

43. THINGS A GOOD CHURCH IS COMPARED TO

Commitment to a good soul winning church is essential if we are to:

- a) Win the world to Christ, and
- b) Enjoy the benefits of a local church.

These symbols to which God likens a local church, show much about our purposes in serving God:

- 1) **A Building:** 'Ye are God's building' (I Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 2:19-22; I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; 10:21).
 - a) We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This means there are no more apostles and prophets today because they are in the foundation and not in the superstructure.
 - b) Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone on which the whole building holds together. Eph 2:20,21.
 - c) We are fitly framed together.
 - d) We are to grow to a holy temple.
 - e) The Holy Spirit builds us together as a habitation of God. (v.22).
 - f) We are as living stones built as a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. I Peter 2:5
- 2) **A Farm, Field or Husbandry** 'Ye are God's Husbandry.' (I Corinthians 3:9). 'He that receiveth seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit ... some 100 fold, some 60, some 30.' (Matthew 13:23, 8).

Question: What is the good ground that the seed is planted in?
Answer: A local church with true doctrine and practice (no weeds) will produce much fruit in a believer's life. We are born to reproduce and to be fruitful. We will never bear much fruit unless we get seriously involved in a good local church.
- 3) **A Temple:** 'Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God.' (I Corinthians 3:16; II Cor. 6:16). Solomon's temple is a type of the local church, as follows:
 - i) Both are built with gold (I Kings 6:20-32; I Peter 1:7; 2:5). Christians face many trials.
 - ii) As in Solomon's temple there were many windows to lighten it (I Kings 6:4), so a local church should enlighten people with the light of the gospel and heavenly truths for life.
 - iii) As both Jews (Solomon) and Gentiles (Hiram King of Tyre) were involved in constructing Solomon's temple (I Kings 5:1-12), so local churches are made up of Jews and Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:6).
 - iv) As the glory of the Lord filled Solomon's temple (I Kings 8:10,11), so the Holy Spirit of God indwells and fills believers. (I Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18).
 - v) As Cherubim guardian angels were carved in the walls and doors of Solomon's temple (I Kings 6:23-32), so angels observe the local church and are involved in ministering to it. (I Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; I Peter 1:10-12; Luke 15:10; I Timothy 5:21).

- vi) As Solomon's temple was viciously attacked by literal Babylonians (II Kings 25:9), so local churches have been viciously persecuted by the Roman Catholic system known as Mystery Babylon. (Revelation 17:5,6).
 - vii) As Solomon's temple and Jerusalem's wall were rebuilt in troublesome times (Daniel 9:25), so local churches are built in troublesome times, facing much opposition from enemies. (Acts 8:4; 14:22).
 - viii) As Solomon's temple and Jerusalem's wall were rebuilt by using a sword and trowel (Nehemiah 4:16-18), so local churches are built by defeating false doctrines with the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) and by teaching God's Word correctly (trowel).
 - ix) As the rebuilders of Solomon's temple and Jerusalem's wall were looked on as poor, weak and contemptible persons (Nehemiah 4:2), so people who build local churches are seen by the world in the same way.
 - x) As rebuilders of Solomon's temple and Jerusalem's wall had to remove much rubbish (Nehemiah 4:2,10), so building local churches involves removing much Popish rubbish, worldly rubbish and tradition rubbish. (I Peter 1:18; Colossians 2:8).
 - xi) As the 'nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord' (Nehemiah 3:5) in rebuilding Solomon's temple and Jerusalem's wall, so it is often true today that many wealthy, socially important Christians do very little to build up local churches. (I Cor. 1:26-29).
- 4) **The Pillar and Ground of the Truth:** 'the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.' (I Timothy 3:15). A local church is like a pillar because:
 - i) It preaches and promotes stability of Doctrine.
 - ii) Local churches support the truth of God's Word.
 - iii) Many other institutions in society depend on Bible truths taught by local churches, such as our legal system; democratic government (Romans 13:1-6); missionary activity; good literature; Bible Colleges; Christian school system; soul winning; Sunday schools, welfare, art, health, science, military, commerce, etc.
 - 5) **An Olive Tree:** 'thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.' (Romans 11:17).
 - i) Local churches like an olive tree's leaves should be always green. Greenness means life and sap in the branches. 'Her leaf shall be green ... neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' (Jeremiah 17:8). 'His leaf also shall not wither.' (Psalm 1:3; 92:12-14).
 - ii) Local churches, like olive trees, should greatly abound with fruit. 'that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.' (Psalm 1:3). (John 4:36; 12:24; 15:2,8,16; Romans 7:4; I Corinthians 9:7; Philippians 1:22; 4:17; Colossians 1:10).
 - iii) Olive oil was used to fuel lamps to shed light and to dispel darkness (Matthew 25:3,4). So must local churches shed the Gospel light to a sin-darkened world. (2 Corinthians 4:4,6).
 - iv) As an olive branch is a symbol of peace (Genesis 8:11), so a local church should be a place where the peace of God prevails (Romans 5:1) and the Gospel of peace is sent out. (Ephesians 6:15).

- 6) **A Golden Candlestick:** 'the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.' (Revelation 1:20).
- Local churches must shine forth the light of God's Word, Christ's salvation, and Godly example to a sin-darkened world. 'Let your light so shine before men...' (Matthew 5:16), 'Walk as children of light.' (Ephesians 5:8).
 - Golden candlesticks are very valuable and precious, so local churches are very precious to God.
 - As removing a candlestick brings darkness, so God may remove a church due to its apostasy and leaving its first love. (Revelation 2:4,5).
- 7) **A Merchant Ship:** 'which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.' (Hebrews 6:19).
- As a merchant ship brings merchandise from a far country, so do good churches bring spiritual blessings from heaven, of eternal life (II John 5:12,13); peace of God (Romans 5:1); comfort of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:31); fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23); wisdom from above (James 3:17); Godly lifestyle – 'our conversation is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20); reports of a better country. (Hebrews 11:16); etc.
 - As a sailing ship sails sweetly along under a favourable wind, so do local churches progress under the favourable wind of the Holy Spirit – The wind bloweth where it listeth.' (John 3:8); 'There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.' (Acts 2:2). The Holy Spirit is represented by a wind. Sailing ships need wind to progress.
 - As a ship navigates by a compass, so local churches find true direction, doctrine and guidance from God's Word.
 - As merchant ships cast nets into the sea to catch fish, so local churches cast out the Gospel net as fishers of men to catch men for Christ. (Matthew 4:19).
 - As some ships are tossed about in all directions by stormy winds, so some churches and Christians may be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14) & persecution.
 - In stormy winds, every person tries to save the ship from sinking. So, when trouble, persecution, heresy or fighting hits a local church, all members should pray to God and work wisely for the church's and their own safety. They must not try to destroy it.
 - As a ship's direction is determined by its rudder, so a church's direction is determined by how its people use their tongues. (James 3:4,5).
 - As a ship without an anchor is in danger of being destroyed on rocks, so a local church which doesn't rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15) and doesn't set its hope in God's Word (Hebrews 6:19) is in danger of making shipwreck of its faith (I Timothy 1:19) on the rocks of false doctrines.
 - As merchant ships greatly enrich those cities and countries to which they belong, by bringing rare and excellent merchandise, so local churches, by bringing treasures from heaven, greatly enrich poor sinners, cities and nations with treasures of truth, peace, pardon and heavenly blessings. 'She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from far.' (Proverbs 31:14). So is a good church like an ideal woman, the bride of Christ.
 - As merchant ships need a skilful pilot to prevent shipwreck, so local churches must let Jesus Christ the 'captain of their salvation' navigate and guide them through the dangers of this world (Hebrews 2:10), to avoid smashing on the rocks of false doctrines, errors, human inventions and heresies.
- 8) **A Flock:** 'Feed the flock of God.' (Acts 20:28).
- As sheep need feeding, so do Christians in a church need to be fed the Word of God.' (Acts 20:28).
 - As sheep are clean, tame and gentle, so this is God's will for Christians.
 - As sheep may go astray, so may Christians. (Psalm 119:176).
 - As sheep have many enemies, so do Christians have many adversaries. (Romans 8:36).
- 9) **A Body:** 'For we being many are one bread, and one body.' (I Corinthians 10:17). 'For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.' (I Corinth. 12:13). 'For the edifying of the body of Christ.' (Ephesians 4:12; 2:16). 'He is the head of the body, the church.' (Coloss. 1:18,24).
- As every natural body has a head, so Christ is the head of the church. (Col.1:18; Eph. 1:22)
 - As a natural body has many members (I Corinthians 12:14,20), so a church consists of many believers called members of His body: 'We are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.' (I Corinthians 12:27).
 - In a natural body, members differ in strength, honour and use, such as arms, legs, fingers, hands, eyes, ears, kidney, heart, liver, etc. so churches have members each differing in honour and use, such as pastors, teachers, evangelists, helpers, givers, etc.
 - In a natural body, if one member suffers, all members suffer with it. So in a church, when one saint suffers, all sympathise and suffer with him. (I Corinthians 12:26).
 - In a natural body, all members take care of each member. So in a church, every believer should seek the welfare and take care of all other members. (I Corinthians 12:25).
 - As all members in a natural body receive direction and nourishment from the head, so do all members in a church receive direction and nourishment from Jesus Christ. (Colossians 2:18,19).
 - As a natural body increases in strength, size and beauty, so a church increases in strength, size and glory and she reproduces other churches. (Ephesians 4:15,16).
- 10) **An Inn:** 'And brought him to an Inn.' (Luke 10:34). See Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).
- As an Inn provides rest and security to travellers as they journey from one city or country to another, so a church provides for believers' needs as they travel through the wilderness of earth to heaven.
 - As an Inn has an Innkeeper who helps and cares for guests, so in a church there are pastors and workers who receive, welcome and help all poor sinners who enter.
 - As an Inn provides convenient food for travellers, so a church refreshes the souls of all pilgrims entering with the sincere milk of the Word of God, or strong meat as needed. (Hebrews 5:12-14; I Peter 2:2).
 - As an Inn is not a permanent dwelling place but a traveller only stays for a night and is gone, so a church is not a permanent residence. We are here for a short time (a night) we have no continuing city, but we rest here a while on our journey to heaven. Hebrews 13:14

- 11) **A Family or Household:** 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named' Eph 3:15. 'ye are no more strangers & foreigners, but fellow citizens...of the household of God.' Eph 2:19 'As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' (Galatians 6:10).
- i) In a Family there are people of different ages, strength and tasks, so there are in a church babies, young men, fathers, grandfathers, teachers, rulers, and servants. (I John 2:12:14).
 - ii) The head of a Family cares for and provides for all in it. (I Timothy 5:8). So Christ supplies all our needs (Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:25-30).
 - iii) As there is order and discipline in a Family, so there is order and discipline in a church. (Hebrews 12:5-11).
 - iv) As a Family has commitment, love, sharing and close relationships, so a church should show the same qualities.
- 12) **A Chaste Virgin:** 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' (II Corinthians 11:2).
- i) As the Jewish High Priest could marry only a virgin (Leviticus 21:10-15), so Jesus Christ our Great High Priest will marry His virgin, the church.
 - ii) As a virgin is kept pure from fornication, so the church and every Christian should be kept pure from idolatry, love of the world, and anti-Christian worship.
 - iii) As a virgin, engaged to a husband, longs for the wedding day, so the church longs for the return of the Bridegroom, when Christ will take her to Himself. 'The marriage of the Lamb is come.' (Revelation 19:7,8).
 - iv) As an engaged virgin is greatly loved by her husband, so Christ greatly loves His Bride the church. (Ephesians 5:25).
- 13) **A Bride or a Wife:** 'As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.' (Ephesians 5:24).
- i) As a wife has made a covenant to be married to a husband, so the church and every true Christian has made a covenant to be married to Jesus Christ. (Romans 7:1-4).
 - ii) As a wife and husband give themselves wholly to each other, so do Christ and every true Christian give themselves wholly to each other. 'They gave themselves to the Lord' 2 Cor 8:5
 - iii) As a wife renounces all other men, so all true Christians must renounce sin, self and justification by the law to keep themselves faithful to Christ. (Romans 7:4). (Eph 5:24,33)
 - iv) As a wife obeys & reverences her husband, so churches should obey & reverence Christ.
 - v) As a wife has legal right to her husband's estate, so Christians will inherit much of Christ's possessions in eternity. (Revelation 21:7; Ephesians 1:11,14,18; I Peter 1:4).
 - vi) As a wife strives to please her husband (I Corinthians 7:34), so churches and all true Christians strive to please Christ. (Colossians 1:10).
 - vii) As a wife is in close communion with her husband (Matthew 19:6; Eph. 5:31), so the church and all true Christians are brought into a close relationship with Christ: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Matt. 25:40.
- viii) As a wife is troubled when she has offended her husband, so all true Christians are grieved when they have offended Christ. (Song of Solomon 5:6).
- ix) As a wife knows her husband's mind and secrets, so does the church have the mind of Christ and secrets that are hid from the world. (Psalm 25:14; I Corinthians 2:16).
- x) As a wife bears children to her husband and cares for them, so the church is to bear spiritual children for Christ and care, feed and nourish them.
- xi) As a wife married to a King has servants, so the church married to Christ has angels 'ministering to them that are heirs of salvation.' (Hebrews 1:14).
- 14) **A House:** 'But Christ over his own house: whose house are we.' (Hebrews 3:6).
- i) As a house is built on a sure foundation, so the church is built on the only sure foundation of Christ. 'Other foundation can no man lay than...Jesus Christ.' (I Cor 3:11). 'Upon this rock I will build my church.' (Matthew 16:18).
 - ii) As a house is built by a wise masterbuilder (I Corinthians 3:10), so we need to take heed how we build local churches on the foundation of Christ: 'Another buildeth thereon ... let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.' (I Corinthians 3:10).
 - iii) As a house may be built of gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble, so a local church (or individual Christian) may build with quality materials of suffering for Christ, Bible wisdom and soul winning, or of worthless things such as rock music, man's wisdom, false doctrines and entertainment.' (I Corinthians 3:12-15).
 - iv) As a house is built for a family to dwell in, so a church is built for Christ and His family to dwell in. (Ephesians 2:19).
 - v) As a house is a place of security to defend from dangers, so is a local church a place of security from evil, worldliness and false doctrines.
 - vi) As a house has a way and a door leading into it, so a local church has a way and door of Christ leading into it: 'I am the way....' (John 14:6). 'I am the door.' (John 10:9).
 - vii) As a house is a place of prayer, Bible reading and family instruction, so is a church a place of prayer, Bible preaching, family instruction and service.