

CHRIST'S CHURCH

A CITY
SET ON A
HILL



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*“Ye are the salt of the earth:
but if the salt have lost his savour,
wherewith shall it be salted?*

*It is thenceforth good for nothing,
but to be cast out, and to be
trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world.
A city that is set on an hill
cannot be hid.”*

Matthew 5:13-14

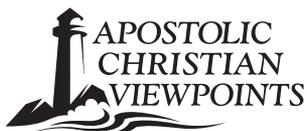
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH	<i>Page 3</i>
II. LAST DAYS?	<i>Page 4</i>
III. THE BODY OF CHRIST ON EARTH	<i>Page 6</i>
IV. A FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S LOVE	<i>Page 8</i>
V. A HOLY TEMPLE	<i>Page 10</i>
VI. THE PILLAR OF TRUTH	<i>Page 12</i>
VII. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD	<i>Page 14</i>
VIII. RELATED QUESTIONS	<i>Page 16</i>
IX. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	<i>Page 19</i>

This booklet is part of the Apostolic Christian Viewpoints series, a collection of writings prepared by a committee of the Elder Council of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean).

These booklets are not intended as exhaustive works on their respective subjects. Rather, they are offered as an encouragement to those who currently embrace these views; and to those who do not, a call to consider these topics in the light of scripture ... and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. (2 Tim 2:7).



I. I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

The Lord Jesus declared that He will build His church upon a solid rock and it will withstand “the gates of hell.”¹ With this statement, the Lord revealed that he intended to build a church, that it would be His church, and that through the ages of time it would conquer the greatest enemy the world ever knew. Nearly 2000 years later, we can only marvel at the way the Lord has kept this promise by building a church that has outlived civilizations, spanned nations and cultures, and penetrated every level of society. All of this occurred in spite of the relentless opposition of the adversary.

Though Christ’s words in the 16th chapter of Matthew were spoken so long ago, the questions about what He meant by what He said remain very current: What should His church be like? What is the mission of the church? Should the church of the 21st century be the same as the church of the 1st century? Is the church I attend a part of Christ’s true church? Is our church fulfilling its mission? What is the role of the church in the life of a believer? How can I contribute to the building of the church?

The aim of this booklet is to affirm the New Testament teachings to and about the church. By bringing clarity and emphasis to what the Scriptures say concerning it, we can help edify our beloved Apostolic Christian Church. Reminding ourselves of the importance the Lord has placed on His church can help foster unity, strength, and purpose against the many threats that face our fellowship. This knowledge can also shed light on the relationship between the church and the individual member.

¹ Matthew 16:18

II. LAST DAYS?

Christ had many specific instructions and warnings for His church during the time of the end. Therefore, before studying these teachings, it is important that we evaluate our own era. It is hard not to conclude that we are living in those momentous days that were foretold by the Lord.² The evidence for this is found everywhere we look: As in the days of Noah, the earth today is likewise filled with violence.³ A survey of the many geopolitical conflicts around the world reveals no likely solution. Open hostilities, barbaric savagery, and uprisings against governments all strongly suggest that we are living in those perilous times before prophesied.⁴

It is not only the rise of global violence but also the rise of ungodliness that proves the Scriptures are being fulfilled. Here in the West, we have seen shocking shifts in what is considered acceptable and normal in society. Shameful sin is glamorized and given legal protection, leading to open contempt and mockery of that which is godly. The institutions of marriage and family, once defined according to Scripture and protected by law, are being grossly reinterpreted. Those who oppose these changes are labeled as “bigots” and are intimidated into silence by the threat of censure or lawsuit in a way that would have been unthinkable a few generations ago.

Another dynamic of our age that portends last-day events is the never-ending advancement of technology. Dramatic changes, ranging from the digitization of communications to the implanting of microchips in humans, are reshaping our world. The internet has become an ever-present reality, connecting everything from education to entertainment, from commerce to socializing. It has become common for people to be connected to the internet every waking moment of the day. This preoccupation with electronic media has led to an obsession with that which is trivial, idly browsing the internet, playing games, and watching personal videos. Worse yet, the worldwide web is saturated with pornography, which enslaves

² Matthew 24:6-8

³ Genesis 6:11-13, Matthew 24:37

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:1-5

countless people in carnality. These things challenge the sanctity and sobriety of the Christian.

As we think of our rapidly changing world, many who love the church are pondering how we as a church can best meet these challenges. Some feel that the answer includes transforming certain aspects of the church. Their concern is that we have become more complacent and less relevant to our own children and a watching world. Indeed, the difference between this generation and their grandfather's generation is so great that it appears negligent to not change the church in key areas. We need to reach out to a lost and dying world and be willing to do whatever it takes to win them!

Others feel that an important part of the answer is steadfastness. Their concern is that the world is pressuring us to conform to its relativism while at the same time nominal Christianity encourages us to compromise. Indeed, to distance ourselves from the way the Holy Spirit has unquestionably led our forefathers would be a mistake. The Lord warned us that days would come when sin will abound and the love of many will grow cold. We must resist being swept up by these powerful forces!

These types of discussions lead us back to those questions about the church that were asked in the introduction. Thankfully, the answers to these pressing questions are not hard to find when we look to God's Word for guidance. The New Testament uses several metaphors to describe the characteristics and functions of the church; some of these are well known and others perhaps are not as familiar. Though these descriptions are not textbook definitions, they do help define what the church is, and thus by inference, what it is not. Nevertheless, they all apply to the one true church, which comprises men and women from every tribe, tongue, and nation, - the universal Church of Christ.⁵ They also apply to the local congregation and to fellowships of churches that are united in serving the Lord. Let us reflect on some of these illustrations.

⁵ Luke 13:29, Revelation 5:9, 7:9

III. THE BODY OF CHRIST ON EARTH

One of the most well known biblical teachings about the church is that it is the body of Christ. This powerful truth is stated repeatedly in the New Testament and is foundational to our understanding of the church.⁶ Exactly how the church can form the body of Christ here on earth while He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven is, in the words of Ephesians 5:32, “a great mystery.” Nevertheless, there are important implications to this description of the church.

One of the first lessons we can learn from this description is that the individual members of the church are connected with one another in a way that is essential to their existence. We cannot survive and function as we were designed unless we are connected with one another. One of the marvels of the human body is the way each individual part is so perfectly joined to the body that it forms a continuous part of the greater whole, yet each retains its own identity and function. Though consisting of countless “members”, the human body is one and functions as one, just as the Lord designed it. Therefore our connection with one another in the church is not merely incidental; it is both intentional and essential. Our relationship with our head, Jesus Christ, cannot be viewed as being completely independent from our relationship with one another. We each have our unique identity, but we find our true identity in the Lord Jesus Christ and by connection with the members of His body.

A second lesson we learn is the need for the individual members of the church to work together. The human body is capable of doing many wonderful things but only if its members work together. In order for the church to work together, it is crucial that each one contribute. This begins by understanding that the Lord has set us in the body “as it hath pleased Him.”⁷ He places us in the body according to the specific calling He has for each of us.⁸ It is by using the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been entrusted to us that we are

⁶ Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:12-27,
Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:6, 4:4,16, Colossians 2:19

⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:18

⁸ Romans 12:3-4, 1 Corinthians 7:17, Galatians 1:1

able to participate in the work of the Lord. The Apostle summarized this work as “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ.”⁹ Each member has something to contribute that the body may continue to grow.¹⁰ Conversely, when we are not “fitly joined together,” we cannot be fully useful.

Another important lesson that should not be overlooked is that the body demonstrates not just the advantages of unity but also the glory of unity. God is three yet one.¹¹ This mystery of the Godhead extends far beyond our comprehension. Even so, it remains one of the glories of God for which we so admire and praise Him. We do not find the same unity in our world. Here there is hatred, strife, and continual fighting. Not so with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The church brings great glory to God when it stands united and works together in the midst of nations and peoples who are hopelessly divided. Just as the Son was so united with His Father in purpose and will that He could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” so also the church should be so united that it could be said he that sees the church sees Christ.¹² This was an important part of the Lord’s Prayer before He went to the cross.¹³

⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 4:7-13

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, Ephesians 4:12-16

¹¹ John 1:1,14, 1 John 5:7

¹² John 14:9

¹³ John 17:20-23

IV. A FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S LOVE

Another description of the church is a fellowship, a family, where God's love is expressed. We find this in passages such as John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, Ephesians 4:16, 1 John 1:3, 3:11-17, 4:7-13. Surrounded by a world whose love is polluted with selfishness and carnality, the church is a haven where the pure love of God is taught, demonstrated, and lived out. It is a place where the lonely can be included, the discouraged uplifted, the doubting counselled, and the wayward corrected. Here the youth can be encouraged and the aged respected. Here the title of Brother and Sister is meaningful—preferred over all other earthly titles and distinctions as a constant reminder of the loving relationships and mutual commitments that exist because of our union in Christ.

By exercising the same care one for another, the fellowship of believers is able to edify and increase itself. This loving care and concern for one another is a defining characteristic of the true church of Christ. Without this love of God being expressed freely and fervently between brothers and sisters, the church cannot be effective in the great work of sharing the Gospel with the lost. The most gifted speakers, talented musicians, engaging ministries, well-coordinated programs, upgraded facilities, and organizational efficiency will all be useless if the true love of God is missing. While these things have their place, they are not the essence of the Christian church. It is far more important to have His love among us than all of these other elements.

The love of God, manifested by a heartfelt care one for another, is essential to the life of the church. God's love is manifested when members are truly happy for the good that happens to others in the congregation, are genuinely concerned for the trials and burdens of fellow members, and come quickly to offer aid and support. The practice of the true love of God cannot remain hidden. It is noticeable, attractive, and appealing.

Many in the church have experienced the blessing of being raised by godly parents, but the family of God also includes many whose lives have been battered by sin. Though forgiven and delivered from bondage, they still bear the scars of their past. They come from

broken families, broken marriages, and broken childhoods. Regardless of our backgrounds, as each one of us comes to Christ, we bring our various needs with us. Within the church we can minister to the needs of one another.

A related extract from the document entitled *We Believe* states: “We believe that the church is called to be a brotherhood under the lordship of Jesus Christ, a loving fellowship of brothers and sisters who are concerned for the total welfare, both spiritual and material, of one another. This concern results in the attempt to help the erring brother or sister find the right path; it includes sharing generously financial aid, encouragement, and a willingness to give and receive counsel.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) *We Believe* (VII 1.3)

V. A HOLY TEMPLE

There is a yet another special significance the Holy Spirit places on the church: He describes it as a holy temple that God indwells.¹⁵ This means that His presence is not only in the hearts of the individual believer but also in the gathering of believers. The Lord Jesus spoke of this in the well-known verse, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹⁶ Why two or three? Is He not already present in the heart of the individual believer? With this statement the Lord shows that He has special regard for our gathering together in His name: He promises to be present.

King Solomon built a temple unto the name of the Lord, which would become the heart and center of ancient Israel’s existence.¹⁷ The construction, design, and wealth of that temple are fascinating even today. At the dedication of that temple, the Lord God confirmed His blessing upon their efforts in dramatic fashion by sending fire from heaven.¹⁸ He hallowed the house and promised that His eyes and heart would be there always.¹⁹ In the end, it was this presence of God that made all of the difference.

As with the first temple, we too are built together for God’s habitation. The Lord chooses the church as His dwelling place here on earth. The implications of this truth are vast. As Israel of old needed to pay special attention and respect the fact that the holy God dwelt among them, we must also give special consideration to the Lord’s holy presence as we gather to worship and praise Him.²⁰ This point was emphasized to the church at Corinth. Reading the 14th chapter of the first epistle, we see there were problems with confusion and disorder in their assemblies. The Apostle admonished them to be orderly, to conduct their worship services peacefully, and to make the

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5

¹⁶ Matthew 18:20

¹⁷ 1 Kings 5:5

¹⁸ 2 Chronicles 7:1-2

¹⁹ 1 Kings 9:1-3

²⁰ Deuteronomy 23:14

edifying of the church their priority.²¹ No room was given for the exalting of any individual.²² By keeping these teachings, they would reflect the presence of a holy God.

In turn, this would have a life-changing impact on those unbelievers that gathered with them in worship. In such a setting the Holy Spirit can convict the hearts of the unsaved.²³ It is noteworthy that the one who fell on his face, acknowledging the Lord's presence in verses 24-25, was struck by the simple, unadorned preaching of the Word. This emphasis on godliness and reverence in our assemblies will also encourage and uplift the hearts of the saved.²⁴ This sequence is appropriate and logical. By giving all glory to God and by not giving any glory to man, the church is positioned to receive God's blessing of spiritual increase.²⁵

Related, the Apostle Peter wrote that the church is a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people.²⁶ The church is uniquely charged with bringing offerings of praise to Him who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. If the church will not find it important to praise God together for His wonderful salvation, who will? By singing and sharing the spoken word, the church shows forth the glories of God.²⁷ Where else should the unsaved go in order to learn about the risen Savior? Truly the church is the dwelling place of the Lord. What a tremendous honor for us to be in this special presence of the Lord! Conversely, we suffer great loss if we pull away from the fellowship and forsake this assembling of ourselves together.²⁸

²¹ 1 Corinthians 14:12,33,40

²² 1 Corinthians 14:28-32, 12:22-24

²³ 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

²⁴ Colossians 2:5

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

²⁶ 1 Peter 2:9

²⁷ Ephesians 3:21

²⁸ Hebrews 10:25

VI. THE PILLAR OF TRUTH

In describing the spiritual advantages that were given to the people of the first covenant, the epistle to the Romans records that unto them was committed “the oracles of God.”²⁹ It is difficult to comprehend how far reaching this blessing actually was. In those days of old, holy men of God wrote down the utterances of God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.³⁰ These were recorded and preserved by the Jews for the generations to come as an undeniable witness to the God of Israel. In similar manner the Holy Spirit inspired holy men in His church to write down the New Testament oracles of God.³¹ The church has been entrusted with keeping and preserving the truths of the Gospel.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul referred to the church as the house of God, the pillar and ground (foundation) of truth.³² This reference reminds us of his letter to the Ephesians where he expressed that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”³³ In both scriptures the point is the same: the church is the place where the Holy Word of God is preached and taught. As the pillar and ground of truth, the church is to support and uphold all of the oracles of God. The church must preserve them by living them, teaching them, defending them, and passing them to the next generation.

The Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of this when stating man needs to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father.³⁴ Not even the slightest jot would be overlooked.³⁵ Is it any wonder then that the Holy Spirit would put so much emphasis on

²⁹ Romans 3:1-2

³⁰ 2 Peter 1:21

³¹ 1 Corinthians 14:37, 2 Timothy 3:16

³² 1 Timothy 3:15

³³ Ephesians 2:20

³⁴ Matthew 4:4

³⁵ Matthew 5:18

maintaining sound doctrine?³⁶ Soundness of doctrine is ensured when the whole counsel of God is upheld, every one of his words, not just some of them.

In the same letter to Timothy, the Apostle touched on another aspect of the truth, one that we do well to take into account today. He described the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the doctrine that is “according to godliness.”³⁷ Only the Word of God can cause the new birth and its fruit of godliness. The Apostle John brought out this same truth when he wrote of the seed of God that produces righteousness, not sin, in those who are born again.³⁸ The beautiful fruit of righteousness and godliness found among its people is the evidence of a church that is truly a pillar and ground of truth.

If the church of this generation (or any generation) fails to deliver the truth that they had initially received to those who follow them, then those who come after will have less than they need. The books of the New Testament are filled with dire warnings against this very thing.³⁹ The road of doctrinal compromise will always lead to spiritual catastrophe.⁴⁰ It ultimately will cause the downfall of that church, or fellowship of churches. Pillars are meant to be strong, supporting great weight. So also the church, as a pillar, must be strong to uphold sound doctrine, the doctrine according to godliness.

³⁶ Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28-31, Romans 16:17, Galatians 5:7-9, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Timothy 1:13, 3:14, 4:2-5, Titus 1:7-9, Titus 3:10, Hebrews 13:9, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 4:1-3, Jude 3-5

³⁷ 1 Timothy 6:3-5

³⁸ 1 John 3:7-9

³⁹ Matthew 5:18

⁴⁰ 2 Peter 3:15-16

VII. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

In His sermon on the mount, the Lord told His disciples they are the light of the world.⁴¹ Though Scriptures declare that He Himself is the light of the world, the Lord knew that the day would come when He would dwell in the hearts of each believer and collectively the church would become the light of the world.⁴² The Lord reminded His disciples that people do not light candles for the purpose of covering them. A candle is lit for the purpose of illumination; its light is needed to pierce the darkness. In like manner the Lord has lit the soul of each disciple through His Holy Spirit so we can be a light, illuminating the darkness.⁴³ Consequently, the Lord never meant for His church to be invisible but rather “a visible manifestation of the purity resulting from the redemptive shed blood of Christ.”⁴⁴ It cannot resemble the world any more than a flock of sheep can resemble a pack of wolves. In order for the church to effectively preach the Gospel, it must visibly demonstrate the life of Christ.⁴⁵

Related to this, the church has been commissioned to spread the gospel. This commandment to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature has never been withdrawn. It remains the church’s responsibility until the end comes.⁴⁶ As with each of the other teachings noted, each generation of the church needs to examine itself to see if it is faithfully keeping this commandment of the Lord. Churches that have drawn close to the Lord have carried a burden for those that are lost, just as He carried such a burden. Likewise, churches that have strayed from the Lord have shown little concern for those who are ready to perish. Selfishness may come in many forms, but it always ends with less than it once had. We cannot keep

⁴¹ Matthew 5:14-16

⁴² John 8:12, 9:5, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:17, Philippians 2:15,
1 Thessalonians 5:5

⁴³ Psalm 18:28, Proverbs 20:27, Acts 13:47

⁴⁴ Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) We Believe (VII 1.1)

⁴⁵ Matthew 5:14-16

⁴⁶ Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Matthew 24:14

the faith that was once delivered to the saints if we are unwilling to share it as it was shared with us.

We must understand that these two aspects are complimentary; they are not in opposition to each other. It is not a matter of the church focusing either on holy living or on sharing the gospel. The Apostles did both; they insisted on holy living and they also preached the Gospel message to those who needed to hear it.⁴⁷ They did this because they were thus taught by the Lord Jesus. Did He not have compassion on the publicans and sinners? Did He not rebuke the Pharisees for hypocrisy? Did He not call His disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross? Yet influential voices continue to stress that one of these is more important than the other. Some will assert that the push to make more efforts to reach the lost somehow jeopardizes the church through compromises, while others contend that the church is too inwardly focused and must become mission minded. Neither view is accurate. It is a false dilemma to suggest that a choice must be made between defending the faith and evangelizing. The reality is that the exact opposite is true. If the church overemphasizes one to the exclusion of the other, it will ultimately fail at both.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:16, 1 Peter 1:14-17

VIII. RELATED QUESTIONS

1. How can I learn where “my place” is in the body of Christ?

We should be careful not to press the analogy of the body too far. Being a member of the body does not mean that there are just a few types of work in which we must specialize. On the contrary, the Lord wants His people to be “zealous of good works.” Those who walk closely with the Lord will discover many opportunities for service and keep themselves busy. This willingness to serve allows the Lord to shepherd us into the specific calling He has planned for us.⁴⁸ When considering the way we can serve the Lord, we should not overlook the evident responsibilities we have already been given. Neglecting these to find something more appealing or exciting would not be right. If we have a servant heart, then even the most mundane and ordinary tasks will prove a blessing.⁴⁹ True servants focus on serving, not on obtaining recognition.⁵⁰

2. What role does the church have in the life of a believer?

This question reveals a subtle, but significant, difference in perspective. Each of the metaphors examined in this booklet show the vital importance that Christ places upon His church. This focuses our attention on the role the believer has in the life of the church, not the other way around. Therefore it may be more appropriate to ask, “What part do I have in the life of the church” instead of “what part does the church have in my life?” The expectations the Lord has of His children will be fulfilled as we are committed to the local congregation and fellowship where He has placed us. A lack of loyalty is completely inconsistent. The importance of this connection is especially clear in the analogy of the body. Christ is the head and we are the members of His body. It is unnatural and wrong to think that our relationship with the head is important but that our relationship with the rest of the body is not. What a sad state when

⁴⁸ Titus 2:14, Ephesians 2:10

⁴⁹ Luke 16:10-12

⁵⁰ Matthew 25:37-40, Luke 17:10

the church has become marginalized in the hearts and minds of people as if their spiritual life can exist without such attachment! Scriptures show that our very life is bound up in His and mutually with one another.⁵¹

3. To what degree is complete agreement required regarding doctrine? Isn't unity better than division?

History records countless instances of division among all branches of Christianity. Regrettably, debates and disagreements have often damaged the testimony of the church throughout its history. It is no wonder that many think that too much emphasis has been placed on doctrine. By extension, the rationale to minimize distinctive doctrines may range from the desire to improve unity to the desire to be more successful in reaching the lost. However, the message in 1 Timothy 4:16 and 6:3-5 helps us evaluate these things. There we read that the elder brother, and by implication the church, is to pay special attention both to what is taught and what is lived. Emphasizing soundness of doctrine does not hinder the work of the Lord. The Apostle explicitly wrote to “take heed unto the doctrine and continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.” In truth, the problem of strife comes from those who will not endure sound doctrine and not from those who uphold it.⁵² Relationships and results that require setting aside sound doctrine should not expect the blessings of God. To ignore the strong warnings of the Lord and His apostles would be tragic.⁵³

4. How can we build each other up, in the body of Christ?

The language in Ephesians 4:7-12 is quite clear. We are given spiritual gifts to use, and by so doing we edify or strengthen the church. If our effort to serve the Lord is stirring up contention and

⁵¹ Ephesians 4:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 3:8

⁵² 2 Timothy 3:5-8, 4:2-5

⁵³ Matthew 24:11, 1 Corinthians 11:19, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15,
2 Peter 3:16-17

controversy within the congregation, we will do well to check ourselves. Our gifts were specifically given to build up, not to tear down, to unite, not to divide. Further in the same chapter, we read in verse 16 that the body is to lovingly edify itself. The Holy Spirit will show us many practical ways we can build up and encourage our brothers and sisters.

It begins with a heartfelt concern for the welfare of one another. Unlike Cain, we realize that we are our brother's keeper. Like the house of Stephanas, it continues with a habitual looking for opportunities to bless our brethren. Finally, as with Paul, it includes the measure of love that is willing to abstain or deny ourselves that which our brethren may find offensive. In short, as with other relationships of love, it is being set on pleasing our loved ones more than ourselves.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ 1 Thessalonians 3:8, Genesis 4:9, 1 Corinthians 16:15, Romans 14:13-21, 1 Corinthians 8:13, Romans 15:2-3

IX. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The world has always been hostile to the true church of Christ.⁵⁵ The Scriptures reveal that the mastermind behind this hostility is Satan, the Archenemy of God. We are warned of our adversary's tireless efforts to assail the Lord's work in every way. History indicates that he has repeatedly stirred up brutal persecution against Christians. Even today this continues in parts of the world and may yet visit the Western countries. For the present his strategy against our church here in the West seems to be to distract us through material prosperity and the busyness of a fast-paced life. This approach brings challenges that may appear less threatening but are equally serious in terms of their ability to undermine the church: apathy, loving comfort, desiring absolute freedom and independence, being entertained by that which is worldly, shallow relationships, lack of loyalty, skepticism, etc. In view of these, it is imperative that we ask ourselves if our beloved church is one that is conquering as sinners repent and are converted and the truth is held up high, or is our church being conquered as its doctrines are diluted and its life is conformed with the surrounding world? We do battle with the greatest enemy the world has ever known. In spite this, the Lord Jesus continues building His church according to the same plan He laid out in His Scriptures so many years ago. What He is building is so magnificent that it requires several metaphors to help us grasp the wonders of His plan. In response to the importance the Lord has placed on His universal church, we do well to compare ourselves to these teachings. Doing so will help us see both what we need to lay aside and where we need to focus our efforts.

His church is like the human body: incredibly complex yet interconnected and one in purpose. Are we well connected with one another? Are we one in purpose? His church is a fellowship of brothers and sisters, whose love and commitment to one another is real. Is our love unfeigned? How important is this to us? His church is a holy temple, the visible dwelling place of the invisible God. Do our assemblies reflect the holiness of God? Are we bringing offerings of praises to him? His church is the pillar and ground of truth. Are

⁵⁵ John 15:18-19, 16:33, 1 John 3:13

we faithfully upholding the faith that was once delivered to the saints? Is there visible evidence that our doctrine is “according to godliness?” His church is the light of the world. Have we hidden our light under a bushel? Are we burdened enough to take His gospel to those who are dying for want of it?

Churches that are built in accordance to the plan of the chief architect and builder Jesus Christ will be churches that fit each of these descriptions. Such a church will be as a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.

“The church is a lantern of righteousness in which the light of grace is borne and held before the whole world. The true church is completely filled with the light of Christ in the same way as the lantern is illuminated and made bright by the light in it.”

Peter Reidemann
*Anabaptist imprisoned
for his faith, 1540.*

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