

# Church = a Building

7.05.2006

As we continue our series on looking at what the Bible says about the church, today we look at buildings. Often when people talk about the church, they mean the building. But in the New Testament, the word "church" is never used to refer to a physical building. However, on one occasion, it does say that church is a building. This New Testament church or building has very solid foundations, and an extremely important chief cornerstone. But the building remains unfinished. It is still being built.

And the material in the building is not sandstone, wood or brick, but it is stone.

The stone is a very precious type of stone. It is called Living Stone.

And the mortar is made from the same material as the cornerstone. and as the building rises and takes shape, it is not just a church, but is a magnificent holy temple of our Lord, wherein He is extremely pleased to live, by His Spirit.

Ephesians 2:20-22 says that God does live in His Temple by His Spirit. It is the only building where you can be certain that God is found. Some people believe that God lives in church buildings like this one. I can remember a kindergarten teacher taking her class past another church building and telling the children to be quiet, because even though it was empty, God lives in there.

She was misguided, for that empty building wasn't the house of God. As Stephen said in Acts 7:48 "*The Most High does not live in houses made by men.*" God is no more present in an empty church than he is in the empty car park of Westfield.

But that does not mean that God is not here.

It does not mean that God is remote and cannot be contacted. For God is in His holy Temple, let all the earth stand in awe.

Where is that Temple? Is it just in heaven?

Is He only based somewhere in heaven and not with us?

NO. For He is with us in His earthly Temple, his church building, laid on a solid foundation, growing day by day, moment by moment, as living stones are place gently yet securely in place, tapped into alignment and bonding together in a unique, living church or Temple.

For we who believe in Christ Jesus, we who are rescued by Jesus, are an important part of His Temple, His church building. We are the living stones. We are united together in Christ, with his chief cornerstone directing the very place of His Temple. The foundation of the prophets and apostles is what keeps us in line, and not pushing into ungodly shapes, designs and purposes. So it is important to check our lives by the Scriptures, to see that what we build is not a dangerous spur on the building that needs demolishing later on.

And God lives in us through His Spirit. We are the dwelling place where God lives. So we can confidently say that God is here, because we are gathered together, and His Spirit is with us. With us gathered as the church, God is here. Not in a special piece of furniture, but in His living stones, in us.

And not only is God here, but God is also building His church. It is building in numbers, in size, in its effects, as more people are joined in with us. But not only is it building in size, it is building in another vital way.

Ephesians 2:22 says we're building our interdependence. "*In him you also are built together in the Spirit into a dwelling place for God.*"

Any stone building can only last as a building if the stones rely on the ones beneath and next to it. If the stones are missing, then cracks appear. If stones are weak, they need stronger ones around them to support and help bear the load.

As Christians, God's church is not a pile of living stones struggling as individuals, wanting to be close to God but neglecting other living stones.

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Too often in our individualistic society we have stressed independence, strength of character, the lone battler who goes against the odds by themselves. That is not the church God desires, nor came to die for.

Rather, as Christians we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. That is why it is important to know the people who sit near you here week by week. That is why for years there has been a stress on meeting with other Christians during the week. As you get to know each other more, you can share when it hurts, care for each other, notice when someone's missing and then call in to see if they are okay.

Each living stone is related in the building God is building. If one is missing, it is as painful as coming here one week to find that this fine building has been vandalised and twenty bricks are missing from the walls!

If we are being built up, we should be getting to know not only our God, but each other.

That is why we have morning tea. That is why we pass the peace greeting. That is why I love a personal church service, where you can feel as if I know you and that is why I try to remember your names and why I chastise myself for not doing as much visiting as I really want to.

But if I stopped the building there, I would be very narrow minded and selfish. For God is building a larger building than just the Christians meeting here in this service. For part of the building are the members of the other three congregations meeting here as Anglicans on Sundays. and then we must include the other Anglican Christians in our diocese, province, country and worldwide communion.

Is that broad enough? NO! For there are many other Christians being built into God's church in Hornsby who do not meet here with us. and not just in Hornsby, but also across the world.

Is that large enough? NO! For we are living in just a slice of time. God has built in Christians

from ages past, faithful Jews from before Christ, and more will be built in until Jesus returns.

God has a massive design. He is a Master Builder with no equal. Each believer is added in, and fits in with others. We need to keep welcoming them in, and growing in line with the foundations set by the apostles and prophets, anchored to the chief cornerstone of Jesus.

This is the Temple of God. This is the True church. God's building in which He delights to dwell through His Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ is building His church!

Thank you Jesus. Amen!