

Jesus Is Building His Church

by Chip Brogden

The Church that Jesus is building is a spiritual house of living stones, built on the revelation of Jesus Christ, where individuals have a personal relationship with Him.

Scripture: Genesis 11:1, Matthew 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 1 Corinthians 3:11-12, Ephesians 1:17, Ephesians 2:20, Colossians 1:12, 1 Peter 2:4

Topics: "Church Membership", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches on the foundation of the Church being built by Jesus Himself, emphasizing the importance of the revelation of Jesus Christ as the key to understanding and experiencing true Church membership. The Church, or 'ecclesia', consists of those to whom God has revealed His Son, and this revelation is what secures individuals as members of the Church. Jesus builds His Church through personal revelation to individuals, not through human efforts or strategies, and the Church is a spiritual organism of living stones, not an organization or denomination.

Transcript

"...upon this Rock, I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18b)."

What is the "move" of God? What is God doing today? What is God saying to the Church? Here's what is happening: Jesus is building His Church. There is no "new" thing to be seen, said, or done: Jesus the Rock is building His Church upon the foundation of Himself. He is faithfully gathering the living stones together and is assembling them into a beautiful structure of gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Corinthians 3:9-17).

There is nothing wrong with the Church! That is, there is nothing wrong with the Church that Jesus is building, though there is much to be desired among those who are following their own building programs and blueprints, and calling it "church". Jesus is assembling the saints together into a spiritual house. The problem is that some things we have come to believe to be "church" are not necessarily the Church. Although there is nothing wrong with the Church, everything that is called "Church" is not the "Church". So what is the Church?

Let us look at this statement: "I will build My Church." The first thing that strikes us about this thing called "Church" is simply that it is that which Jesus is building upon the foundation of Himself. More specifically,

the word "church" is "ecclesia", the called-out assembly. It consists of those to whom God has chosen to reveal His Son. This revelation of who we are in Christ and who Christ is in us is the key. Without this firm foundation we cannot know, understand or experience being part of the Church. Quite frankly, our religious head knowledge or credal affirmation is of virtually no significance. Even the repeating of the so-called "Sinner's Prayer" means nothing apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ. May God give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:17-23). Then, our prayer and confession will be based on Spirit and Truth revelation, not flesh and blood, second or third generation "knowing" (Matthew 16:17).

The Church is not built upon the individual Peter, but upon those who have been given revelation. Jesus builds His Church through revelation to individuals, the "whosoever". What revelation? The revelation of Himself. This revelation is sufficient to secure us as members of the Church that Jesus is building. When we understand that revelation is the only thing which matters we will cease trying to grow the Church or gain members through better preaching, musical entertainment, handsome facilities, demographic studies, and savvy marketing techniques. Instead, we will simply come to rely upon revelation and trust the Father to reveal the Son through the Spirit Who brings illumination to our heart. We are the Temple of God, a habitation for Himself, and this Church grows as a living thing (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Jesus is not building a denomination or founding a movement. The Church is not a denomination, but neither is it a non-denomination. It is not a steeple-house or institutional church, but neither is it a house church. Stated simply, the Church is a spiritual house of living stones, invisible to the naked eye, but clearly seen and known in Spirit. It is not an organization, but an organism. Who are its members? Those who have the revelation of Jesus Christ. Where are these members to be found? They are scattered in all directions, both inside and outside of Organized Religion.

Keith Green once said, "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger." How true this statement has proved to be through the years. But we hasten to say that going to a house church won't make you a Christian either. We thank God for the saints which are meeting in homes and rediscovering what it means to gather together in simplicity apart from the steeple-house, paid clergy, and denominationalism. Yet, Jesus did not say, "I will build My HOUSE church." Since the Church is comprised of individuals who have the revelation of Jesus Christ, how or where they meet together is of little consequence. In Jerusalem, or in this mountain? Neither, says the Lord (John 4:20-24). Where we gather doesn't matter to the Lord, but WHY we gather is of extreme importance to Him. If it is due to the revelation of Jesus Christ, we will worship in Spirit and Truth because the revelation of Jesus Christ draws us together. Why? Because our testimony is other-worldly, peculiar, spiritual. We are the called-out assembly, the ecclesia of Jesus. We are His particular treasure.

What we have, both within Organized Religion and within the house church "movement", is a mixture of people. Some of them have the revelation of Jesus Christ, and some do not. We affirm that this revelation is enough to establish the Church, regardless of the outward appearances. Where this revelation exists, THERE is the foundation of the Church that Jesus is building. Since it is an inward revelation, a spiritual seeing and entering into, we cannot classify everyone as being the Church merely because they are within a system of Organized Religion, or even if they have come out of a system. Nor can we include or disqualify them because of where or how they meet. The meeting together is only a small part of the total picture. The question is not whether we are in or out of a human system, or how we meet, or what doctrine we lay emphasis on. The question is, have we seen the Lord? Do we have the revelation of Jesus Christ? We may be correct in outward appearance but have no inward revelation. Hence, not all who say, "Lord!

Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 7:21-23). Similarly, we may be politically or spiritually incorrect and offensive outwardly speaking, that is, according to what man values and esteems as good, acceptable, moral, and religious; yet the revelation of Christ is sufficient to bring us into the Kingdom with or without the support and approval of men, even the most spiritual and holy men.

"I will build My Church." We maintain that the Church exists where individuals have the revelation of Jesus Christ: for when this revelation takes hold of a person, Jesus Christ will have the preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:12-19). It is not enough to tell people, "Jesus is the Head of the Church." We cannot make Him the Head while gathered together and then expect Him to remain in the background while we live out our lives individually. Either He is Lord OF all, or He isn't Lord AT all. When we see Him seated in heavenly places we will gladly and joyfully allow Him to be the Head over all things, not only in the Church, but in our marriage, family, and work. We will at once see that the Church does not belong to us. We will discern that hitherto we have viewed "church" as something that we must attend, build, or grow. With the knowledge that the Church does not belong to us we will relinquish our claims to it and begin to co-labor together with the Lord (I Corinthians 3:9). Then, it is a natural thing to give up our titles and positions and merely concentrate on building one another up in love. To give up title and position within a group that has no revelation of Christ is to invite chaos. This is why man feels the need to have some organization and established leadership among the saints, running the steeple-house much like a business with mission statements and top-heavy organizational charts, paving a one-way street of submission to some earthly head - because there is no vision of Christ. It is not more organization or leadership training that we need. We only need more revelation, and no man can give us revelation. It is the gift of God. Once obtained, we will with much rejoicing and relief fall into place below One Head and allow Christ to have the preeminence. "The Lord is my Pastor: I shall not lack (Psalms 23:1)."

Since it is the Lord's Church, and no man's, and since we are the sheep of His pasture, not man's, we will stop referring to "Pastor Smith's church" and "Brother John's congregation". The pastor is not the head of the Church. But then, neither is the teacher, evangelist, prophet, or apostle. Apostles do not build the Church: Jesus builds the Church, for it is His Church. All anyone can do is co-labor with Him. Anything done apart from Him will fall apart, for there is no other foundation but what has been laid, and that foundation is Christ (I Corinthians 3:11). If the foundation is faulty, it matters not one whit how beautiful the structure is. The apostles and prophets lay the foundation of the Church, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20), but it is still based upon a revelation that no man can give! The Spirit of Jesus must make Himself known in you (Galatians 1:11-18). Then others will build upon that foundation, which is your personal revelation of Christ in you and you in Christ. But no one at any time may lay claim to the Church, or any particular fellowship, as his or her own. The Church does not belong to a denominational office, church board, circle of elders, founding apostle, or individual pastor. At least, not the Church that Jesus is building.

How do we know if a particular work is the true building of God, part of the genuine Church? All we have to do is see who has the preeminence there. If an apostle or pastor is considered the spiritual head then Christ does not have the preeminence (3 John 9). If the elected deacons are in charge then Christ does not have the preeminence. We may give Him lip service and acknowledge with our mouth that it is His Church, but apart from revelation these are empty words. When the moment of truth comes man will always seize control, demonstrating that Christ does not have the preeminence there, and indeed, probably never had it to begin with.

How then do we know who has the preeminence? We need only look to see who gets the credit for the work. Men talk about "this great denomination" and glory in the works of their hands. Of course, with their lips they draw near to God, but their heart is far from Him. They are only trying to build a name to themselves and reach the heavens. The end result is confusion and vain babbling (Genesis 11:1-9). They are not co-laboring with Christ in the building of His Church, they are asking Christ to co-labor with THEM in the building of THEIR church. "We have done many mighty works in Your Name! Behold what manner of stones and buildings these are (Mark 13:1)!" And surely, great things have been accomplished, insofar as organization, wealth, property, and numbers are concerned. "But Jesus said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15)." If Jesus is building His Church as His own possession, then we cannot take the credit for it. We can only marvel at what He does and bow our heads in humble gratitude for allowing us to be a part of it.

What shall we do about Organized Religion? What shall we do about those who claim the Church as their own, who intend to build a name to themselves? What shall we do about the false religious system? We will do nothing at all; for, those structures not built upon the Foundation of Jesus Christ will fall of their own accord (I Corinthians 3:12-17; Matthew 7:24-27). How could it be otherwise? The only safe place to be is within the Church that Jesus is building. Besides, if we attempt to bring down the huge idol of Organized Religion we may well crush ourselves and others in the attempt.

What is the Spirit of Antichrist? It is that religious thing that makes war against Jesus and the Church that He is building. The Spirit of Antichrist is already gone out in to the world (I John 2:18) and has sown tares among the wheat. Indeed, in the last days the Spirit of Antichrist will dominate and rule the world system, attempting to blot out the true Church. Outwardly speaking it appears to be succeeding. Nevertheless, the Church that Jesus is building cannot be overcome by the gates of hell. Since it is built upon the revelation of Jesus Christ, nothing can stop it. Why? A sane man will not die for a tradition or a doctrine. But he will gladly lay down his life for the revelation of Jesus Christ. He cannot be disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 20:24; 26:19). He has found his Life (Christ) by giving up his life.

Yes, this world system, including man's religious systems, is passing away: make no mistake (I John 2:15-17). The nations will be judged and will pass through the fire (Psalms 2). The earth will decay and finally dissolve altogether, consumed in the fire; the heaven's will melt with a fervent heat (II Peter 3:7-14). The outward things are fading, perishing, evolving downward in a state of entropy. Look around you, saint of God. See the steeple-house? It will not remain for long. See the cathedral? It too shall pass. See the oceans? One day they will be no more. Look at the mountains - they will all be removed. See the cities? They will be destroyed. Heaven and earth will pass away.

What is my point? Simply this: the Church that Jesus is building will be the only thing which remains. The visible will make way for the invisible, the temporal will give way to the eternal, mortal will put on immortality (I Corinthians 15). A new heavens and a new earth will be made and the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, the Church, will be completed (Revelation 21). We are that Building of God, built upon the revelatory foundation of Jesus brought by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). We are the Temple of God, therefore we need no earthly temple, we seek no earthly kingdom, and we expect no earthly reward (I Corinthians 3:16,17). We look for a City whose Builder and Maker is God, and we are that City (Hebrews 11:10). Jesus is building His Church!

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