



The Architecture of the Spirit

... he was looking for the city... whose architect and builder is God

Hebrews 11:10

There is an *architecture of the Spirit* which will build the city of God.

It is not what many of us have thought of as “The New Testament Pattern”, nor is it “The New Apostolic Reformation”. And it is definitely not “The Local Church”, or even “The Organic Church”! It is rather an artistry born of the Spirit that will guide us in the construction of the “new thing” that God is about to do (Isa 42:9).

The Greek word rendered as “architect” in our text (Heb 11:10) is *technites*, which Trench suggests brings out the artistic side of creation. It is the word used for an artificer, artisan, or craftsman. According to Vine, it is “one who does a thing by rules of art”.

Painting by numbers

This is far from slavish subjection to a pattern. We have not been called as “wanna-be” artists, mindlessly painting by numbers, but as true artisans of the Spirit—as those with talent and with skill. Just as an artist is gifted with innate talent, which is then honed into a skill through practice and cognisance of the laws of art, so too the person of the Spirit.

We have been called to “build” in the Spirit. But first the design comes from God and then the building. Nevertheless, we build according to our notions of the design—of our particular understanding of the “local church”, of the “apostolic”, of “community transformation”, or even “organic church”. In our presumption we call *our* notions, “*the* blueprint” or “*the* pattern”, believing we have the scoop on growth and success. However, we are merely breathing our own air and imitating just another model.

Instead it is time to heed the call to, “*Trust in the LORD with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding*” (Prov 3:5).

Uncharted territory

We have not “been this way before” (Jsh 3:4). We are being called into uncharted territory, into ways of doing the work of the kingdom and being the people of God that are unfamiliar. There is a unique way in God for every time, season, and people. The previous ways and paths, though good for their season, will not sync with the *new thing* that God is about to do.

We, therefore, need the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus. The skill and creativity of the artisan is all about wisdom. It is one thing to have knowledge, but another to have insight into how and when to

apply the knowledge, appreciating its full implications and applications. It is all about living in the knowledge of God and his ways.

Architecton - wise master-builder

And so, Paul the apostle could refer to himself as a “wise master-builder” (see 1 Cor 3:10), or in Greek *architekton*, from which the English word, “architect”, is derived. However, the ancient usage of the word suggests more than the modern day architect, thus the rendering, “master-builder”. It denotes the creative skill of the artisan, operating according to the rules of art, in both conceiving *and* implementing the design.

It would seem then, that the building of the city of God is far from some mechanistic, programmatic, engineering feat. And yet this is exactly what so much of contemporary church life has become. One can, therefore, only assume that much of what is being built is not the “city” that Abraham was looking for! Thus Paul's warning for each of us to “take heed how he builds” (see 1 Cor 3:10).

"Come, let us build..."

Man has a propensity to build, but not all building is of God. This is reflected in the first human community at Babel purposing, "*Come, let us build ourselves a city...so that we may make a name for ourselves... .*" (Gen 11:4).

Many are building – ministries, churches, networks, movements, and denominations – but we are not building the city of God. Rather than building from the *architecture of the Spirit* we build out of the *architecture of self*, to build for ourselves a name. Sure, superficially it is “for the kingdom”, but at the heart it is something else altogether.

So, how do we build the city of God?

Through the *architecture of the Spirit*, and it begins in the foundations.

For Paul, as a wise master-builder, the foundation to be laid is Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 3:11). The infrastructure is, therefore, to be consistent with the foundation. If not, the builder will be constructing with consumables—with wood, hay, and stubble. And these will be tested by fire to ascertain their oneness with the foundation (see 1 Cor 3:12-15).

There is a fire about to be poured out on the church. Motivations, models, traditions, and innovations will be touched with the fire of God's holy nature. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken, so that only the unshakeable will remain (see Heb 12:25-29). Every human contrivance will come under a heavy dealing of God. This is evident, even now, in the endemic failure of our present system of ministry. Over 1,600 pastors every month in the USA are forced out of ministry due to power struggles within the church. This figure is not inclusive of those pastors who leave the ministry because of burnout! Something is radically wrong! While we rejoice with every victory, it really doesn't matter how successful the latest tele-evangelist is, or mega-church may be, or for that matter any ministry when, overall, the Western church is losing ground.

The *husk* or the *kernel*?

So, the *architecture of the Spirit* will call us back to the foundation of Christ, to rediscover the kernel of intimacy with him, and to experientially know him. Knowing about his person and work is good, but knowing him is even better. Doctrine and theology are good, but it can be the husk rather than the kernel, the packaging rather than the substance.

Jesus said:

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

John 5:39–40 ESV

It is possible to know the Scriptures, but not know Jesus. They give witness to the one who is the *living* word. Therefore, we are at risk of stopping at the letter, thinking we have arrived, and never come to knowing the spirit behind the letter—to the true knowledge of God (see 2 Cor 3:4-6; also Hos 5:4; 6:3, 6; 8:2).

The implications of this are deeply disturbing. Much of what we call “spiritual life” or “church life” is merely a husk. It means we can do “church” and not really connect with the head of the church, read the Bible and not really know its author, or do “worship” and not really commune with the one worshipped. We are expert in building impressive institutions, including theological ones, around a husk. This is not to diminish the significance of the *word of God* in its enscripturated form (and thus the importance of theology), but it is to highlight the imperative of knowing the *God of the word*. Nor is it to deny that Christianity is founded on objective content, but it is to assert that that this is incomplete without the subjective experience of the content—it is *both* word and Spirit.

And I am not only referring to traditional and liturgical churches. The words of Jesus and Isaiah speak prophetically into the whole contemporary church, including the Evangelical/Pentecostal streams:

*13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.
14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

*““You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”*

Matthew 13:13–14 ESV

And our blindness is unconscious:

*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' **But you do not realize** that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*

We do not realise our true condition – we think we are free when we are bound – we think we see and yet we are blind – we think we are filled with the Spirit when we are not. We are, in fact, deceived.

Revelation—words that are *spirit*

So, how are we set free?

Through the truth. And this only comes through the words that Jesus speaks which are "*spirit and life*" (Jn 6:63). But they are not only received cognitively, through the mind; and therefore, they are not taught by the church, nor any man, but by the Spirit. While we may read them, or hear them preached, they are only truly received when they come as light to our spirit:

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:13–14 ESV

Only to the degree the words are given wings by the Spirit of God and carried to us, as revelation, is the city of God built.

This is why John said:

But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

1 John 2:27 ESV

Despite the fact that Peter had received much teaching from the Lord himself it had not always been discerned spiritually. However, when questioned as to Jesus' identity, in a flash of illumination, he declared, "*You are the Christ!*" Jesus then explained what had just occurred: "*...flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but My Father who is in heaven*". His eyes had been opened—he had received revelation.

This provides the context for Jesus' historic declaration, "*... upon this rock I will build **My** church...*" (Mtt 16:17-18). The church that Jesus builds, in contrast to ours, is exclusively on the rock of revelation; but not any revelation—it is the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. There is no other foundation:

*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid,
which is Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 3:11 ESV

What does this mean? It is far more than an article of faith or creedal belief, as important as that is. Without a current revelation of Christ – an immediate inner illumination of the spirit in knowing Christ as the Son, thereby providing intimacy with the Father – the church, despite its vociferous claims to orthodoxy, cannot be the church. It may be the institution that appropriates the name, but it is not the church that Jesus said he would build; or therefore, the one that overcomes the gates of hell! It is, in fact, spiritually illegitimate. A survey of the current condition of the church confirms this.

We must therefore conclude that the foundation of revelation is not fully in place.

The foundation of *apostles & prophets*

This is why the restoration of true apostles and prophets is so significant, and therefore so clouded with confusion and counterfeits—by those *"who say they are apostles and are not"* (Rev 2:2; also 2 Cor 11:13). The restoration of intimacy with the Father and of present-day apostles and prophets goes hand-in-glove. In union with the chief cornerstone – the ascended Christ – apostles and prophets become the foundation of the church (see Eph 2:20; also 1 Cor 12:28; Rev 21:14). Authentic apostles or prophets will live in union with Christ, communing with him in his suffering and in his ascension glory (see 1 Cor 4:9-13; 15:7-8; 2 Cor 11:16-33; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24). In knowing the Son, they become intimates of the Father, and thus aligned to his ultimate intention for mature sons.

Therefore true apostles, prophets, and saints will heed the call toward maturity—toward the city of God; and thus suffer with Christ outside the city gates:

*So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the
people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside
the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have
no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*

Hebrews 13:12–14 ESV

But outside which city gates? — the earthly Jerusalem's:

*the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where
their Lord was crucified.*

Revelation 11:8 ESV

The city that had been called as the city of God – Jerusalem – by the time of Christ had become instead, the city of man. Israel had so apostatised that she could only be identified as “Sodom and Egypt”.

Therefore, those in authentic union with Christ will always be counter-cultural. Like Christ, their authorisation will not come from “Jerusalem”—the religious institution of the day. Instead, their authority will come from above, from the Father—not from man.

De-construction before construction

This means the loss of all things – of reputation, respect, and resource – of all the securities of this life and its regular patterns. With Paul we can declare:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

Philippians 3:8 ESV

The *architecture of the Spirit* will always de-construct human patterns and dependencies before it rebuilds and constructs. It will uproot, tear down, destroy and overthrow before it builds and plants (see Jer 1:10). As long as we are secure and satisfied with our patterns and ways, we are not able to receive revelation, experience true intimacy with Christ, nor understand the Father’s ultimate purposes.

The *architecture of the Spirit* is calling you into a place of complete abandonment—a place where you are no longer in control; a place of brokenness and contrition of heart where God can download the *new thing*.

Are you ready?

April 2004