

Building God's House

by St. Cyril of Alexandria

The sermon emphasizes the glory of God's house, the Church, and the gift of Christ, which brings peace and salvation to those who build it.

Scripture: John 4:23

Topics: "Christology", "Worship"

Description

St. Cyril of Alexandria preaches about the surpassing glory of Christ as the divine temple, far more splendid than the old temple, symbolizing the superiority of worship in Christ and the gospel over the old laws. Through Christ, the one temple in Jerusalem has expanded to countless places of worship worldwide, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi about the universal honor of God. The Church, as the final temple, is declared to be more glorious, with Christ Himself being the ultimate gift from heaven, offering peace to all who labor for its construction and access to the Father through the Spirit.

Transcript

When our Savior came, he appeared as a divine temple, glorious beyond any comparison, far more splendid and excellent than the older temple. He exceeded the old as much as worship in Christ and the gospels exceeds the cult of the laws, as much as truth exceeds its shadows.

Furthermore, I might point out that originally there was just one temple at Jerusalem, in which one people, the Israelites, offered their sacrifices. Since the only-begotten Son became like us, and as Scripture says, though he was Lord and God, he has shone upon us, the rest of the world has been filled with places of worship. Now there are countless worshipers who honor the universal God with spiritual offerings and fragrant sacrifices. This, surely, is what Malachi foretold, speaking, as if in the person of God: I am a great king, says the Lord; my name is honored among the nations, and everywhere there is offered to my name the fragrance of a pure sacrifice.

With justice, therefore, do we say that the final temple, the Church, will be more glorious. To those who are so solicitous for the Church and labor for its construction, Haggai declares that a gift will be made, a gift from heaven given by the Savior. That gift is Christ himself, the peace of all men; through him we have access in the one Spirit to the Father. The prophet goes on to say: I will give peace to this place and peace of soul to save all who lay the foundation to rebuild the temple. Christ too says somewhere: My peace I give you. Paul will teach how profitable this is for those who love: The peace of Christ, he says, which surpasses all understanding will keep your minds and hearts. Isaiah, the seer, made the same

prayer: O Lord our God, give us peace, for you have given us everything. Once a man has been found worthy of Christ's peace, he can easily save his soul and guide his mind to carry out exactly the demands of virtue.

Haggai, therefore, declares that peace will be given to all who build. One builds the Church either as a teacher of the sacred mysteries, as one set over the house of God, or as one who works for his own good by setting himself forth as a living and spiritual stone in the holy temple, God's dwelling place in the Spirit. The results of these efforts will profit such men so that each will be able to gain his own salvation without difficulty.

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