

THE CHURCH



1. The Church Is Like A Building

Introduction

What is the church? To many people the church is a special building, with a cross outside, where Christians meet to worship. It is true that we call that building a church, but according to God's Word, the real church isn't a building made of wood and concrete, but a group of people who meet to worship Jesus.

In the little book of Philemon, the Apostle Paul is sending his greetings to his friend and the church that meets in his house. Philemon 1:2. Paul is clearly not speaking about the building, but the believers. The believers are the church, and so you and I are the real church, whether we meet in a home or a special building. Some people think it is important to go to a church that has a beautiful building, but it is more important to belong to a group of people who really love Jesus and worship him, wherever they meet.

In the Bible different pictures are used to help us understand what the church really is. We are going to study some of these pictures so we can learn more about the church and who we are. The first picture we are going to look at is that of a temple or building.

1. THE CHURCH IS LIKE A BUILDING

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:20-22

In these verses it tells us that the church is like a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord. In some countries when the word 'temple' is used the people think of a Buddhist or Hindu temple, but in God's Word it is speaking about the building that God's people, the Israelites, built to worship God. There were no idols in this temple. Ephesians 2 tells us that when the believers are gathered together to worship they are like that temple or building. What can we learn from this picture of the church?

A. THE BUILDER

All buildings have a builder! Who is the builder of the church? It is God himself. In some countries where Christians are persecuted, they try to destroy the buildings where these believers meet. But no-one can destroy the true church, as it hasn't been built by man, but by God. It is not a building, it is people!

At times we can be discouraged by what we see in the church, but remember God is building his church and we are working together with him. Look at 1 Corinthians 3:9-10. A house is built by team work, with a foreman and construction workers. In the same way the church is built by a team of leaders and members, working together with Christ. Just remember you are part of the team!

B. THE FOUNDATION

When building a house, you begin with the foundation. If it is not laid well the house may crack or sink into the ground. What is the foundation of the building or temple that God is building? Look at 1 Corinthians 3:11. It tells us that Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation of the church. When we meet together Jesus should always be the centre. This is true in our own lives, and also when we gather together.

C. THE STONES

After the foundation has been laid for a building, the walls begin to go up. In some places cement and bricks are used, and in other places wood. During the time of Jesus stones were used. In 1 Peter 2:4-5 it describes believers as living stones that make up the building or temple.

When stones or bricks are used to make a wall, they have to be fitted together well. This is also true in the church. God is at work in our lives, so that we will fit together and work alongside each other, to bring glory to him. It isn't always easy! Let's allow him to keep changing us, even using the people around us, to make us more like Jesus.

Conclusion

What is the building or temple for? In Ephesians 2:22 it tells us that we are being built together with others, into a place where God lives by his Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Israelites built a temple and dedicated it to God, and God filled it with his glorious presence. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to live IN believers. We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit, individually, and corporately when we meet together.

Remember that God's temple is holy, and as his temple, we need to keep ourselves pure for him. Read 1 Corinthians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

So what is the church? It is not a building made of wood or cement, but a building or temple of people, who are filled with God's Spirit. Are you one of those living stones in this building? Let's continue to allow God to change us, so that we fit together with the other stones, and together reflect the glory of God.