

God's House of Merchandise

Text—John 2: 13-16 (Rom. 10: 1-3)

Intro. The Social Gospel and More

A. *The coliseum sported the latest in audio and lighting technology. Onstage, performers kept us entertained for an hour while the several thousand people in attendance clapped, cheered, and laughed through the entire presentation. Video cameras caught all of the action on stage as well as the reactions from the crowds. Kiosks and booths in the lobby sold wares from different musicians and comedians, while boasting upcoming events. I was not at a rock concert. I was in church—a megachurch.*

B. How does a church get this way?

1. Show top ten Mega-churches in America.
2. Men allow own desires to come first.
3. The Money Changers—John 2: 13-16
 - a. “Den of Thieves”—Mk. 11: 17; Lk. 19: 46
 - b. Paul wrote—Rom. 10: 1-3

C. Jesus and the church today

- a. Coffee Pots, stoves, refrigerators, etc.
- b. Break them up and throw them out
- c. Say to Books, T-shirts, and Cafes?
“Make not my Father’s House a place of recreation and merchandise.”
- d. Such people are lovers of self and pleasures (2 Tim. 3: 1-7)

D. Transition of Holy House to Disneyland

- a. Rom. 16: 16, “churches of Christ greet you”
- b. Welcome to the Church of Walt Disney!!!
- c. Quote concerning the Lakewood church
“King Solomon built the Lord's Temple with such lavishness, expense, that it took the Queen of Sheba's breath away when she saw it. Why is it a sin to build a fine, state-of-the art facility in these times for our Lord? It takes money to reach the lost.”
- d. How much money, limited commission? Matt. 10: 7-10
 1. “Freely receive, freely give”
 2. No purses, no wallets
 3. Still did job as an evangelist.

I. What is a Mega-church?

A. Fast Facts concerning Mega-churches

- a. 2000 or more in attendance
- b. An authoritative and often charismatic senior minister
- c. An active 7-day-a-week congregational community
- d. Multiple social and aid ministries
- e. A complex organizational structure

B. Examples of the Mega-church mentality

a. Bill Hybels—Willow Creek

Survey locals: “In 1975, he and members of his student ministry went door to door asking residents what kept them away from church. Hybels then crafted his services to address their concerns, becoming one of the first pastors to use video, drama and contemporary music in church and encouraging a more casual dress code.” (Christian Capitalism, 9/17/2003)

Why Change?

“Hybel's consumer-driven approach is evident at Willow Creek, where he shunned stained glass, Bibles, or even a cross for the 7,200-seat, \$72 million sanctuary he recently built. The reason? Market research suggested that such traditional symbols would scare away non-churchgoers.” (Earthly Empires, 2005)

b. Joel Osteen—Lakewood church

Media has helped spread the message, particularly for Lakewood Church, the largest megachurch in the U.S. In 1981, Joel Osteen, son of then-pastor Joe Osteen, quit college to set up his father's television ministry. The services eventually aired in 140 countries. He also advertised Lakewood on local television and on billboards throughout Houston where the church is located. After his father passed away in 1999, Osteen became pastor and expanded the church's media strategy. **(Christian Capitalism)**

Increased Numbers-- Osteen is so popular that he has nearly quadrupled attendance since taking over the pulpit from his late father in 1999, winning over believers from other churches as well as throngs of the "unsaved." Many are drawn first by his ubiquitous presence on television. Each week 7 million people catch the slickly produced broadcast of his Sunday sermons on national cable and network channels, for which Lakewood shells out \$15 million a year. Adherents often come clutching a copy of Osteen's best-seller, Your Best Life

Now, which has sold 2.5 million copies since its publication last fall.
(Earthly Empires)

- C. What of the church in Jerusalem?
 - a. 3000 + (Acts 2: 41, 4: 4; 5: 14)
 - b. Is bigger better or worse?

II. Reasons People attend Mega-churches

- A. Appealing to everyone
 - 1. Something for everyone.
 - 2. No one felt bad or left out.
- B. Popular—winning team
 - 1. Everyone wants to win
- C. Relationships with no accountability
 - 1. Still in your sins, no one cares.
 - 2. As long as you feel good and love God.
- D. Business contacts—directories, Want Ads
 - 1. “If they worship here, they must be trustworthy.”
- E. One stop religious experience—child care, recovery programs, movies, cafes, gift shops
- F. Entertaining atmosphere—Various music genres
- G. Feel good faith of health and wellness—aerobics, martial arts, weight-loss
- H. Counseling of every kind—Marriage, grief, addictions, etc.
- I. Bible says—Jn. 4: 24; Rom. 14: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 20-21

III. Dangers of Mega-churches

- A. “I don’t feel edified.”
 - b. Religious Experience
 - c. Emotionalism—Five senses
 - d. Doing what feels right
 - 1. Killed Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3)
 - 2. Dethroned King Saul (1 Sam. 15)
 - 3. Condemned Herod (Matt. 14: 3-4)
- B. “What’s in it for me?”

1. Jesus fed 5000—Jn. 6: 8-14
 - a. Following day people follow Jesus
 - b. Looking for more food—vs. 26-27
 - c. Jesus continues
 1. Bread of life vs. Manna
 2. Bottom line—vs. 53-60
 3. End result—vs. 66
 - d. What if Jesus fed them?
 1. They continue to follow but for physical pleasure

2. Jews after the Return—Mal. 3: 14
 - a. People: What do we get out of it?
 - b. Complaints after Egypt, Wilderness Wanderings
 1. No food—Ex. 16: 2-3
 2. No water—Ex. 17: 3
 3. Just manna? Num. 11: 4-6

3. Jesus said
 - a. Matt. 16: 26
 - b. Jesus said, Mk. 10: 45

4. Paul writes, 1 Cor. 3: 6-7, **“I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”**
 - a. Do your part and be satisfied with it
 - b. God will do his part

Conclusion

Amos 8: 11-12—A famine in the land. Lack of Bible reading.
 Luke 11: 31—“A greater than Solomon is here.” Jesus doesn’t need a huge church to prove He is greater. His sacrifice on the cross proves that over and over again.