

The Contrast of Kingdoms: **Body vs. Buildings**

In 312 A.D., Constantine made Christianity the State religion; became its Patron; and built the Cathedral of Trier. This was the beginning of the Body of Christ (and its leadership) losing the focus of the Kingdom of Heaven (that Jesus preached while He was on Earth). When Jesus commanded us to 'go and make disciples' in Matt. 28:19-20, He did not include the construction of buildings (i.e. churches). The Church is first and foremost an 'organism', not an 'organization' (i.e. physical/temporal buildings).

The three-fold ministry of the Kingdom of Heaven (as mentioned in Matthew above) is: 1) Birthing people into the family of God (Salvation); 2) the maturing of believers (Sanctification); and, 3) the training of Disciples for the work of the Kingdom.

Since Constantine, there became a transition of focus of the ministry of the Kingdom of Heaven from building up the Body of Christ to now including the construction of church buildings. This subtle change brought about the focus on a 'business' model as compared to the Biblical model.

As we can see from history, for many years the Body of Christ (the Church) met in private residences. The focus for generations was introducing people to Christ and building up believers to maturity in order to send them out to do the work of the Kingdom of Heaven. Public spaces were only used when the number of believers exceeded the capacity of the residences available or for publically preaching to the lost.

The adoption of a 'business' model has resulted in the spending of exorbitant amounts of money on impressive structures (i.e. gymnasiums, theaters, chapels for weddings, entertainment facilities and even entire campuses of buildings). Along with buildings, we have taken on many of the additional components of this 'business' model (such as commercial advertising, sporting events, entertainment events), in order to compete with the contemporary culture. We have embraced a worldly model of sensationalizing our worship and activities to the level of a Hollywood production. In many cases, the bottom line financially has become one of profit and notoriety.

There is nothing wrong with the existence of buildings and facilities to support the work of the Kingdom. However, spending major money on these, to the neglect of the three-fold ministry of the Kingdom of Heaven, is a great tragedy. This false paradigm is the reason that we are failing to see the transformational life of believers and their impact on the world at large.

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With the right mindset, and the priorities of God (rather than the priorities of men), there are hundreds of millions of dollars and countless qualified workers that could be used for the real work of the Kingdom.

God uses the human body to illustrate the Body of Christ, and the only purpose of that structure (the bones) is to facilitate the operation all of the 'organisms' and extremities of the body. The structure (the bones) is to support the 'organism' (the body), not the reverse. Therefore, it is imperative for us to consider what we're spending for the expansion and maintenance of the structure (the church), as compared to the expansion and maintenance of the 'organism' (the Church, which is the Body of Christ).

Investments in buildings are temporal, but investments in the Body of Christ are eternal. These principles are illustrated clearly in the Scriptures below (which are just two of many!) and amplify that the Body of Christ (the Church) invests in its own care above investments in temporal possessions (the church).

Luke 12:15-21 ¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' ²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Acts 2:42-47 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

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In Summary:

Do you *personally* know how to use the Scriptures for the maturing of a believer, resulting in their practical transformation in all 7 Areas of Life? (Rom. 8:28-29, Eph. 4:11-16)

Do you have a training process in place to: 1) mature believers; and 2) to train them for ministry so that they join you in the work of the Kingdom? (2 Tim. 2:2, Rom. 8:30)

If we operate under a business model, we lack a sound foundation and are building on sand. (Matt. 7:24-27) This leaves our communities open to deception and false religion (Eph 4:14, 2 Tim 3:5) and results in the condition of our members being indistinguishable from (and with the same problems of) the world (2 Tim 3:1-4).

Additionally, everyone recognizes the value (and impact) of word-of-mouth 'advertising'. Why should the Body be spending money on conventional advertising? The production of mature believers who are excited about their faith and their walk with Christ is the best way to expand the Kingdom (and its ministry) at relatively no cost to that of commercial advertising. Without the framework of this 'spiritual reproduction', the impact and expansion of the Kingdom cannot take place.

Is our major activity the transformation of the lives of believers to maturity and the training of them for the work of the Kingdom?