

God's Building.

by Gareth Evans

Gareth Evans explores the concept of the church as God's building, emphasizing its spiritual significance and the role of believers within it.

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Acts 10:41, 1 Corinthians 1:26, 1 Corinthians 3:10, 1 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4

Topics: "Church Structure", "Gods Presence"

Description

Gareth Evans delves into the concept of the church as a building, a bride, and a body, emphasizing the importance of structure, dwelling place, and God's presence within His people. He explores the story of David wanting to build a dwelling place for God, highlighting God's promise to build a house through David's 'greater son,' Jesus. Evans discusses the blueprint of the church, with Jesus as the chief cornerstone and the foundation built on the apostles and prophets, emphasizing that the church is 'the called-out ones' chosen by God for His purpose.

Transcript

I have been asked to teach a series on the church. Each week I shall present a different aspect of this subject for our consideration and discussion. Many today are calling us back to the 'pure' church of the C2nd (or their interpretation of it) but I confess I am not particularly interested in imitating that church but, rather, in finding out what the mature church of the C21st should be like. "Not the child but the mature man."

What did Jesus say about the church?

Matt 16:18 "I will build my church". "The gates of Hell will not prevail against it". "Upon this rock".

The picture presented to us is that of a building, so it is that picture I want to consider today. Other pictures we have in Scripture are those of a bride - (speaking of intimacy, relationship, destined for marriage, reigning with the King, etc.) and a body (unity, living organism, interdependency, activities, etc.)

A building speaks of structure, dwelling place, presence, etc.

I want to take you back to an interesting story in the OT. It is recorded in several places so I will paraphrase the story.

David wants to build a dwelling place for God. (represented by the presence of the ark) (2 Sam.7:1-13; 27. 1 Chron.17:10-12).

Through the prophet Nathan, God tells him not to. Note particularly the reason ("I have never dwelt in a house made with hands") and the promise ("I shall build you a house.") Each subsequent time this story is told through the mouth of David or Solomon both the reason and the promise is changed! (See 1 Kings 5:3-5 and 8:19 and 1 Chr.22:6-11) The promise continues, "I will raise up your 'son' and he shall build a house for My name and his kingdom shall be everlasting." Of whom is he speaking? I suggest David's 'greater son, Jesus.

A further interesting thought is that at the dedication of this new temple, destroyed a relatively few years later, the ark was brought in with this interesting comment - "and there was nothing in the ark but the tablets of the Law." (speaking of the judgment of God). Where was the manna speaking of His faithful provisions and the rod that budded speaking of the new life and priestly authority He gives? No wonder His presence was seen in a thick, dark cloud! (2 Chr.5:10-14). It is true that God does agree to 'dwell' in this temple in response to Solomon's plea, but that was not His intent. So today, He will meet us in our buildings and programs, but His desire is to dwell in a temple not made with hands - His church.

Let us consider the blueprint for this building. Its architect and builder are of that great creative company, God & Son. Jesus said He would build his church. This is a future tense but indicates no stated time. Some would teach that He built it in one event at Pentecost but this I refute. The purpose of Pentecost was not to build a church but to empower it for His service. As God created man from the dust of the earth and then breathed into his prepared vessel; as Jesus was prepared for his ministry ("A body you have prepared for me" -Heb 10:5), so the church was prepared before it was indwelt by the spirit of God. God always prepares His creation first before breathing life into it.

This is literally, "the church of Me" indicating that the church must always be under His control and authority. It is not a man-made organization.

Its chief corner stone is Jesus.

Matt 16:18 "Upon this rock" - petra (a large slab) not petros (a little stone - Peter).

Promised in Isaiah 28:16 "I am laying in Zion a stone, ... chosen and precious, ... head of the corner." Paul speaks of him as "a rock of offense, a stumbling block..."

Jesus is the corner stone of the foundation - the first stone in the building.

[1 Cor 10:4 " and that rock (petra) was Christ."]

Ephesians 2: 20. The foundation is built of the apostles and prophets. Evidently, Jesus began to build his church when he choose those first disciples. After a long night of prayer, he began to choose them (Luke 6:12). The Greek word for church is ekklesia [from ek (out of), and kaleo (I call)] - the called-out ones. A better understanding might have come from his words to the disciples found in John 15:16 "You did not choose me but I choose you." [eklexamenos - selecting for myself - for my own interests - not for yours!] He has chosen the foolish things of this world, etc. (1 Cor 1:26-30). The church is made up of 'the chosen-out ones'.

Peter recognized that they were chosen for a purpose. In his testimony before Cornelius in Acts 10:41 he speaks of the apostles as those 'chosen beforehand to be witnesses'.

Did these disciples have eternal life then? (Consider David, Abraham and other OT saints. Did they have eternal life?) How could the disciples have eternal life if the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified? (John 7:31). Assuredly the disciples did, for they were told to 'rejoice because their names were written (already) in heaven. (Luke 10:20). They had eternal life even then as the Comforter was with them in the person of Jesus. God had enrolled their names in heaven and had fully prepared them to receive the spirit life as soon as Jesus was glorified at his resurrection. He returned to breathe that life into them (John 20:22) and to give them power (Acts 1:8 and 2:4).

[See Matthew 18:15-17 for more evidence of an already existing church prior to Calvary and Pentecost. "Go (eipe - present imperative - cannot have a future meaning in classical Greek) tell it to the church. If Jesus had wanted to speak of a future church He would have used the future tense as he always did in such cases.]

Continuing Eph 2:19-22: "We are God's house(hold); being fitly framed together; growing into a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

We are its living stones.

Which is the most important stone in the building? Is a window ledge more important than a roofing tile?

Peter writes, (1 Peter 2:4-5), "... living stones, a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices ..."

Jesus will build his church from chosen stones, which he started to call out for himself at the beginning of his ministry on earth. This is the church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. We are co-builders "employed" by the building firm, God and Son. Paul recognizes this, calling himself a 'wise, master builder.' (1 Cor 3:10-17) Let every man take care how he build upon the foundation. What am I? Do I assist in the building or am I a hazard? Am I fitted correctly into the structure?

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