

# FURNITURE & FIXTURES of a Church

“And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but **the house of God**, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen 28:17).

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim 3:15).

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will **remove thy candlestick out of his place**, except thou repent” (Rev 2:5).

## Introduction:

1. By God’s gracious addition to our membership, we must seek new meeting facilities (I Cor 12:18).
2. In this distracting, necessary-evil process, we want to keep our priorities and perspective in line.
3. God chose to use metaphors pertaining to buildings and furniture by reference to the Old Testament.
4. Accounting covers buildings and properties, furniture and fixtures, depreciation, improvements, etc.
5. There are wonderful terms for a church ... temple ... house of God ... habitation of the Spirit ... etc.
6. Consider the verb *edify*, which means to construct a building, as in Rom 14:19; Eph 4:12,16,29; etc.
7. Wherever we take some modest liberties applying Bible precepts or principles, it should be stated.
8. We have preached the value of a church ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/church/what-is-a-church-av/sermon.php>.
9. We have preached the value of a church ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/sermons/church/what-is-a-church/sermon.php>.
10. We have preached about a great church ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/what-is-a-great-church.pdf>.
11. We have preached the purpose of the church ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/purpose-of-the-church.pdf>.
12. We believe in three dispensations (Rom 5:14; Luke 16:16) ... the patriarchs ... Israel ... the N.T. church.
13. God chose to be worshipped this way ... far above convenience, organization, or geographical cares.
14. The glory of the church ... from the Bible ... God’s dwelling place and interaction with His children.
15. Let the Muslims pilgrimage to Mecca ... the Fundamentalists to Jerusalem ... our Bethel is here!
16. No matter the obscurity and deficiencies of our meeting place or those meeting, Jehovah meets here.

## CANDLESTICK

- A. When John saw Jesus glorified, there were seven golden candlesticks (Re 1:12-13,20).
- B. But we first encounter the seven lamps or candlestick in the Old Testament tabernacle.
  1. The seven lamps in the tabernacle and temple are sometimes called the Menorah.
  2. It was by God’s design to Moses for one of few fixtures (Ex 25:31-40; 37:17-24).
  3. Paul identified this fixture in his listing of furniture in the tabernacle (Heb 9:2).
  4. A vision of a new one was shown to Zechariah in building the temple (Zech 4:2).
  5. The engraving/carving on the Arch of Titus in Rome shows the captured Menorah, no matter what John Gill or Jewish sources may say about Zerubbabel’s temple.
- C. What in the world did this old covenant candlestick mean for the church of the O.T.?
  1. The clearest O.T. description we have is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:1-10).
  2. It was of pure gold, for what can be holier and purer than the Holy Spirit Himself?
  3. In contrast, the mercy seat over the Ark was God’s presence for forgiveness of sin.
- D. Can and should we bring this symbolism of the Holy Spirit into the New Testament?
  1. Yes, indeed, for the tabernacle/temple signified the New Testament (Heb 9:8-10).
  2. The seven golden candlesticks are identified with the Spirit (Re 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

- E. Some think they are angels or other created spirits, but we do not for several reasons.
1. They are included as a source of grace and peace, which can only come from God, for how can dependent creatures dispense the will of the infinite Creator, I AM?
  2. Listed between God the Father and Jesus Christ, thus closely connected to them, angels are only servants of God, Christ, and saints without right of such a location.
  3. Since the two other Persons of the Trinity are identified, they cannot be creatures, or else there is an inspired neglect of the Holy Spirit and divine honor of angels!
  4. They are burning lamps (4:5), and angels are fiery, but the Spirit more (Ac 2:3-4).
  5. They are Christ's seven horns and eyes (5:6); seven angels are not worthy to be part of Him who was God, but Jesus had the Spirit unlimited (John 3:34; Gal 4:6).
- F. We rather understand that these seven Spirits of God are reference to the Holy Spirit.
1. We make this choice for far more than capitalization, which had no consistent rule for deity in 1611, as Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 compared to Daniel 3:25 should prove.
  2. The reasons above against angels argue as well for one answer – the Holy Spirit.
  3. How can a great salutation with two Persons ignore Him? Compare II Cor 13:14.
  4. As the language is clearly of worship to God and Christ, it must be God the Spirit.
  5. The number seven in scripture refers to completeness or perfection, which the Holy Spirit most certainly is by diversity of operations and perfection in divine power.
  6. The number seven is symbolically popular in this book of signs, thus the use here.
  7. The book was written to seven churches, each with the Spirit's presence, so seven.
  8. He is before the throne in the sense of going forth to divinely perform God's will, just as the scriptures present the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Luke 11:13; John 7:39; etc.).
  9. Jesus has the oil (fuel) of gladness above others – joy of the Holy Ghost (Heb 1:9).
  10. Jesus also has the Holy Spirit's horns, symbolic of authority, and eyes, symbolic of oversight, of the seven churches, for it is His Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rev 3:1; 5:6).
- G. In addition to the points above, we add the following to help explain verses in context.
1. We understand the seven stars of 1:20 as the pastors of the seven churches, for it was to them and not angels that Jesus sent commendations, threats, and warnings, for no angel has ever lost his first love or fulfilled a single phrase of the context; further elaboration on this point not related to the salutation is for another time; the only reason the word angels is used is to trip up those who value sound over sense.
  2. We understand the seven churches of 1:20 to be the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit in each church, for He (note *him*, as in Gen 3:15) could be taken from each church (2:5), leaving a church a mere corpse of a church (Jas 2:26; Pr 21:16).
  3. It is absurd to think the stars are literal angels or the candlesticks literal churches.
  4. Rejoice that grace and peace are by the Spirit sent forth to give them, which is the seal of our inheritance and God and Christ's perpetual presence with us (Rev 1:4).
  5. For these points in Rev 1:4-6 context ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/kings-and-priests.pdf>.
  6. Where is now the great church of Ephesus? There is no historical evidence of one.
- H. Jesus Christ began at Ephesus and warned them of losing their candlestick (Re 2:1-7).
1. Jesus walks among His candlesticks, His churches, examining their conduct (2:1).
  2. The churches of 1:20 are the presence and operation of the Spirit in each church.

3. It is impossible to remove a church from a church, literally, but the Spirit for sure.
  4. Note that removing the candlestick is removing *him* (similar to *his* in Gen 3:15).
  5. Without the Holy Spirit, a church is nothing but an organizational corpse (Ja 2:26).
  6. Without the life of the Spirit, a church is the congregation of the dead (Pr 21:16).
  7. Without Jesus and His Spirit and by His Spirit, a church is terrible (Rev 3:14-22).
  8. Without Jesus and the Spirit, the church has no real glory – *Ichabod!* (I Sam 4:21).
  9. The church is the habitation of the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:22, I Cor 3:16; etc.), but the Spirit can be grieved, quenched, withdrawn, or turn to be an enemy (Ps 51:11-12).
  10. By His strictness to the seven churches, most churches today are without the Spirit.
  11. With enough sin and offence against Him, the Spirit becomes an enemy (Is 63:10).
  12. Each chapter of Ephesians exalts the Spirit (Ep 1:17; 2:22; 3:16; 4:30; 5:18; 6:18).
- I. This must be far more key to us than any interior or exterior lighting or anything else!
    1. Fussing or worrying about a building in comparison to this is perverse profanity!
    2. We must keep the candlestick or recover the candlestick by fervent first love of Christ, His preeminence in all we teach and do, our daily walk with Him, etc.
    3. Prayers for the Holy Spirit in our church and He active therein should never cease.
    4. Free confessions of our weakness and sinfulness are necessary ingredients for it.

## **ALTAR**

- A. The tabernacle and temples of Israel had an altar for the multitude of sacrifices.
  1. Only for the patriarchal time would individual men build and use their own altars.
  2. At this altar the high priest and priests offered countless animals and their blood.
  3. From this altar, the priests and the worshippers would partake of the sacrifices.
- B. But Christians have an altar that Jewish worshippers had no right to participate with.
  1. The Christian altar known in the churches of Christ is Jesus' offering to God.
  2. There is a great gulf between salvation by grace and Jewish legalism (Heb 13:9).
  3. Christians have an altar, sacrifice, and high priest that stubborn Jews fully missed.
  4. Loyalty to Moses' system required rejection of Jesus Christ and His final sacrifice.
- C. There are sacrifices under the New Testament God does accept through Jesus Christ.
  1. Praise and thanksgiving to God are sacrifices He is well pleased with (Heb 13:15).
  2. They are acceptable to God, even with sinners involved, by Jesus Christ (I Pet 2:5).
  3. Giving thanks is not being thankful, but it requires the use of your tongue – glory.
  4. Good works and charity are also to be remembered as sacrifices pleasing God.
- D. This altar of Jesus Christ and His finished work are our hope and means for offering.
- E. A table at the front of a church, no matter how it is used, is not an altar! Reject Rome!

## **PULPIT**

- A. Churches have pulpits; pulpits are in churches. Others use podium, lectern, stand, etc.
- B. The only use of a pulpit in the Bible is by Ezra in a great preaching service (Neh 8:4).
- C. However, note what is intended by a pulpit there – a place for the preacher to stand.
- D. The elevation was for Ezra to be visibly seen opening the Bible to preach (Neh 8:5).
- E. Our platform and pulpit represent what we can see in this illustrative O.T. usage.

- F. We want our pulpit limited to primarily the use of God's word for reading/preaching.
- G. The reverence of Ezra's preaching service should be reflected in our own reverence.

### **TEMPLE**

- A. A temple is a substantial building designed for the only purpose of worshipping God.
- B. Moses built a tabernacle; Solomon built one temple; Zerubbabel built the last temple.
- C. The descriptions of either temple are overwhelming and should create foolish envy.
- D. Our local church is also the temple of God (I Cor 3:16-17; II Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21).
- H. Our church on this side of the cross inhabited by the Holy Spirit far outstrips either.
- E. This name for the church has nothing to do with the appearance of the meeting place.
- F. How should this word affect your desire, devotion, and service to our local church?
- G. David took great pains and expense to build something exceeding magnificent for God.

### **TABLE**

- A. There is a table in N.T. churches – the Lord's Table for communion (I Cor 10:21).
- B. This table requires us to separate from false religion to avoid mingling (II Cor 6:14).
- C. This table and its supper require very faithful, strict church judgment (I Cor 5:1-13).
- D. A church's communion is all those who believe the same things and live holy lives.
- E. Every public sinner without repentance must be put out of the church (II Thess 3:6).
- F. The table at the front is not literally the Lord's table itself – we mean the communion.
- G. More about closed communion ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/church/closed-communion.php>.
- H. More about church judgment ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/bible/church/church-discipline.php>.

### **CUP**

- A. There is a cup in N.T. churches – the cup for the wine for communion (I Cor 10:16).
- B. Though we may use multiple cups, we drink the same blessed wine at the same time.
- C. Communion should always be understood – it is the common union of us with Christ.
- D. Communion is not an individual ordinance that you can choose to participate or not.
- E. Communion is a congregational ordinance whereby we share mutual love of Christ.

### **CRUCIFIX**

- A. While we are at it, let us agree we have no literal crucifixes or crosses in our church.
- B. Jesus has not been on a cross for 2000 years; He has been exalted at God's right hand.
- C. He did not tell us to make any such thing, but such things are condemned (Ex 20:1-6).
- D. He did ordain the Lord's Supper to remember His death until He comes (I Cor 11:26).
- E. We do not want the sign of a curse in church, homes, purse, or anywhere (Gal 3:13).
- F. Since we are still in our sins, if Jesus is not risen, an empty casket or grave is better!

### **OIL**

- A. There was oil in the early churches, but we no longer use it as did they (James 5:14).
- B. We understand this oil part of an apostolic gift of healing (Mark 6:13; I Cor 12:28).
- C. The oil we do care about is the oil of gladness, a metaphor for the Spirit (Heb 1:9).

D. Paul in his Pastoral Epistles indicates such healing was ending (I Ti 5:23; II Ti 4:20).

### **AROMA**

- A. Plain preaching of Christ crucified leads to church triumph with God (II Cor 2:14-17).
- B. A sweet savor of Christ goes to God by the response of both the saved and perishing.
- C. Who is sufficient for these things? No man can produce any stage of this by himself.
- D. Though many corrupt the gospel to win crowds, we must never compromise the truth.
- E. The rejection of the gospel by most is as triumphant in Christ as those that believe it.

### **INCENSE**

- A. There is incense that accompanies a church of Christ's prayers unto God (Rev 8:3-4).
- B. We do not have literal incense like the RCC, Greek Orthodox, or Russian Orthodox.
- C. When we pray, our prayers are seen in heaven as golden vials full of odors (Rev 5:9).
- D. God blesses the prayers of the righteous with much incense in heaven to help them.

### **STONES**

- A. They are chosen by God and placed in the building or body (I Pet 2:4-8; I Cor 12:18).
- B. Jesus is our chief cornerstone (Ep 2:20), and we are lively stones for a spiritual house.
- C. Every stone is important in a church, just as it is important in any stone structure.
- D. For more about the stones of I Peter 2:4-8 ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/first-peter-two.pdf>.

### **ZION**

- A. Mount Zion of the O.T. church was a mountain on which the fort of Jerusalem stood.
- B. Mount Sion of the N.T. church is in heaven part of the general assembly (Heb 12:22).
- C. Instead of adoring Mount Sinai like the Seventh Day Adventists, we choose Mt. Sion.

### **FOUNDATION**

- A. The foundation of a N.T. church is the Person and doctrine of Christ (Eph 2:19-22).
- B. Paul as a wise masterbuilder laid the one and only foundation in Christ (I Co 3:10-17).
  - 1. He determined not to know anything in churches but Christ (I Cor 2:2; Gal 6:14).
  - 2. Pastors must be careful to add only gold, silver, precious stones to the foundation.
  - 3. They must hate and avoid frivolous, foolish, and carnal distractions from Christ.

### **WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE**

- A. These are vain substitutes for the grace of God contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. As men turn from truth to fables (II Tim 4:3-4), there is much wood, hay, and stubble.
- C. These additions are entertainment, activities, programs, personalities, and such junk.

### **GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES**

- A. These are the apostolic doctrines, promises, warnings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. As men turn from truth to fables (II Ti 4:3-4), they will substitute anything for Christ.
- C. There must be a focused effort to keep Jesus crucified, risen, and reigning preeminent.

## **TREASURE CHEST**

- A. Pastors are to study and learn in order to bring out things new and old (Matt 13:52).
- B. Pastors are stewards of the mysteries of Christ to emphasize (I Cor 4:1; I Tim 3:16).
- C. The Bible, the pastor's manual, makes him perfect and fully furnished (II Ti 3:16-17).

## **FRUITTREE**

- A. Jesus Christ, walking among His candlesticks, finds fruitless trees (Luke 13:6-9).
- B. Those abiding in Christ Jesus by faith and obedience will bear much fruit (Jn 15:1-8).

## **PILLARS**

- A. Churches have foundational pillars that are the apostles, as Paul observed (Gal 2:9).
- B. Older men in a church are pillars, and it is their duty to hold the church up (Ps 75:3).

## **THRONE OF GRACE**

- A. Because of Jesus Christ's priesthood, there is a throne of grace for help (Heb 4:15-16).
- B. Any church member can go boldly into the palace of Almighty God (Heb 10:19-22).

## **ARROWS**

- A. Families are described as a quiver with arrows by children and offspring (Ps 127:3-5).
- B. A close and well-trained family makes children like arrows in a mighty man's hand.
- C. Children properly trained in a church may be compared to them by their similar value.
- D. The Bible identifies the value of young men (or women) with the Bible (I Jn 2:12-14).

## **BANNER OR ENSIGN**

- A. Our church has an ensign of the people, and we Gentiles have sought to it (Is 11:10).
  - 1. **Ensign.** A badge or symbol of dignity or office; chiefly plural – Latin *insignia*.
  - 2. Gentiles have rallied to the banner of their King by the gospel for these 2000 years.
  - 3. The council at Jerusalem heard consecutive reports of Peter and Paul (Ac 15:7-12).
  - 4. Can you imagine the hippie at the garden door with an ensign? He is no Prince!
- B. Who will rise to reign over the Gentiles? Jesus Christ, Prince of the kings of the earth!
  - 1. Psalm 2 gloriously prophesied this event, fulfilled at Jesus' ascension (He 1:1-14).
  - 2. Men have pressed into the kingdom of God since days of John (Lu 11:20; 16:16).
  - 3. The future tense is only to Isaiah; it was past or present for Paul's existing things.
  - 4. Prophetic perspective separates future tense of a prophet's view from fulfillment.
  - 5. Gentiles came to trust a Jew as God in the flesh for salvation and everlasting rule.
  - 6. This is a miracle for ignorant barbarians adoring stumps and bugs (Rom 1:21-23).
  - 7. Why was the Ethiopian eunuch in Jerusalem and reading Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:26-40)?
  - 8. Why was an Italian centurion in Caesarea praying always to God (Acts 10:1-48)?
  - 9. Why did a Philippian jailor cry to be saved? There is no Savior but Paul's Jesus!
  - 10. We must seek to Christ, for this is no other name under heaven for you (Acts 4:12).
- C. As Isaiah wrote it, the gospel rest of His kingdom is glorious; we must appreciate it.

## **ROOT**

- A. Jesus is the *root* of Jesse in the church (Ro 15:12), but Jesus descended from David.
- B. Rejoice to compare scripture, for the Holy Spirit calls Jesus both (Rev 5:5; 22:16).
- C. The future tense is used after David had died, so you can see David's descendant.
- D. Job explained both by describing how a root produces after a tree dies (Job 14:7-9).
- E. The Spirit had already explained the matter by Isaiah before the prophecy (Is 11:1,10).

## **TRUMPET**

- A. The man of God, a church's bishop, uses the gospel trumpet for repentance (Is 58:1).
- B. Jesus Christ will come soon with the sound of a trumpet (I Cor 15:52; I Thess 4:16).

## **PLANTS**

- A. A church is a body of people that by blessing produce male offspring of sons/boys.
- B. Saving the church from strange children, boys grown up are the goal (Psalm 144:12).

## **POLISHED CORNERSTONES**

- A. A church is a body of people that should produce female offspring of daughters/girls.
- B. Being delivered from strange children, polished cornerstones are the goal (Ps 144:12).

## **GARMET**

- A. This metaphorical figure describes the life and reputation of believers (Jude 1:23).
- B. Pure religion in the church is keeping life and reputation spotless (Ja 1:27; II Pe 3:14).

## **CLOSET**

- A. Jesus said His Father would hear prayers offered up in closets, not public (Matt 6:5-6).
- B. This should alter the manner of praying from worrying about eloquence to humility.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

- A. While not furniture or fixtures, local churches are related to another (Heb 12:22-24).
- B. Believers on earth are in union with the general assembly that is meeting in heaven.

## **BRANCH**

- A. Jesus is the branch of Jesse by growing out of his stem (Isaiah 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15).
- B. The N.T. church is the body and worshippers of Jesus the Branch (Zech 3:8; 6:12).

## **WORD - BIBLE**

- A. The offensive weapon for warfare is the sword of the Spirit – the Bible (Eph 6:10-18).
- B. It is our source document for all the promises and instructions of God to defeat Satan.
- C. It is the chief fixture in pulpit and pews, for we must ultimately be Bible Christians.
- D. It makes the man of God perfect, totally furnished to all good works (II Tim 3:16-17).

## **ANGELS**

- A. We are come into contact with an innumerable company of angels (Heb 12:22-24).
- B. They are servants for those that will be heirs of eternal life – our church (Heb 1:14).
- C. They desire to look into our salvation for God's great grace toward us (I Peter 1:12).
- D. God designed His drama of saving the church for the instruction of angels (Eph 3:10).

## **MAINTENANCE & REPAIR**

- A. It is first the pastor's responsibility to see things lacking and to correct them (Tit 1:5).
- B. Church members also have a duty to observe the building and perfect it (I Thess 5:14).

## **SALT**

- A. Believers are salt of the earth by their preserving and purgative properties (Matt 5:13).
- B. Even their speech, which is to be always gracious, is seasoned with salt (Col 4:6).

## **LIGHT**

- A. Believers are to be the light of the world by virtuous, visible conduct (Matt 5:14-16).
- B. They must choose in conflicts with this world to honor Christ's gospel (I Pet 2:12).

## **VEIL**

- A. A massive veil hung in Solomon's and Zerubbabel's temples keeping men from God.
- B. But our Lord's death on the cross tore that physical, symbolic veil from top to bottom.
- C. We now have a new and living way into God's presence by the blood (Heb 10:19-22).

## **ARMOR**

- A. Believers and church members must fist against the devil and his wiles (Ep 6:10-18).
- B. For more of Christian armor ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/armor-of-god-Nathan-11-06-2013.pdf>.

## **CROSS**

- A. A faithful church will not have images of crosses on their steeple or anywhere else.
- B. Yet, the cross as a fixture of redemption, is to be remembered (Gal 6:14; I Cor 2:2)

## **BOOKS**

- A. If Paul asked Timothy to bring books for him, we should have a library (II Tim 4:13).
- B. Ministers give themselves wholly to reading, exhortation, and doctrine (I Tim 4:13).

## **BODY**

- A. While the church is a body, when you look at a church building, it is not the body.
- B. Different from the metaphor of a building, house, or temple, the body is a great image.
- C. The function of members within the body is easily grasped this way (I Cor 12:12-27).

## **TABERNACLE**

- A. Gentile conversions were described as rebuilding David's tabernacle (Acts 15:12-18).



B. Rather than a gaudy, small tent on earth, we have a tabernacle Jesus pitched (Heb 8:2).

**Conclusion:**

1. By God's gracious addition to our membership, we must seek new meeting facilities (I Cor 12:18).
2. In this distracting, necessary-evil process, we want to keep our priorities and perspective in line.
3. Accounting has accounts for buildings and properties and for furniture and fixtures and their losses.
4. God chose to use metaphors pertaining to buildings and furniture by reference to the Old Testament.
5. There are wonderful terms for a church ... temple ... house of God ... habitation of the Spirit ... etc.
6. Consider the verb *edify*, which means to construct a building, as in Rom 14:19; Eph 4:12,16,29; etc.
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