

What is the Church?

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Text: *Ephesians 2:11-22*

Before I got saved, I had wrong concepts about Church. I used to think that Church is a building. I thought that Church is something we do or a place we go to or a service we attend. But when I read and studied my Bible, God by His grace showed me how wrong I was about Church. God through His Word and by His Spirit corrected me and showed me what the Church is.

But not only has God delivered me from wrong concepts about church, I am now part of that Church which Christ so loved and has promised to build.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

I am excited about Church, what He has done. What He is doing. What He is going to do in the immediate and the distant future and for eternity. Just to think that **you and I get to be part** of what the Lord Jesus Christ is building. It is humbling. It is amazing!

Today **my prayer** is that we would have a **right understanding** and have a **real appreciation** of what the Church is. But in order to really appreciate the Church Christ is building, **we must remember** a number of things. We must remember what we were apart from the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12: That at that time ye were (1) without Christ, being (2) aliens from the commonwealth (citizenship) of Israel, and (3) strangers from the covenants of promise (Romans 9:4), having (4) no hope, and (5) without God in the world:

The bottom line is, that as Gentiles, we were **objects of Jewish contempt** and were **spiritually bankrupt**.

But that has changed! Now that we are in Christ three things basically happened:

1. Gentiles and Jews reconciled to one another (vv13-15)

13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

2. Gentiles and Jews reconciled to God (vv16-18)

16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

In order to appreciate God's grace and mercy we must remember what we were apart from Christ. In order to appreciate and love the Church we must remember what we were objects of Jewish contempt and were spiritually bankrupt. But now Jews and Gentiles reconciled and reconciled to God.

3. Gentiles and Jews are being built together (vv19-22)

Believing Gentiles and along with believing Jews, are being built into a great spiritual Temple.

The Bible uses many figures to help us understand what the Church is. The Church is compared to a **body** (v16), to a **city** (v19), to a **family** (v19), to a **bride** (5:23-33), to a **building**. And here in our text, Paul uses a figure of a **temple**.

I - It is a spiritual Holy Temple

19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The Church is not material building or physical temple. It is not a temple made by human hands. It is not made of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. **Though the Church is not the building, the church is like a building.** Every building must have a foundation, cornerstone and superstructure. A building without a good solid foundation will not last, will not stand and will collapse. A building must also have a **solid, firm** and **precise** cornerstone. It is that which most strategic in the whole edifice. A **cornerstone** is that which **supports the whole structure** and it is **the standard** by which every part of the structure is **measured** and **aligned**.

Furthermore a building or a **temple is not all foundation** and **cornerstone**. It is not complete without the superstructure. **Superstructure** is the **construction above the foundation**. It is all that part of a building above the basement.

Now let's look at the Temple Christ is building.

1. The Foundation and Cornerstone

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

There is in one sense, the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. But not in the sense that apostles and prophets themselves are the foundation for it says in ...

*1 Corinthians 3:11 For other **foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, **which is Jesus Christ.***

So the foundation of the Church is not the the apostles and prophets themselves, but rather the foundation is the truth that was entrusted to them and the truth that they proclaim. The foundation which the apostles and prophets laid, which they used for themselves and announced for others.

After Peter preached the resurrection and repentance and faith, many received ...

*Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42: And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.***

The Church is built upon the truth, upon the apostle's doctrine. It is founded on the doctrine of Christ; delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New.

And what is the main doctrine that they build the Church?

Here Paul makes clear that Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone. Jesus Christ Himself, the only true Foundation, was the grand subject of their ministry, and spring of their life. **Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.** The cornerstone is that which supports the whole structure. It is that which most strategic in the whole edifice. A cornerstone will sometimes be referred to as a "foundation-stone", and is symbolic of Christ, whom the Apostle Paul referred to as the "head of the corner" and is the "Chief Cornerstone of the Church" (*Ephesians 2:20*).

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried (tested) stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste (not panic, not act hastily, not worry).

*1 Peter 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a **chief corner stone, elect, precious:** and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the **head of the corner,***

Jesus rejected of men and religious leaders but He is precious to God and to those who believed. The stone the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone.**

*Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself** being the chief corner stone;*

The verse does not simply say Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. But it says, Jesus Christ **Himself** being the chief corner stone. He and He alone. Jesus Christ alone can support and uphold and align the whole structure.

The cornerstone must be strong enough to hold and support the structure. The cornerstone must be precise to align the whole structure. It must be straight and square so the rest of the building would be straight and not crooked.

As the builders build the building they are measuring everything by the cornerstone. So the building is only as good as the cornerstone. The building greatly depends upon the cornerstone.

2. The Superstructure

*21: In whom all the **building** (structure) fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

The superstructure of the spiritual temple or building is made up of living stones.

*1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4: **To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.***

In *verse 4*, Christ is identified as the living **Stone**. But in *verse 5*, we are also called as the living **stones**. Christians are living stones **by virtue of their connection or attachment with the one living Stone**. The church is compared to a temple, of which Christians are stones. **People who though were dead in trespasses and sins have come in contact with Jesus Christ and have been made alive in Him and they have been made stones with life.**

*1 Peter 2:4 **To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.***

All who come to Him in repentance and faith, all who are joined in living union with Him become this lively stones that become part of the great spiritual temple - the Church.

II - It is fitly framed together

What does the Lord do with those living stones?

*21: In whom all the building **fitly framed together** groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

In Christ the whole building, are being fitted or joined together. We are like stones or bricks being fit together to form the temple. We are carefully being joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

Each stone are carefully selected and carefully being formed

The Church is not just a collection of loose stones and timbers. The stones are carefully **being formed** and **chiseled out, smoothed out and framed** so that they would **perfectly fit and aligned together**.

Taking every individual stone to fit in the building. **We are not randomly thrown into the pile of rocks and bricks.** A meticulous work is behind it, so that we will all be harmoniously and inseparably linked to one another.

III - It is a work in progress

*21: In whom all the building fitly framed together **groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:** 22: In whom ye also **are builded** together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

It is an ongoing work. **Jesus did not build His church once and for all.** Jesus is still building His church. **It is under construction.** The Church is like a **construction site.** What does a construction site look like? It's dusty. Still lots of work to be done.

The work of a church is not going to be clean. It's not always going to look just so, because it is a construction site. There is always going to be new people coming in and they have sin issues and they need to be disciplined. They need to be helped. All of us need to be made mature.

It is a work in progress. God is building it little by little. We have to be patient. We cannot be in hurry. Our Lord is laying the stone, one stone at a time. But patiently over time and relentlessly God is building His church.

Although the Church is a work in progress we need to understand **the foundation has already been laid out.** The laying of the foundation is done. It is completed in the past. That is why there no more apostles and prophets today because the foundation has been laid. There no more new revelation needed. The foundation is firm and sure.

*20: And **are built** upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also **are builded** together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

And having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.

IV - It's end design

What is the function of this building or this temple? When we build houses, it is that men may dwell in them. But what is the end design of this temple?

1. For an habitation of God

*22: In whom ye also are builded together for an **habitation of God** through the Spirit.*

The end design of the temple is for the habitation of God through the Spirit. In Him you also are being built together into a **dwelling place for God** by the Spirit.

God dwells in all believers now. They become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit.

Thus the Church is the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

2 Corinthians 6:16 I will dwell in them, and walk in them ...

*1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4: **To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.***

In this temple there is worship. There are sacrifices. Their hearts. Their lives. Their bodies, service, love, life, affection, will are all feared as holy and acceptable sacrifice to God. (*Romans 12:1-2*)

2. A living representation of God

That it may be the living representation of God

*Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9: And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places **might be known by the church the manifold** (various, great) **wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:***

Through the Church the great wisdom of God, will be manifested here and now

*Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21: **Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.***

God is displaying to its fullest measure the infinite wisdom that was exercised in planning redemption and the application of that redemption to men.

Men and women will look with amazement. When they see what God is doing through the church. Through the church they would see the manifold wisdom of God and the glory of God.

Made for His habitation. Made to bring glory to Him. Made to offer spiritual sacrifices to Him. And all that the church does on a horizontal plane if its a true church activity must have reference to God, His glory, His will His purpose.

V - Practical lessons

Just think that God chose to dwell in the Church

1. What condescension in God to dwell in human hearts!

It is humbling and amazing that the dwelling place He has chosen for Himself is sinful creatures like us.

2. How careful we ought to be not to defile this temple!

We ought to live pure lives and not defile the temple of God.

3. What gratitude and love we ought to have for Him!

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

4. How committed we ought to be!

Stick close to the church. **Center your life** in the church. **Cherish** the Church. Give yourself for the church. Christ died for the church. The Church is precious to Christ.

Psalms 92:12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13: Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14: They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15: To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The church is where Christ manifest His glory and presence. It is the pillar of truth. It is where He blesses His people.

Let us pray that GTBBC will faithfully represent God in this community. We will manifest the manifold wisdom and the infinite glory of God. That when they see us treat one another, love one another, care for them, love the truth, proclaim the Word of God with grace and truth, they will say ...

Psalms 118:23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.