

LESSON- 17

CHURCH - Similes

References : *Ephe. 2 : 15 - 22*

1Cor. 12 : 11 - 28

Ephe. 5 :25 - 32

Memory vers : *Ephe. 2 : 20 - 22*

Objective: To know God's purposes of the Church through various similes about the Church used in the Bible and to surrender ourselves to His will.

Introduction: Jesus Christ told many parables about the Kingdom of God. (Refer Mt. Chapters 13 & 25) similarly, the apostles have described about the Church through various Similes in their epistles. It is quite interesting and informative to study about them.

SIMILES OF THE CHURCH:

1 Temple - Building :

The Church is compared to a building especially to the Temple of God in the Bible. Let us see in what all aspects does the Church resemble the Temple.

- a) **Plan:** Just as we make or design a plan before making a Building or a Church hall, a clear sketch and plan of the Church was prepared by God even before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1 :3-6).
- b) **Worth:** The Tabernacle and other Temples in the Old Testament were of great worth. Too much was spent of them with lot of valuable materials. But the worth of the Church is the highest worth because the most precious blood of Jesus Christ was spent for it (Acts. 20 : 28, 1 Pet. 1 :18-19.)

- c) **Foundation:** The Church has been built on the chief corner stone which is Christ Jesus. The apostles and prophets are other foundation stones built together with the Chief Corner Stone (Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:4-7).
- d) **Builders:** God, the Holy Spirit and the ministers of the Church are builders of this living Structure." For we are God's fellow workers" (1 Cori. 3: 8, 9, Eph. 2: 22). Begun on the day of pentecost, this work is still going on. How much are you involved in this work?
- e) **Worship:** In the Old Testament Temple, the sweet smelling smoke of the incense always went up to the Lords presence. Also well pleasing sacrifices were offered to God. Similarly, from the Church the Living temple, the incense of prayer must go up continually. Moreover worship involves our self-dedication to Gods service (Rom. 12:1). We must also offer to God the sacrifice of praise and the thanks giving always (Rom. 12:1, Eph. 5:18-20). This Church is being built for a dwelling place of God (Eph.2: 22).

II Body:

Church is metaphorically spoken of as the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 23, 1 Cori. 12: 13-27). Jesus Christ is the head and the Church is the body. Each member of the Church is therefore member of the body of Christ. There are two-fold relationships for the believers. First is their **relationship to Christ** as members of the body of Christ. Second, the believers are related one to another as the members of the same body.

They are all one in Christ. They equally share the Joys and sorrows of life.

III Bride:

Another metaphor used to describe the Church is the Bride. The Church is betrothed to Christ (2 Cori 11: 1-3, Eph. 5: 23 -32). This simile, first of all, reveals the unselfish and unlimited love of Christ towards the Church. How amazing is the love of Christ for the church giving Himself up for her so that He might present her to Himself a glorious and unblemished bride: Secondly it shows the obligation of the Church to Christ. He has redeemed the mankind from the bondage of sin, death and satan by His precious blood and has betrothed them

to be His bride. The duty of the betrothed woman is that she must live in purity and sincerity to the bridegroom. We must bear in mind that Satan and the World will always try to lead the Church astray from her love and purity towards Christ the Bridegroom. The Church is obligated to keep herself in purity, love and sincerity to Christ. The Church must be well determined that nothing can separate her from the love of Christ.

IV Family or Household:

Again the Church is compared to the household of God (Eph. 2 : 19, 3 : 14). In a family, Father and children live in a father- son relationship. Similarly, in the Church i.e. the house of God, the believers are children and God is the Father. The children must obey the Father in all things and honour him. As members of the same family, the believers must act in perfect harmony and brother hood towards one another. Just as the members in a family are of different age and growth in the Church also believers are of different age and growth spiritually. Nevertheless, nobody should look down upon others. All should tolerate one another and take care of others.

V Flock (Sheepfold):

In the Bible there are many references to Christ as the Shepherd and the believers as the sheep (Lk. 12 : 32, Acts. 2 : 21, Jn. 10 : 1-6 : 1 pet. 5:2 - 4, Psa. 23 : 1-6) Jesus Christ the Good shepherd has given his life for us. Now he is caring for us protecting us and even spanking us. And in the near future, He is going to come as the Chief Shepherd and take his sheep i. e. His saints to himself. The sheep must hear the voice of the shepherd and follow him. The sheep must also love and obey the Shepherd and live in subjection to His will and discipline.

VI God's Vineyard or Field of Corn:

(1 Cori. 3: 9, Jn : 15:16, Song of songs 4 : 12 -16)

The owner of the field or Vinedresser takes care of the plants in his garden. Similarly, God protects us and makes us grow. The Church which is the garden of God must yield the kind of fruit that pleases the owner of the garden. This garden is fenced all around. It means that the Church must live separated from sin and the world. It must be all for the Master. Besides, it must produce best fruits (witnessing) and must spread fragrance (good works).

VII Light:

Jesus Christ said, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life (John. 8 :12)." The Church who follows Jesus the True Light also is the light of the world. About the Church Jesus said, "You are the light of the world". (Mtt. 5:14) Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun at night and illuminates the earth, so does the church reflect the light of Christ to the darkened world.

VIII The Pillar and Ground of the Truth : (1 Tim. 3 : 15)

The Pillar supports the building or carries the weight of the whole structure on itself. In the ancient days pillars were used as notice boards on which the King's announcements or decrees were inscribed or stuck. The ground holds the whole structure. These metaphors, show the supreme duty of the church. The Church must declare, support and protect the eternal truth of God.

God's Holy Spirit has revealed to us the greatness and responsibility of the Church of God. Let us submit ourselves before God in the light of these truths.

EXERCISE -17

Answer the following questions.

1. In what all aspects do the church resemble the Temple?
2. Which are the two- fold relationships of the believers, as Church in the body of Christ?
3. How does the church resemble a family or household?
4. Who is the Chief Shepherd and who are the sheep?
5. Mention the various similes through which the church as been described by the apostles?

