

Fitted Together

As we have seen with the lessons on spiritual authority, the Kingdom of God and the Church have a structure and an order to them. We each have a *place* and a *function* in the Lord. No one else can fulfill our functions or place in the Body of Christ except us.

One of the ways that the Scriptures describe us both corporately and individually is as a **building**. All buildings have foundations. The taller the building the deeper the foundation that is required. As an individual, we lay the foundation of Jesus Christ and then build upon it, ourselves. We choose the building materials (by doing the works prepared for us—Ephesians 2:10—or doing our own works); they can be wood, hay, stubble or gold, silver, precious stones. We need to choose the materials carefully, because there will come a day when our building will be tested by fire. If we have built out of the wrong materials, it will burn and we will suffer loss. If we build out of the correct materials, the fire will only make the building more brilliant.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NASB

- (11) For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- (12) Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
- (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.
- (14) If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.
- (15) If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

In our other lessons, we have been building our *individual* foundations. We have learned how to build in ourselves the **character** of the Lord. We have learned how to develop the **ability** to do the Lord's will. We have learned how to be **obedient** and to **stand under** authority. But now, we have to learn **how to be fitted together**. Our little building becomes a living stone in the larger building that is the Temple of the Lord.

1 Peter 2:4-5 NASB

- (4) And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,
- (5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

God is building His temple according to *His own plan and pattern*. In Exodus chapter 40 God instructs Moses on building the tabernacle, furnishings, etc.

Moses followed the **pattern** given to him by God and when he finished, the Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In the New Testament we are told that the pattern given to Moses was a pattern of something in the heavenlies.

Hebrews 8:5 NASB

(5) who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."

The Temple that the Lord is building today is still a shadow of something in Heaven. We should remember this and with the help of the Holy Spirit maintain the plan of God. If we build according to the pattern of the Lord, when it is finished the glory of the Lord will fill His Temple.

PLACEMENT

As we are built together, God does the placing. We don't choose our place, He does. The Temple of God already has a foundation laid with Jesus as the chief corner stone and the apostles and prophets as the rest of the foundation.

Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB

(19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

(20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

(21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

(22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

As we come into **structure** and **order** (placement), we have stones (people) over us, stones (people) under us, and stones (people) on each side of us. Our problem is that we are living stones—we have the ability (by an act of our will) to hinder or prevent our placement. Remember, we are quarried from the world, but then we are shaped, chipped, sanded and otherwise worked on by the Holy Spirit and then placed by the Spirit into our function in the Lord. Just as it was with Solomon's Temple, we are put into position "without the sound of a hammer" (1 King 6:7).

As discussed in earlier lessons, if we are rebels or lawless at heart, we can refuse to come into unity. As a result we forgo our placement in the Building of God.

Our **placement** requires two things:

- that we are secure in our *identity*,
- that we are secure in our *function*.

Our identity must be defined in relation to Jesus Christ. No other identity is possible. Our **value** is derived from our **identity**. This is important to remember because many times we confuse value with function which is not correct. We are all of equal value before the Lord but we all

may have different functions, some of which have different levels of visibility.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18 NASB

(14) For the body is not one member, but many.

(15) If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

(16) And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

(17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

(18) But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

When Paul talks of the Body, he is not using an illustration but a **reality**. We are not *like* a body but we *are* a body. You will never find out what God has apprehended you for unless you are properly related (in structure and order and identity and function) to the people of God. Why is that?

Because we all have *blind spots* which limit us. We don't see ourselves as God sees us. We don't see reality in a correct manner sometimes. We need others to help us see our blind spots.

One definition of living under the Lordship of Jesus: I have come to the end of living on my own terms—from now on I will live on God's terms. I can't do that alone. Why? Because even the born-again, regenerate man cannot be trusted to apply the Lordship of Jesus to himself in the particular areas where God wants to deal with him.

General truth doesn't do it for us. We think of general truth as always applying to someone else. For it to hit me, truth has to be applied in particular to my situation. God has to bring me into some kind of relationship where I can find the general truths of God applied *particularly* to me, either directly by the Holy Ghost, by the teaching of His word, or by some kind of close fellowship with others whereby I can be confronted with what I really am.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB

(24) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

(25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 3:12-13 NASB

(12) Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

(13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Romans 15:14 NASB

(14) And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Stimulate, encourage, admonish, this is normal christian relationship. God has ordained that the Church be the place where we receive loving **support** and loving **discipline**. This is not an option, but a necessary condition for maturity. No matter where you are, you will never come to maturity alone—you were never destined to. There is something about the new creation that will remain in eternal immaturity if it remains alone.

You can even make a scriptural case for the fact that you can't even live as a christian alone. If a member is cut off, it will die (John 15:6). We were destined to live in fellowship.

When we talk about God gathering His people together, we are talking about more than just having hundreds of people in the same room. In Ezekiel 37 in the Valley of Dry Bones, there were many bones together, but when they were prophesied to, they came together "bone to his bone". When God gathers His people, there is order even to the gathering.

Five Reasons for Relationships

1. All of us have areas of weakness where we need to be encouraged to do the right thing.
2. Each of us needs a place where he can share
 - a) his hopes and dreams
 - b) his doubts and fears
3. Each of us sometimes need help in discerning the will of God.
4. Each of us needs a place where our mistakes can be corrected, where we can be adjusted.
5. Each of us needs a place to confess our faults.

RESTORATION

In Acts 3:19-21 the Bible speaks of the time of the restitution or restoration of all things. There are two aspects to this:

- ◆ putting things back into their **right place**,
- ◆ putting things back into their **right condition**.

Both of God's covenant people, Israel and the Church, require restoration. Israel has wandered in exile far from their God-given **geographical** inheritance. The Church has wandered in similar exile far from its God-given **spiritual** inheritance. All of the principles that are unfolded in the *natural* realm of Israel's restoration are equally applicable to the Church's restoration in the *spiritual* realm.

In Ezekiel Chapter 37 we have the story of the Valley of Dry Bones. In this we have a picture both of Israel and the Church and the process of restoration.

The restoration is presented in two phases. In phase one, the bones are moved upon, brought

together and fitted to each other by joints. Then ligaments, muscles, flesh and skin cover them. The result is physically complete bodies.

In phase two, breath (spirit) enters the bodies and they stand up. The result is "an exceeding great army".

The initiative and plan for this comes from God. However, God doesn't accomplish it directly, but uses human instruments of His choosing.

While the restoration is in two phases, the prophesying also takes two different forms. First, the prophesying is directly to the bones. We can compare this to *preaching and teaching*. Next, the prophesying is to the breath (spirit). We can compare this to *proclamation and intercessory prayer*.

BODY JOINTS

It is the power of God that makes the Body a living, breathing, flowing, yielding organism. It is the sap necessary for the branches.

The Body implies "**visibility**". The Holy Spirit is invisible, but the Body itself is the visible manifestation of the Spirit of God. The Body is not only visible to God but to the world as well. The world is to behold its behavior and glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12).

Body members are related by **joints**. A literal visible body requires literal visible joints that are functional.

Ephesians 4:16 NASB

(16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Colossians 2:19 NASB

(19) and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Definition of joint: where members or parts connect and share in a common bond.

There are two primary purposes of joints:

- hold the members together and in place;
- transmit life, or supply, from one member to another, and in so doing perpetuate the growth of the body.

If joints between members are weak, then members can easily get "**out of joint**" and out of place. Such a condition render them undependable and useless to the purposes of God. It also causes pain and limitation to the entire Body. Weak, ill-defined and undernourished relationships have put many members out of joint.

Finding one's place in relationship should precede finding one's ministry, for the members of a Body must be properly joined before they can supply life to one another.

Our natural body has many different types of joints—elbows, knees, shoulders, hips, fingers, ankles, and toes, and they all work differently. So it is in Christ's Body.

Joints need definition, understanding, and commitment if they are to function properly. A commitment to the Lord Jesus is a commitment to relate properly in every other relationship.

LIGAMENTS

How are joints held together? By ligaments. These are the "joint bands" or "ties" referred to in Colossians. In keeping with the body analogy, what would correspond spiritually to the ligaments? I believe that it is commitment. Not just general commitment but specifically covenant commitment. The type of commitment that is similar to the marriage covenant. This is re-affirmed each time that we partake of the Lord's supper.

MUSCLES

It is the muscles that give the body strength and movement. They operate off of two basic principles: tension and opposition. Each muscle tenses or relaxes in opposition to the opposing muscle. If this doesn't happen then the body is paralyzed.

In the Body of Christ, the muscles are represented by the different kinds of ministry. There is a balance in the tension and opposition required between these ministries for the Body to function properly.

The ligaments of commitment must be in place before the Body can be exposed to the opposing tensions of the muscles of ministry. Damage has been done when the Body has tried to flex its muscles without first having strong commitments. Members have been thrown out of joint.

We must be fitted together "bone to his bone" in strong, committed relationships before we build up our muscles of ministry.