

Church Building

It's obvious that anytime a building is constructed, for whatever use, the first thing of utmost importance is its foundation; what it sits upon. Could you imagine building a house, for instance, without one? How would you even begin? Even prefabricated homes, in order to be safe, need to sit on foundations. We know when it's the tornado season, a mobile home park is the last place we would want to be. Who would want to be in a house without a foundation then? Even relationships are based on some sort of foundation or they wouldn't last very long now, would they? So even the church, obviously, has a foundation upon which it was established, and every doctrine from leadership roles to the Godhead to our very salvation, must be based on "God's firm foundation" which "stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,'...

"This is one of the inscriptions on the foundation-stone of the church, which seems to mark the character of the building. It always stands there, no matter who apostatizes."

Albert Barnes

...and 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity'.
(2 Tim 2:19)

"This is the other seal or inscription which is made on the foundation which God has laid. The foundation has two inscriptions - the first implying that God knows all who are His own people; the other, that all who are His professed people should depart from evil."

Albert Barnes

Even when **we** aren't sure who are God's select people, **He** is. As we saw in Gen 4:26 when "people began to call upon the name of the Lord", so we see in Act 11:26 where "in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians". That's what it means to "name the name of the Lord" as a holy designation and mark of distinction between the citizens of Heaven and the citizens of the earth. As New Testament Christians, we are "members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph 2:19-21) And we understand the concept of having to have a blueprint before any important construction can begin and that the same blueprint given to two or more contractors should produce the same results, if they stick to the architect's original plan. If they don't then they wouldn't be producing the original construction that the home builder had in mind.

The Bible is our Blueprint

The Word of God has served as a blueprint for multiple things such as, for instance, how to raise a godly family, how to be morally successful in marriage, how to run an honest business, and the list goes on. But the one most important thing the Bible **should** be used in, is in how mortal man is to build a God honoring, soul loving church. (*Obviously, we aren't referring to the meeting house.*) If we hope to build the church today as the original one of the first century, we need to stick to the plans found in the Word of God. So to begin we need to look at the foundation.

Mat 7:24 "Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

Jesus said we are to hear and do because....

Jas 2:17 ... faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

As the “living stones”, spirit beings that are part of the makeup of the “spiritual house” known as the church, Christians are the “holy priesthood” of the New Testament who are “to offer spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). But what are those spiritual sacrifices since “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4)?

“Since there is a priest, there is also involved the notion of a sacrifice; but that which is offered is such as all Christians offer to God, proceeding from the heart, and breathed forth from the lips, and in a holy life.”
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Mat 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in Heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter (*Gk.4074- [pet'-ros] a [piece of] rock*), and on this rock (*Gk.4073- [pet'-ra] a [mass of] rock*) I will build My church, and the gates of [Hades] shall not prevail against it.

By Jesus' own words, Peter was not what He would build His church on but on his confession recognizing Jesus as Who He really was [*and is*], “the Son of the living God”. If Jesus wasn't the Son of God then He would have had nothing to build His church upon, just as denominationalism has no foundation upon which to build theirs. Any organized religion that doesn't look to the pattern found in the New Testament is not based on truth and cannot claim Jesus Christ as its foundation. They have built their houses on the sand.

Mat 7:26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

According to the Pattern

Heb 8:5 They (*O.T. priesthood*) serve a **copy** and **shadow** of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." (*Emp. added*)

Whatever Moses was shown on Mt. Sinai was to ultimately be the pattern for the church Jesus would later build. Everything from the altar of burnt sacrifice, the laver, the Holy Place with its furnishings and the Most Holy Place with the ark of the covenant, all were to be constructed according to the blueprint God gave Moses on the mount. So, let's follow that pattern as we seek to reconstruct the church of the New Testament.

The Altar of Burnt Sacrifice

Both this altar and the laver are found outside the Holy Place for a reason. The altar represents atonement through the death and offering of a bloody sacrifice.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Jesus “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) ...

Heb 9:28 ..., having been offered **once** to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. (*Emp. added*)

Just as “Aaron (*the High Priest under the O.T.*) made atonement for [the priests] to cleanse them” (*Num 8:21*) Jesus, Who became “a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17*), gave “His life as a ransom for many” (*Mat 20:28*),

and “the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises” (*Heb 8:6*); the Old Covenant “He set aside, nailing it to the cross” (*Col 2:14*). At this point, the New Testament priests, i.e. Christians, are “to present [our] bodies as living [sacrifices], holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship” (*Rom 12:1*). Thus the altar of burnt sacrifice was the shadow of our “[taking] up [our] cross daily and [following Him]” (*Lk 9:23*). As Paul stated in 1 Cor 15:31 “I die every day!”,...

Col 3:1 .. then [we who] have been raised with Christ, [are to] seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 [Setting our] minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For [we] have died, and [our] life is hidden with Christ in God.

What then does it mean to “have been raised with Christ”? In order to understand that we need to look at the other object that was found outside the tabernacle in the courtyard.

The Laver

Immersion under the Old Law were for the Levites who wished to serve in the office of the priesthood. For them it was for the putting away of the filth of the flesh” (*1 Pet 3:21*) before they could don their priestly garments (*Lev 16:4*). Scriptural immersion under the New Covenant is for those who wish to enter the “priesthood of God” (*1 Pet 2:5*) but first need to attain “a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (*1 Pet 3:21*). Christ becomes our priestly garment once we are obedient to this ordinance just as the Levite was under the former covenant.

It was the only way they could enter just as Jesus noted in Jn 10:1, anyone who tries to enter “by another way, that man is a thief and a robber”. Under the New Covenant, before entering the Holy Place known as the church, believers must be “born of water and the Spirit” or they “cannot enter the kingdom of God” (*Jn 3:5*); the kingdom, the church and the Holy Place being synonymous. The pattern for the church includes baptism just as the pattern God gave to Moses concerning the tabernacle and the ministry of it included the laver. As Peter said in Acts 2:38, the purpose for baptism is to be “in the name (*Gk.3686-authority*) of Jesus Christ **for** the forgiveness of [our] sins”. And once those sins are remitted, only “the Lord [can add] to [the church] day by day those who [are] being saved” (*v. 47*). So to answer the question “What does it mean to “have been raised with Christ”? We need to look at Romans 6.

Rom 6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ **was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life**. 5 For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united **with Him in a resurrection like His**. (*Emp. added*)

That’s what it means to be “raised with Christ”.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the **first resurrection!** Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years. (*Emp. added*)

Rising from the watery grave of baptism we begin our part in the figurative 1,000 year reign with Christ in His spiritual kingdom, the church, the Holy Place in the tabernacle being her shadow. People can “join” any man ordained “church” but only God adds us to His Son’s body, the “ekklēsia” (*Gk.1577*) or “called out”, “through [the] Gospel, so that [we] may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*2 The 2:14*).

Col 1:13 He (*the Father*) has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Holy Place was the shadow of the church.

Heb 9:1 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an **earthly place of holiness**.
 2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. (*Emp. added*)

Heb 9:6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties,

Obviously speaking of the Old Covenant priests; theirs was a ministry performed daily in the Holy Place after washing at the laver. If the Holy Place represents the church, then what do the priestly ministry and the furnishings in the Holy Place represent? First we'll look at the...

Lampstand

Lev 24:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be **kept burning regularly**. 3 Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from **evening to morning** before the LORD **regularly**. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. (*Emp. added*)

It was the only light within the tabernacle by which the priests were able to minister. The lampstand represents the importance that the word of God has in the church today. It's what is supposed to guide our steps.

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

We're blind without it.

Psa 119:130 The unfolding of Your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

Christians are to "shine as lights in the world" by "holding fast to the word of life" (*Php 2:15-16*), because as the church, we are the "pillar and buttress of the truth" (*1 Tim 3:15*). Next we look at the...

Table of Shewbread (*bread of the Presence*)

This was a shadow of communion that the priests then did on the seventh day of the week. Christians, as priests of Christ, are to partake of the communion on the "first day of the week" (*according to the example in Act 20:7*). Under the Old Covenant...

Lev 24:8 Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. 9 And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due."

Only the priests were to partake then, which should give us a pattern of who are to partake of the communion today. And no, Sunday was never to be considered the "Christian sabbath" once the Mosaic Law was fulfilled through the cross of Christ. There is no New Testament command, example or necessary inference to support such a claim. But, as it was to be "a perpetual due" for the priests then, so communion is for the priests of the N.T.

1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Altar of Burnt Incense

In answering how often the priests were to dress the lamps on the lampstand, they were to do such as often as they burned incense on the altar of burnt incense.

Exo 30:7 And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it (*altar if burnt incense*). **Every morning when he dresses the lamps** he shall burn it, 8 and when Aaron **sets up the lamps at twilight**, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. (*Emp. added*)

As the Revelation reveals in chapter 5:8, this was a shadow of “the prayers of the saints”.

Rev 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

Within the Holy Place of the tabernacle there was The Veil that separated the two rooms through which the smoke of the incense passed.

Exo 26:33 And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy.

The smoke from the altar of burnt incense not only filled the Holy Place but went through the veil into the Most Holy Place. It was the only portion of the priestly ministry that was able to enter the Most Holy every morning and evening. The veil was a shadow of the body of Christ.

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father **except through Me**. (*Emp. added*)

The only way into the Holy of Holies was through the veil and only the High Priest was permitted to go there once each year (*Lev 16*). Jesus became our High Priest through the offering of His own blood because “it [was] necessary for this priest also to have something to offer” (*Heb 8:3*).

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, 21 and since we have a great Priest over the house of God (*a.k.a., the church*), 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Our prayers today are to be through Jesus Who gives us direct access into the throne room of God. The last area we will look at then is the Most Holy Place.

Heb 9:3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4 having the golden altar (*Gk.2369- censer*) of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

There may be some difficulty in understanding where the writer of Hebrews got his information concerning this censer. We understand via scripture that the altar of burnt incense was “before the veil” (*Ex 40:26*), so what is this referring to? It would be with reference to the censer of coals the high priest was to take within the veil, and the inspired writer knew that.

“Aaron and his successors were expressly commanded to burn incense in a “censer” in the most holy place before the mercy-seat. This was to be done on the great day of atonement, and but once in a year; (Lev 16:12-13).”
Albert Barnes

Within the Holy of Holies, a shadow of “Heaven itself” (*Heb 9:24*), sat “the mercy seat above upon the ark” (*Ex 25:22*) which contained the pot of manna, Aaron’s staff that budded and the stone tablets of the covenant. It was the place that God would commune with Moses “from between the two cherubims which [were] above the ark of the testimony” (*v. 22*). The three items within the ark played an important role as shadows or representations of the New Testament. First...

Tablets of Stone

The Mosaic Law “had regulations for worship” (*Heb 9:1*) but “the righteous requirement of the law” was to “be fulfilled in us” (*Rom 8:4*) via the new commandment Jesus would later give.

Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Jesus didn’t “come to abolish the Law or the Prophets... but to fulfill them” (*Mat 5:17*) as Paul wrote in...

Rom 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Aaron’s Rod

After Korah and his companions rebelled against the authority of Moses and Aaron, God gave instructions to Moses to show who it was that He had appointed to have such authority. Taking up twelve rods from among the children of Israel, one from each tribe, Moses was to lay them in the tabernacle so that God would show, through the one that budded, which was to be kept as “a token against the rebels” (*Num 17:10*).

Num 17:8 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

Even in the church God has a set of standards, for those who qualify, for positions of authority. These are not qualifications which man can pick and choose from but are a set of specific requirements in order for the church to be so governed.

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

So what do we do if we don’t have qualified men that serve as elders? We still have the inspired words of the apostles to direct us.

2Th 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

The Jar of Manna

Exo 16:32 Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer (*about two quarts*) of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" 33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations." 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept.

The manna that fell from above was a shadow of the grace God would later bestow upon all of mankind through the true Bread of Life that He would give in sending Jesus from Heaven. Jesus said...

Joh 6:58 This is the Bread that came down from Heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this Bread will live forever."

The life that Jesus referred to here is eternal and not physical. The manna that the Israelites ate only extended "forty years, till they came... to the border of the land of Canaan." (*Ex 16:35*). Only those today who "have tasted (*Gk.1089- experienced*) the goodness of the word of God" (*Heb 6:5*) are those who will experience an eternity in Heaven with Christ after the resurrection.

Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (*Rom 6*)--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places (*the kingdom of God; the church*) in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

So what does it mean to build the church of the New Testament? And why was God so adamant about patterns during and before the Old Covenant? The tabernacle served as an outline by which we can identify the one true church that Jesus built almost 2,000 years ago.

1Co 3:11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Ask yourself; "Why did God tell Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern He gave him, and not to substitute any of His instructions with ideas originating from men?" Did He not have something in mind that those patterns were to represent in the salvation of the human race? Remember "[His] thoughts are not [our] thoughts, neither are [our] ways [His] ways, declares the Lord" (*Isa 55:8*). The church of the N.T. was established according to a pattern and that pattern is based on the one God gave to Moses concerning the building of the tabernacle. None other than a priest could enter that "tent of meeting" before being cleansed just as none can enter the church before being immersed for the forgiveness of their sins. Are you a priest of God under the New Covenant? If not you can be by following the simple Gospel pattern that saves. Hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, be baptized for the remission of your sins so God can add you to the number of the saved and begin a new life in Christ Jesus.

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