

Intro:

A couple of weeks ago I preached a sermon on the church entitled “It’s Not Your Church”. So...

Whose church is it? — the Lord Jesus Christ’s.

It’s not your church, it’s not my church — it’s *His* church. It is very important for us not to forget that.

A lot of church problems would be solved if we really looked at the Church as His possession; we are just his servants working together for his kingdom, doing his bidding.

Now I want to embark on a few more messages on the topic of the church in order to communicate what I think is a biblical philosophy of the church.

I hope that you will see through these messages what I am trying to do as a pastor, and hopefully what the rest of us are trying to do as church members in serving God in this place.

In this series, I am taking several metaphors that the Bible uses about the church to describe our philosophy. For this message, I have taken this metaphor as our title:

It's a Building

The church is a building. Peter and Paul both use this metaphor to describe what God is doing in the church.

Read Eph 2.19-22

One of the things that the metaphor of the building implies concerning church work is this: *It's a Building - it needs organization.*

Proposition:

Compare 1 Peter 2.1-5

I. The purpose of the building [the dwelling place of God]

A. Ancient dwelling places of God on the earth

1. As a pilgrim, walking with sojourners

a. Enoch walked with God (Gen 5.24)

b. Noah walked with God (Gen 6.9)

c. Abraham walked with God (Gen 17.1, 24.40)

2. Among His people, dwelling in his sanctuary
 - a. The tabernacle (Ex 25.8, 40.34)
 - b. The temple (1 Ki 8.10-11)
 3. In His Son (Jn 1.14) ['dwelt' = 'tabernacled']
- B. Current dwelling place of God on the earth
1. God does not live in temples of stone (Ac 7.48-50)
 2. God dwells in the hearts of men
 - a. Individually (1 Cor 6.19-20)
 - b. Collectively (1 Cor 3.16; Eph 2.20-22)
 - c. 'Alive, alive-o' (1 Pt 2.5)

You are familiar with these concepts, I think. We have gone over them many times over the years.

But let's really settle on this concept: the purpose of God's building, the church, is to have a place for God to live in this world.

- The presence of God has had a tremendous impact on the world for the last 2000 years.
- The removal of God's presence is going to have a devastating impact in days to come.

II. The features of the building

The building of Solomon's temple was very impressive:

^{NAU} **1 Kings 5:17** Then ^athe king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with cut stones.

^{NAU} **1 Kings 6:7** The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built

"The only way Solomon's engineers could have accomplished this was by following a master plan. God gave that plan to David and he shared it with Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11-19). Because the workers followed God's

plan, the temple was built without noise or confusion. Every stone was prepared and fitted into its rightful place.

“God has a master plan for his church (Eph. 1:4-12). He is hewing stones out of the quarry of sin, giving them life, and fitting them into his temple. He alone sees the total plan, and he alone knows when the temple will be completed. When Solomon’s temple was completed, God moved in. But when the church is completed, God will move it out and take it to glory.”¹

In recent months I have been learning a good deal about ‘stick built houses’ – they all have to follow a plan if they are going to function properly. Some are better at following the plan than others.

A. The foundation

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 3:10** According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

^{NAU} **Ephesians 2:19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

B. The materials

^{NAU} **Ephesians 2:21** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

^{NAU} **1 Peter 2:4** And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be What You Are : 12 Intriguing Pictures of the Christian from the New Testament* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1996, c1988). 86.

III. The organization of the building

A. According to God's plan, developed through God's apostles

1. Apostles ordered and organized by virtue of their status as witnesses and gifts as God's servants
 - a. Eyewitnesses of Christ
 - b. Gifted as apostles (inspiration, authority, etc.)

The apostles naturally took leadership in the fledgling church, and took charge of its development under the leadership of the Holy Spirit

2. Apostles organized additional leadership

- a. First, deacons to serve the church (and the apostles) (Acts 6)
- b. Later, elders to lead the church (Ac 11.28-30, 14.23, 15.2ff.)
- c. Various ministries to meet needs in the church (e.g. 1 Tim 5.5-10, ministry of widows...)

B. Continued by God's people (1 Cor 14.40)

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 14:40** Let all things be done decently and in order.

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 14:40** But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

1. Pastors [elders] and deacons
2. Orderly business, regular rules

At the recent ordination down in Sedro Woolley, Pastor Coursen led the meeting, following [I think] Robert's Rules of Order.

First, the meeting called for a temporary chair and a temporary clerk who were nominated and voted on. Then the temporary chair called for a permanent chair and clerk, who were then nominated and voted on [same guys].

Now that may seem foolish – but it is wisdom, following decent order so that no one can be blamed for not proceeding orderly.

Conclusion:

The Christian church is the dwelling place of God on the earth as he dwells in men's hearts, organized together into local bodies of believers.

Since God uses the metaphor of a building, so should we.

A building implies order and organization — it cannot function without it.

May God help us to follow his order from the word, and be orderly in our conduct in the world.