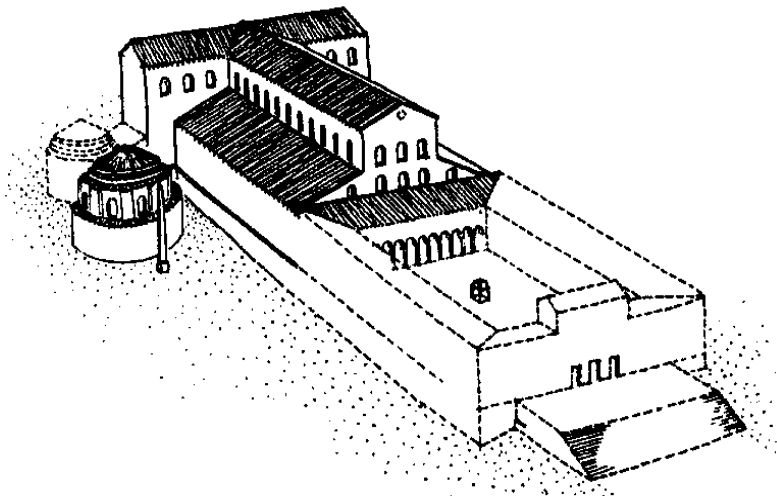
It is not wrong to have a building, unless it gets in the way of God, other Christians, or of our final goal, heaven. I hope we all realize this building is no more holy than our houses. God dwells in us, not a “sanctuary.”



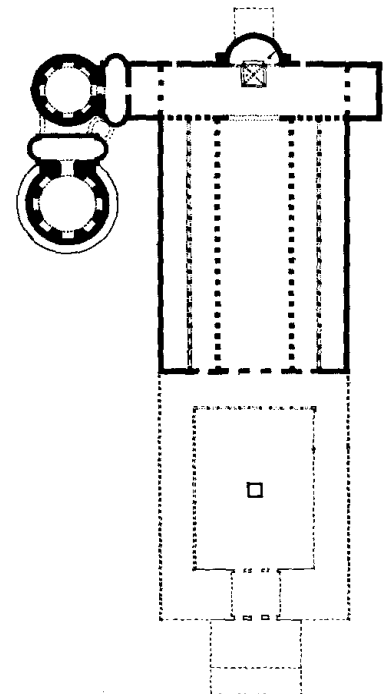
- a. nave arcade
- b. triforium
- c. clerestory
- d. vault
- e. aisle
- f. buttress
- g. flying buttress
- h. wooden roof



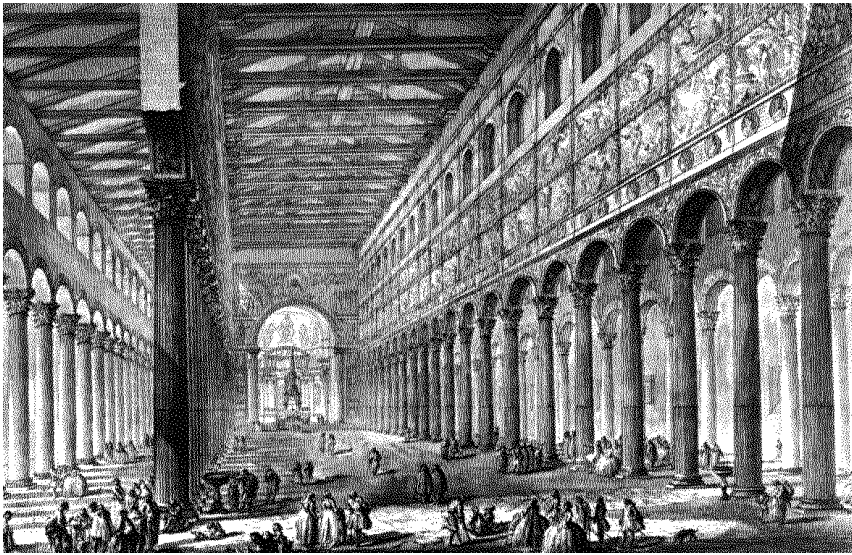
1. Plan and section of a typical Gothic cathedral



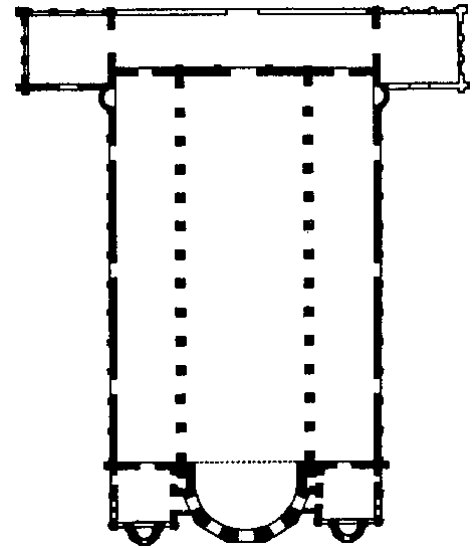
2. Reconstruction Drawing of Old St. Peter's, Rome 333 A.D.



3. Plan of Old St. Peter's, Rome 333 A.D.



4. Interior, St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome 386 A.D.



5. Plan of S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna



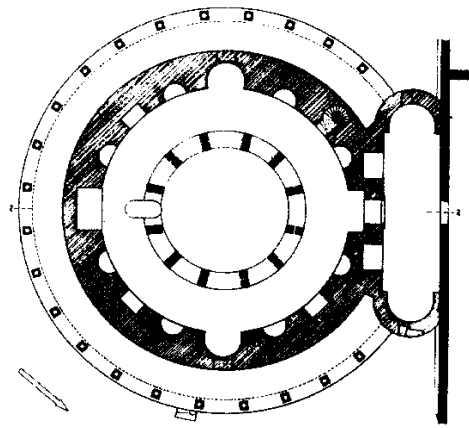
6. S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna 533-549 AD



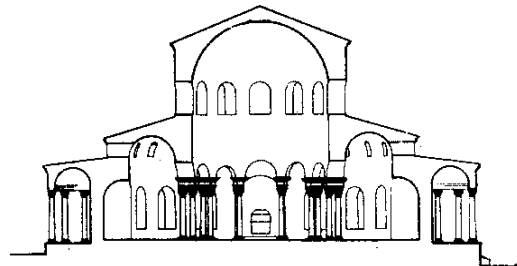
7. Byzantine, Interior (view toward apse),
Sant' Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, 533-
549 AD



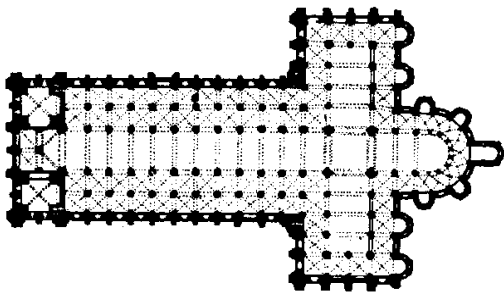
8. Interior, Sta. Costanza, Rome 350 AD



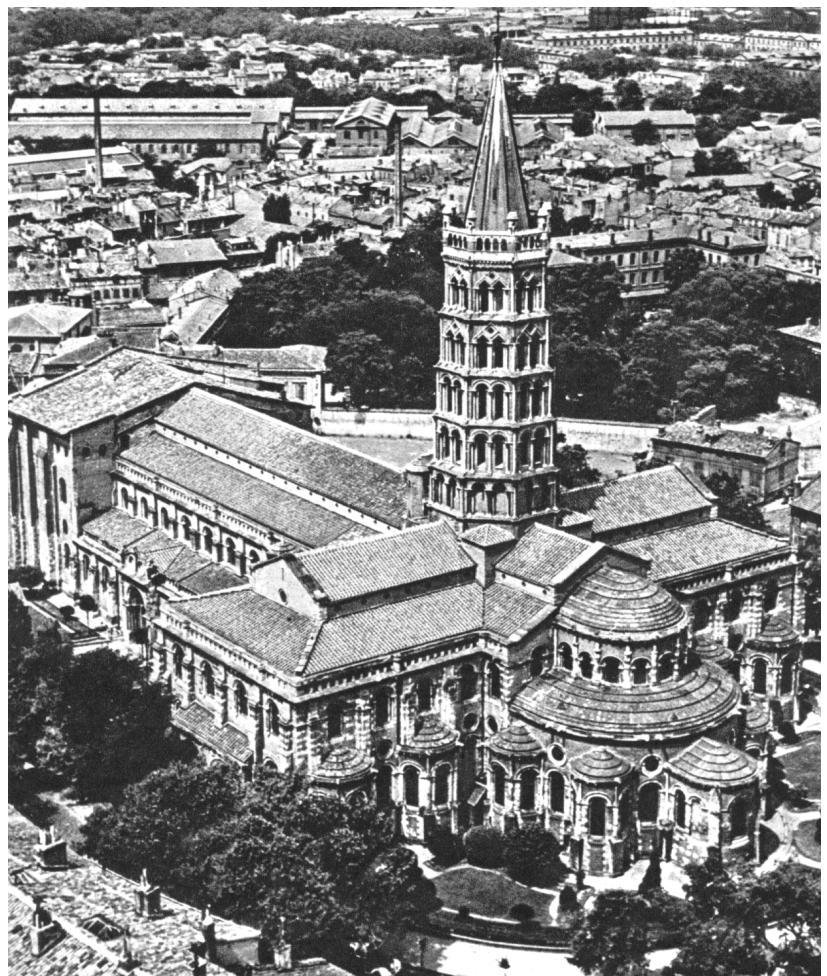
9. Plan of Sta. Costanza, Rome



10. Section of Sta. Costanza, Rome



11. Plan of St.-Serin, Toulouse 1080-1120



12. St. Serin, Toulouse (aerial view)

