

## **Notre Dame - Lessons Learned From Its Burning**

On April 15, 2019 Notre Dame had a massive fire destroying much of the building. All the major news networks dedicated hours of coverage. Over 12 million people visit the Cathedral annually. The words Notre Dame, means "Our Lady". The official name is Notre Dame de Paris which means "Our Lady of Paris." Its construction began in 1160 A. D. and ended in 1260. The Cathedral contained many priceless artifacts as some of those were rescued from the fire. Stained-glass windows dated back to 1225 A.D.

It was currently undergoing renovation and restoration. Being a physical building it was showing the effects of time. Most of the money raised for this construction came from outside sources. In explaining the restoration one person said most of the money came from America since France is a much more secular society. Sadly, millions of people came to this museum to see the gargoyles and French architecture but not to know more about God. There are certain lessons we can learn from this.

The church is not the building. And the New Testament we read of the church, Ekklessia, meaning the called out, referring to those who had heard the gospel of Christ and had obeyed in order to become a part of his church. Therefore, the word church refers to the people and not the building they assemble in. It is easy to build a structure and idolize it instead of worshiping God. In the book of Acts chapter 19 we read of the Temple of Artemis, a temple which was considered one of the great wonders of the ancient world. People came from all over the region and order to worship the Goddess Artemis. At Corinth they likewise had a temple of worship to their Goddess. Neither Temple exists today as the effects of time took its toll on them. But the church of the first century

still exists in its people. We should never equate the building to the people comprising the body of Christ.

A building dedicated to the worship and service of God can become a museum. Notre Dame was not a place of great spiritual activity anymore; it had become a tourist attraction. While there is authority for the local church to possess a building or some other type of place of worship it is for the express purpose of spiritually serving God. We read of the church of Laodicea and Revelation 3. It is described as being lukewarm. In chapter 2 we read of the church at Ephesus which was in danger of having his candlestick removed due to leaving its first love. We are not immune from having our church buildings becoming empty and either museum pieces or tombs.

Already plans are being made to rebuild Notre Dame, millions of dollars have been pledged for such purposes. There is no doubt this can and will occur over time but it will take effort and dedication. Men will have to study the original design and style of Notre Dame if they want to be true to its original form. Skilled craftsmen will have to painstakingly craft the material used in the building to make it like it once was. If ever we find the Lord's church in disrepair and in need of restoration, we need to have the dedication to go back to the Scriptures to restore the worship, organization, doctrine, and work of the first century church. Go to the word of God, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2.15); to make all things according to the pattern of God's word, "as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8.5). If we do that, we will have the church of the first century. - - Dennis Tucker