

Intro:

A month and a half ago, in our series on the metaphors describing the Church, I gave you a message entitled *It's a Building*.

The message was all right, but after I delivered it, I came away dissatisfied. I felt that I was too tied to my commentaries in that message and didn't really get to express what I really wanted to say about this metaphor.

So we are back to the same topic, but as I look over my notes from that time to this time, and consider the messages we have had in between, I think everything has worked out in a way that the Lord may have intended for us.

We are coming again to a metaphor for the church, but this last expression of the church is something that perhaps offers the greatest challenge for us in our local church. We considered several other metaphors in this series:

- A body
- A growing body
- A flock
- A temple

In some respects, though we are not perfect in this local assembly, I think the Lord has blessed us in these areas, especially the concept of 'body'. In some ways that is my primary emphasis in church life.

We are all quite different, coming from different backgrounds, yet there is a spirit among us that I love – we are a body, a true Christian family.

That doesn't mean we are always perfect in our expression of 'body love' and 'body life' – sometimes you annoy me, I annoy you, you annoy each other ...

But by God's grace, I think there is a true sense of 'body love' among us.

But now we are going to consider this last metaphor...

It's a Building (2) — it needs organization

I especially want to emphasize that 'organization' bit...

It is here where I think we lack a good deal of the ideal...

Let's return to Ephesians, we will get a few ideas from this text that suggest the image I have in mind concerning the church.

Read Eph 2.19-22

Proposition: As a building, the church requires efficient and sufficient organization.

I. The organization of a literal building

A. Suggested by the biblical metaphor (20-21)

1. A foundation
2. A chief cornerstone

Thayer: "For as the cornerstone holds together two walls, so Christ joins together as Christians, into one body dedicated to God, those who were formerly Jews and Gentiles, ... And as a cornerstone contributes to sustain the edifice, but nevertheless some fall in going around the corner carelessly; so some are built up by the aid of Christ, while others stumbling at Christ perish."

3. A fit framing

B. Illustrated in all kinds of architecture

1. Every building must have sound organization in order to stand for any length of time
 - a. Solid foundation
 - b. Well designed walls, supports, roofs, plumbing systems, etc
2. Ancient homes were built of simple materials, but with wise organizational principles
 - a. Most homes in Palestine in Bible times were built of 'mud-brick' construction
 - b. A high foundation made of rubble – broken stones, previous buildings, etc. (to raise the mud-brick house high enough to keep away moisture)
 - c. Mud-bricks
 - 1) Mud formed into bricks, dried in the sun
 - 2) Mixed with chopped straw to aid in drying and ease removal from moulds
 - 3) Mortared together in construction with mud

4) Entire structure plastered over with a mud plaster

“Each year the entire building would be replastered on the outside, and perhaps also on the inside, in order to keep it waterproof. Without this maintenance, mudbrick buildings soon decay.”¹

d. Roofs made of reeds, laid across wooden rafters, then plastered over [easily removed]

Even simple buildings made of mud-bricks required wise construction, organization, and especially regular maintenance.

II. The organization of a local assembly

A. The biblical model

1. Cornerstone: Jesus Christ
2. Foundation: the apostles
3. ‘Mud-bricks’ – you and me, organized into local assemblies
 - a. Leadership for training and administration [pastors/elders and deacons] (1 Tim 3)
 - b. Committees for care and ministry (ILLUSTRATION: 1 Tim 5.3-16)
 - 1) Some obscurity, but ...
 - 2) Apparently some widows were organized into the care of the church for their financial needs
 - 3) They were to be widows indeed, with none to take care of them
 - 4) They were on an official list (9)

¹ Wood, D. R. W. (1996, c1982, c1962). *New Bible Dictionary* (78). InterVarsity Press.

5) They were to be involved to some extent in the ministry of the church (compare 10 with 11-13)\

The evidence in the NT is somewhat sketchy, but it does give evidence of ministries within churches, organized and led by various individuals under the supervision of Pastors/Deacons

B. An historical example: Metropolitan Tabernacle under Charles Spurgeon²

1. The regular Sunday services
2. Pastor's College
3. Almshouses
4. Orphanage
5. Colporteur's Association (for the distribution of Christian literature)
6. Evangelists Association
7. The Country Mission
8. The Home and Foreign Working Society
9. The Loan Tract Society
10. The Sermon Loan Society
11. The Maternal Society
12. The Police Mission
13. The Coffee House Mission
14. The Loan Building Fund
15. The Christian Brother's Benefit Society
16. The Flower Mission
17. The Gospel Temperance Society
18. The Female Servants' Home Society
19. The Blind Society
20. The Ladies Benevolent Society
21. The Tabernacle Evangelistic Society
22. Spurgeon's Sermons Tract Society

These are but a sample – at the 25th anniversary of Spurgeon's ministry, 66 ministries like this were named as part of the ministry of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Forty mission churches, various Sunday Schools and Ragged Schools were sponsored throughout London.

² I don't know what all of these ministries are. They all have names that sound very British and very nineteenth century. They are evidence of a great working congregation.

My point in holding up Spurgeon's Tabernacle to you?
This kind of effort, this kind of building, requires
organization and administration.

III. The organization of our 'building'

- A. We have some structure proportionate to our size
 - 1. One pastor, three deacons
 - 2. Several Sunday School teachers
- B. We have weaknesses in our organization
 - 1. Number One weakness: I, as a pastor, **HATE** administration
 - 2. Number Two weakness: as a small organization, I have tended to take responsibility for everything
 - 3. Resultant weaknesses
 - a. Slow progress at many aspects of administration
 - b. Loose organization of Sunday School
 - c. Virtually no organized outreach ministries
- C. We have an obligation to our Master for organization
 - 1. God has not called us to be a Metropolitan Tabernacle (yet)
 - 2. But God has called us to be accountable for the talents [assets] He has entrusted to us

Read Lk 19.11-26.

Conclusion:

This message is preached as much [or more] to me than it is to you. But I believe the Lord wants us to find ways to build his church.

We need to work together, labouring in God's building, lifting up the name of Christ, calling men to found their lives upon Him.

You ask God to show you what you can do as a labourer in God's construction crew.