

JESUS IS BUILDING HIS CHURCH

Encouraging, heart warming, life-changing glimpses of God at work

The Lord Jesus Himself declared, "I will build my church." That should be sufficient for each of us to trust that He is building it right now, and will complete it right on time.

I believe that He is carrying out this undertaking and His progress is timely. It will be His way or no way and accordingly, be very, very beautiful.

Personal salvation is by vital, present tense faith. On-going salvation is the same, by faith and not by sight. *We should view Christ's undertaking to build His church in the same way. I personally believe with certainty that He is building it here and now, and it is glorious!* Yes!

Can you accept this by faith, and stand upon it, 'sight unseen'?

If a person's trust is sufficient to assure them of eternal life, surely it can be sufficient to assure them that Jesus fulfils all He promises including building his church - beautifully, with the stamp of His own heart and character marking it out as divinely created! His ways are immeasurably higher than ours, and definitely nothing like ours at all.

We see very little of what God is doing in another person, or in our selves for that matter - only snippets. It is the same with the church - we only see snippets! To tell the truth, I can't understand much of what's going on in my own body, let alone the Body of Christ.

I believe it is far better not to see the building as it is now, or be able to measure it and understand what is happening. It is a challenge to TRUST Him, sight unseen.

EVERY ASPECT OF IT IS FOR GOD'S GLORY

A good friend wrote to me recently that he knows Jesus is building His church "even if we do not see it with our eyes . . ." I would rather say, *especially* if we do not see it with our natural eyes!

In some ways I am glad I didn't see Jesus 'in the flesh.' It would be very easy to focus on his natural features, intonation of voice, speed at responding to Pharisees, look of compassion on His countenance, and so on. I could even have been tempted to tell others that 'there was no beauty that we should desire Him.'

By way of illustration, when I sent out my article on 'Passing the torch' I had no desire to write anything about myself. It is healthier for you to sense my spirit and not be hassled by my frailty, which could be a

distraction and hinder God blessing through what He inspired me to write. My body is just a container for my spirit and His Spirit – hopefully, for the glory of God alone.

Likewise, I am glad that I [and others!!] cannot see His church with natural eyes. Its human-ness could distract, when that really has no significance at all since it is being built in a different dimension.

I am aware of some folk who are actually looking for the wrong thing, in the wrong direction when they think they are looking for the church Jesus is building! They seem to want there to be an immense visible structure, with visible leaders, something they can 'join.' Their thoughts and concepts need to be laid aside, once and for all. Let's remember to look to Jesus and focus on things above, not on the earth.

It would be wise, surely, to change our longing to see here and now the church Jesus is building into a yearning for the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; and to have a cry in our hearts, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Imperfections are housed in visible 'things,' aren't they? Where does the visible fit in with the invisible, in us individually and in situations where what I describe as 'glimpses of church life' are experienced?

Let me repeat, I believe Jesus is building His church right now, and I love what He is doing. It will be on time, and perfect – a fragrant and holy reflection of Himself!

Walk by faith, not by sight. Never say or feel concerning the church: "Unless I see it ..." because *without faith it is impossible to please God in this issue and any other.*

It is possible to have an unhealthy fascination with seeing and understanding what God is doing in the church, and how the work is progressing – especially with a desire to be in the forefront of it. Hear Jesus, "What is that to you, you FOLLOW ME!"

Do you want to be involved in the forming of Jesus church? Make no mistake about it, there is only *one way* you can and that is *not by trying to*, but by keeping your eyes on Jesus, enthusiastically loving God with your whole heart and being very sensitive to every prompting of the Holy Spirit. Even the activity of leaders, committees, councils and the like have no bearing or part in Jesus building His church unless or to the degree that they are marked by these three factors.

The Lord Jesus is building a *spiritual* church, fit for heaven's glory! It will be perfect!

WHAT A WONDERFUL CHURCH

A small portion of Jesus' church may be experienced whenever the Spirit moves, whenever deep calls to deep, and whenever two or three are

completely responsive to the precious Holy Spirit. It may be seen whenever several of us sense Holy Spirit anointing and whenever we hear God's heart through divine anointing on a life, a word, or in sacred moments of silence.

A portion of His building in the spiritual realm is felt and revealed whenever human love responds to divine love, and human purity identifies with divine purity. It is seen wherever there is whole-hearted honouring of God, in situations where none 'touch' His glory and where a deep Christ-centeredness is linked with a fragrant awareness of His holy presence.

Hopefully we all can recall special sacred moments of being hushed before the Lord, bathed in the flow of His love and deeply touched in our spirits so that every attitude and response is a sweet refection of God Himself. When the Holy Spirit lingers over my heart and yours and we tarry with hushed hearts right there as the Spirit lingers, *that* is church. His church may be very real among Jesus-followers to we who are sensitively listening, eagerly hearing and joyfully walking in the light of God.

When several believing believers are jointly gripped with a sense of awe, experience rivers of peace, overflowing love and joy, and the holy hush of manifest divine presence, that's it! That's a glimpse of the church Jesus is building!

The touch of God, as he blends, melts, stirs, inspires even [or maybe especially] two or three believers with a fragrant sense of His presence, is Jesus building His church.

The knitting together in the Spirit, lifting above earth things, increasing reality of life in the Spirit and the spiritual dimension, and awareness of Christ being an integral part of our lives, plus a deepening sense of eternity, is Jesus building his church.

The intensity of holy love, and depth of oneness in the Lord as several focus heart and thought upon Him, is Jesus building his church.

The tender, sweet, holy, lovely recognition of Jesus in one another is Jesus building His church.

Who can describe the sheer delight in the Spirit as some precious lost person deeply repents of their sins, and receives God's loving mercy, pardon and acceptance as they place their trust in Him? The joy that bursts forth as sweet peace and inner assurance of forgiveness and salvation become reality cause moments of wonder and delight. Angels are rejoicing and Jesus is building His church!

If we think back over wonder-filled experiences such as I have mentioned above, multiply it by who knows how many in your area, around the country and across the world that you know nothing about, and you may sense a little of what God the Holy Spirit is doing as Jesus

builds His church. Glory! Most of what God does on earth today is in the unseen realm of the Spirit, so only He can see and measure and understand the progress of His work.

VESSELS CONTAINING DIVINE GLORY

In the above paragraphs, our natural person with its limitations, imperfections and weaknesses fade from view as it is simply recognized to be a mere earthenware vessel containing the Lord of glory. Amazing! You see, Jesus is building in another dimension – different from the way man builds – allowing us to marvel at and enjoy a foretaste of the church He is building, and indeed, a foretaste of heaven itself. Glory!

In such moments and in the kind of situations as I've sought to describe, His church 'comes to the surface' giving us a glimpse of the beautiful thing Jesus is creating. There is no place for human effort trying to bring about what He is doing, though, tragically some try to imitate the Spirit's work, wasting their efforts and simply playing a game of 'make believe.' Make no mistake about it, such efforts are doomed to failure, even if they look grand for a brief season!

THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

I would not want to give the impression that the church is mainly being built within our inner beings mostly when we meet with one or two others – or more. Not at all! A glimpse may be caught at times like that, but the church is being built within each of us individually, often in times of quiet alone-ness, but also in times of difficulty, stress, pressure or pain. The Holy Spirit endeavours to use every circumstance to mould us into the likeness of our precious Lord Jesus. Yes!

Scripture makes that plain: "... God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. [His purpose being] to become like His Son." - Romans 8.28,29 NLT

PRECIOUS DESIRES ON GOD'S HEART

One of the privileges afforded Mary and me over the years is that we have come to know and love precious brothers and sisters in many places. I am very grateful to our dear friend David Rice for what I now write.

The Gospels make plain that the desire on the Lord's heart for His children is that we walk in the same way Jesus walked, each one of us sensing what Father is doing and then deeply agreeing with that in our 'inner man' – our spirit. The consequence of this heart agreement with God should surely be that we speak, act, pray, and above all trust Him to

fulfil all *His* plans for the building of His church and the establishing of His reign.

It is an immense privilege to be called to walk like that! This is even more so when we find deep agreement with individual brothers and sisters who are likewise walking in wholehearted agreement with our wonderful Lord Jesus. There is precious unity in the Spirit as God's children are of one accord in trusting, praying, and gladly responding to divine leading in their lives, especially with regards to the specifics of God's will on earth.

How did Jesus walk during His time here on the earth? He spoke of doing nothing of Himself, but only doing what He saw the Father doing. 'For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does.' Jesus said that 'anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing and greater things than these because I go to the Father.' Jesus also taught that: 'The world must learn that I love the Father and I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.' Written over Jesus' life could well be the banner, "Not my will, but yours, Father." He wants this to mark our lives too.

What an amazing God! What a challenge and yet what a blessing, to be called to walk as Jesus did – and then be divinely equipped to do it!

God's desire is to reveal Himself to each and all of us, and then through transforming grace to change us into His likeness, to the end that He may show Himself through us to the people all around us. What an awesome thought! No wonder the Scripture declares that His ways are perfect!

Should it seem strange for the church to walk as Jesus did? Surely it is intended to be the norm for each of our lives. Without possible contradiction the New Covenant means that there is no blockage or reluctance on God's part. We are made alive unto Him to be able to hear Him in our hearts.

For far too many the agenda for each of our lives, and for the church, is set by man, *not God*, resulting in our only hearing him in a limited, self-centred way. Life is ever so much more wonderful, and indeed on an entirely higher plane when He sets our agenda. *On such a path we are increasingly enlarged in our spirits, coming to trust Him for what is on His heart.* 'This is like heaven to me!'

Lord grant that more and more of your children come to know you, even as we are known, to the extent that *your will may truly be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

Years ago I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to share a 'word' with precious believing friends. It is as relevant now as then. This is it:

"I am not content," says the Lord, "Simply that the moral Christ be formed in you. I want the whole Christ to come to full expression in your lives." Of course He requires of us holiness of heart and life, but much more besides.

"It is in my heart for you that the emotional Christ be an integral part of your lives." He was anointed with the oil of gladness and yet He wept over Jerusalem. He was moved with empathetic compassion at the needs of the multitudes.

"I want the redemptive Christ to be formed in you." He went out to find the lost sheep; He shared the good news of His Father's kingdom; and He laid down His life to make a way for the lost of earth to be redeemed.

"I am in the pains of childbirth until the triumphant Christ is formed in you," says the Lord. "I am not content that you experience seasons of overcoming, and times of great victory. I yearn for you that you might continually know my grace in such measure that you walk in constant triumph, being more than conquerors because of my love for you."

Another good friend of ours, John Langford, suggested that I add the previous paragraphs to this article. He puts it this way: "This unseen work of God's grace in our lives is how I see Jesus building His Church - the moral Christ, the emotional Christ, the redemptive Christ, the triumphant Christ - Jesus in every aspect of His being." It is "Christ formed IN you!" Amen to that!

I take this to mean Christ formed in us individually, resulting in Him being formed in us as the body of Christ.

One further thought under this heading: The natural, man is *not* comfortable with the activities of God being unseen. As in worldly affairs, the natural man wants to be able to see, measure, tabulate, report, compare and magnify these things. In such a way it is easy to accept and acknowledge them without having to resort to receiving by faith. This way also, sadly, carnal man is too easily able to take pride in what is done as if the credit is theirs. The glory is God's alone. Never forget it! He opposes the proud. He is jealous of His glory! *Please note well, that a person ignores this to their mortal peril.*

QUITE DIFFERENT

The kind of revelation I've been referring to does not appear simply because a number of believers hold to the same 'truths', 'worship' in the same kind of way, belong to the same group, or honour the same 'leaders'. This is true, regardless of how much they may study the Bible together, pray together or jointly engage in 'Christian service.'

It has nothing to do with age, degree of maturity, similarities or viewpoints. Nor does it have any relationship with knowledge, diligence in 'serving the Lord' or years of experience. Such things may well be a hindrance to what God wants to do in us and among us.

I cannot fathom why some fine folk seem to be desperate to see Jesus build His church in a way that is visible, measurable and able to be physically joined with here on earth. All of Christian history shows that such a way simply does not and cannot work. Besides that, all this life is just a vapour anyway – quite uncertain and very brief in the light of eternity.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Commendably, many today attempt to return to the church as it was in the first century. Simplicity is good, as is the desire to have everyone involved in living for Jesus and serving Him without dominant leadership, but do they still miss the heart of it?

The issue isn't so much about getting free from formalized roles and structures, though there is frequently a need for that. The issue is dealing with the heart and mind-set that causes even so-called 'free' believers to abandon the radical life style and stigma of the cross and so become acceptable and compatible with the world about us.

Are we aware that there is a deadly danger for us as children of God in becoming comfortable and 'at home' here in this world? Paul described it as becoming conformed to the world, didn't he?

Why have servant functions turned into 'positions' and office holding?

Why has response to the Lord turned into predictable programmes with human control?

Why has Holy Spirit leading and guidance turned into committees and church hierarchies?

Why has a dynamic living organism turned into formal, static church organizations?

Why has winsome, God anointed and effective sharing of the Good news of salvation in Jesus by 'ordinary' believers too often been replaced by specialist evangelists doing the work for us all.

Have these changes in thought, behaviour and practice gradually turned into a protective attitude of holding on to what we have?

Why [by and large] has the priority Jesus set in Matt 22.37-39 of *loving God with all our heart, soul and strength, and loving our neighbours*

as ourselves [which should dominate all of the life of all of our lives!] been replaced with expressing love for God *in lovely words* once or twice a week, and with charitable organizations and institutions? Weakness at this point is at the core of sub-standard living – and therefore at the heart of sub-standard church life styles, surely.

Men build *their* church and churches, but Jesus builds *His* church! No matter what changes people make to their form of gathering, style of leadership and their efforts to make the message contemporary, *these things do not take gatherings and churches back to the life-style of the early church*. They may simply be making the vessel – the earthenware pot – more appealing, but not affecting what it contains. Though believers make their very best efforts, it may still be man's best. As for me, I have tasted heaven's best and have been sickened by the best of human efforts.

HEART WARMING VISION

Many years ago a brother in the Lord that we knew shared with some of us a vision he was being given. He saw numerous believers who were busily building a block wall. It appeared to be very uneven and insecure. Here and there along the wall various individuals were pulling blocks out of the wall indicating that the construction was inadequate there. Putting them up, changing them around, taking them down and then replacing them meant that the work was proceeding very slowly and the quality was extremely disappointing. Everyone in sight was very busy.

Back behind the wall a little way our friend saw Jesus, who was quietly and serenely building a wall. Without rush and bustle but with a clear vision of the finished product, Jesus was building a magnificent wall of the quality only He could produce.

That vision is a picture of Jesus building His church!

Years ago in Johannesburg a freshly retired pastor told me of his final Sunday evening in the church. Everyone else had gone home. The building was quiet and empty. As he walked all through the building he had a sense of achievement and pride over all that he had built over his years there.

He told me that in the quietness of his heart God spoke with him. The pastor whispered, "All this I built for you, my Lord." God spoke back, "Did I ask you to provide a board room, cry rooms, women's rooms, youth facilities and the like? Do you think I need plush seats, a fine amplification system, quality lighting and all the facilities that you have provided?"

The pastor told me he knew that the Holy Spirit was convicting him that all this effort was not for God, but for himself. With a radiant face he said that while he grieved over wasted effort and wasted years, yet Father

had responded to his cry for mercy and forgiveness. Now, all he wanted was to please God and live for His glory alone for whatever time he had left.

Can we return to believing that the dominant factor of our very existence is to reflect, share, and bring glory to Jesus? Does our life style pressure us into being believers 'on the side' rather than everything else taking second place to our walking with God in the Spirit and carrying a heart concern for His glory, the lost of earth and the call to focus on things above, not on things of the earth? Where *is* our treasure stored?

As believers we are spiritual creatures and citizens of heaven seated in the heavenly realms. May we be challenged to allow what we are in the spiritual realm and in our relationship with Jesus to permeate all of our thinking and activity in our families, work places and fellowship with other believers? Let us be love-slaves of Jesus in very truth.

"Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen."
- Ephesians 3.20-21 NLT.

Yes!

He who is a faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.

- Revelation 22.20,21.
NLT.

Yes, yes. my heart says: "Yes!"

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This leaflet, 'Passing the Torch' and other books, booklets and articles by John and other writers may be down-loaded or read on www.Hislife.co.uk