

# Where's the Church? & Who's in it?

## Seeking Fruit in God's Church

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Scriptures from the KJV.

I live in New Jersey, it's a State which is oftentimes viewed in peoples minds with "misconceptions". Many people have a "preconceived notion" that NJ consists only of Asphalt Pavement & Oil Refineries, and it's no wonder because the majority of those visiting this area of the Country, are usually headed to Manhattan (The chief business district of NYC) and they fly into one of NYC's 3 Major Airports:

JFK – LaGuardia - or Newark Airport. Well, Newark Airport is actually located in Northern NJ, just across the Hudson River from NYC.

(That particular part of the State is asphalt & Oil refineries.)

I can probably refresh everyone's memory, concerning that particular area, by mentioning an incident that generated media coverage around the world.

You may remember when US Airways Flight 1549 with 155 people on board went down in the Hudson River, back in January 2009. The plane struck a flock of birds upon take off from NY's LaGuardia Airport.

(The crash landing was quite unique, and received a Lot of coverage world wide. (You probably don't remember the flight # or the date, But I'm sure you'll remember this particular crash, if I mention a few details.

The airplane was airborne less than 3 minutes, when the pilot "Sully Sullenberger" radioed air traffic controllers, that he had experienced a double bird strike, and declared an emergency.

(Apparently a flock of Canadian Geese were in the planes flight path upon takeoff.)

After that initial distress call to the Airport tower, Sully's last statement was "Were going to be in the Hudson." (The Hudson River that is)

At first he was going to try and make it back to the Airport, but quickly realized that there was not enough time, because the plane was loosing thrust and going down.

So he set his eyes on the Hudson, and announced to his passengers to "brace for impact."

He put that plane down in the river, with barely a scratch; and everyone got out alive. There were pictures & videos shown around the world, of the passengers & crew standing on the wings in the 20 degree temperature, as the plane drifted down the Hudson River.

It was quite a sight! The busy NY Metropolitan Waterway, with all its ferries, tugs, police boats and Coast Guard boats dropped everything they were doing, and rushed along side the downed plane to try and rescue everyone, before the plane sank (and they succeeded.)

That plane floated down the Hudson River for approximately 4 miles, with one wing in NY, and the other wing in NJ. That “crash landing” became know as: “The Miracle on the Hudson”.

That part of NJ, bordering Manhattan is densely populated and quite congested, But thinking that all of NJ is like that, is a misconception, and usually preconceived.

If someone ventures out of the Metropolitan area, there usually taken by surprise, when they see just how “green” and “beautiful” much of NJ actually is. (It’s called the “Garden State”.)

(I think Tom had mentioned that recently, about NJ being “The Garden State”.)

NJ has lots of farm land, we’re known for “cranberries” “Egg Plant” “Tomatoes” and more. We even had so many “chicken laying egg farms” in the past, that NJ still set’s the price for “eggs” each day, for the entire Country.

And were # 2, when it comes to horse racing (just under Kentucky.) Yes, preconceived ideas oftentimes blur our vision to reality & truth...

Another thigh NJ has an abundance of, is trees. Believe it or not, we have lots of forest in NJ, but ya know, sometimes even the forest can blur our vision, and produce some preconceived ideas, about trees.

We all heard the expression “Can’t see the forest for the trees”

Well, sometimes we “can’t see the trees for the forest”.

(Let me explain what I mean.)

Sometimes there are so many trees crowed together, that they can’t ever reach their full potential, and become “whole” and “fully mature”. Plant trees to close to one another and they will have stunted growth.

I can drive around all day here in NJ, passing acre after acre of trees, even my own property where I’m currently living, is full of trees. But ya know, oftentimes, none of those trees are very impressive, none of those trees stand out.

Why? Because there too congested & overburdened to reach their proper & full potential, there too confined, kept within limits, restricted from space and growth, resulting in a lack of maturity & perfection.

Now contrast to that, there's a "senior citizens" housing development that I visit from time to time (My job brings me in occasionally to do some contracting work) and every time I go into this particular development, I'm astonished at the trees. (There quite impressive, and they do stand out.)

(Reason?) The person, who originally designed this development, knew what he was doing. He placed each and every tree far enough apart, so that each individual tree could grow without any hindrance, and reach its proper & full potential.

The trees in this particular development are awesome to say the least. There fully mature, and perfectly, yes, perfectly shaped on every side, and there mere, absolute beauty, grabs your attention like a magnet coming in contact with metal.

And why, why are those particular trees in that development so Unique, so Impressive, so Profound, compared to the forest of trees that I'm continually driving by?

Because these particular trees were originally chosen, and uniquely placed where they would be unrestricted, unhindered and free, yes, free to grow, and to reach their full potential...

Its quite amazing what one tree can look like when its standing alone, and not cluttered with other trees pressing up against it, restricting it, confining it and hindering its growth....

It's a fascinating sight to see one fully mature, with all its limbs & branches perfectly shaped, without even a flaw.....

Now the Scriptures often refer to "us" the Ecclesia, the called out ones, the members of God's church as "trees".

So today, I want to talk a little about "trees" brethren, because trees & the fruits they produce can help us clarify who we are. Yes, trees and their fruits can identify the one true church that Christ Himself began to build nearly 2,000 years ago.

People often ask, "Where's is the one True Church? How do we identify which Church is the one through whom God is working? This is a very important question, because the church, in which Christ began to build nearly 2 Millennia ago, is nearing its completion - nearing its maturity. We need to be sure that that completion, that maturity includes all of us.

“Where’s the Church” & “Who’s in it” is a subject that is plagued with “misconceptions” & “preconceived ideas”, so today, I’m hoping we can eliminate some of that confusion by examining some “trees”.

Why, because the answer brethren, to identifying the true church, and who’s in it, can be found in the trees and in the fruits in which those trees produce.

(Luke 13:6 please) (The proof is always in the pudding.)

The title of today’s message is: “Where’s The Church?” & “Who’s In It?” (Subtitle) “Seeking Fruit in God’s Church”

*Luke 13:6 He spoke also this parable, A certain man had a fig tree planted in His vineyard; and He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

(According to Isia 5:1-7 & John 15:1-8 [might be going there later] fig trees & grape vines represent Israel as the visible witness of God in the world, and generally all within the visible Church of God, are represented by the fig tree & the Grape vine.)

(Bottom line, Fig Trees & Grape Vines have a lot to say about God’s people, And there speaking directly to you and to Me. We need to give a listen.)

*(Verse 7 of Luke 13) Then said He unto the dresser of His vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

*And He answered and said unto Him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:*

*And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shall cut it down.*

“Faith without works is dead” – “Trees without fruits are worthless”

(Let’s go to 1Kings 6:7 please because there’s something there I want to take note of concerning the building of God’s church, which Temple we are.)

(Many in God’s church seem to take their calling lightly.) (But we have too High a calling brethren to take it lightly; we’re 1<sup>st</sup> Fruits. “Planted First” “Grow First” & “Harvested First”

And our harvest is rapidly approaching, there’s no turning back for us. This world is going down like Sully’s plane was going to ditch!

*1 Kings 6:7 And the House, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought tither, so that there was neither hammer nor Axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.*

Now we've dissected this verse many times in the past (The house that's being built is the "Household of God" Those "stones" being "made ready" represent us. But what I want us to take note of here today, is that Axe.

(What in the world is that Axe for?)

Why an Axe in the tool shed of the building of the COG? I've been around axe's my whole life, but there for tearing down, not for building up.

(Mathew 3 Please) John the Baptist was well aware of that Axe in the tool shed, in fact, it wasn't even in the shed, when John came on the scene; it was outside, and readily available.

Mathew 3:1 *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*  
<sup>2</sup> *And saying, Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

(Funny thing about that word "repent", it seems to echo throughout the Bible, John came preaching repentance, Christ started His ministry preaching repentance, even Peter, on the day of Pentecost preached repentance.

*V:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

<sup>4</sup> *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.<sup>5</sup> Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,<sup>6</sup> And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*

<sup>7</sup> *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*

<sup>9</sup> *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.<sup>10</sup> And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees (What Fore?) therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

Brethren, fruit production in God's church, is not something to take lightly, because it's a requirement... (Let me clarify that) "Good Fruits" Yes, "Good Fruits" are a requirement to reside in the "House of God"

Everyone has "fruits" And as I'm sure we all know the Scripture says: Only "Good Trees" can produce "Good Fruit" & Only "Bad Trees" can produce "Bad Fruit." And "trees" are known by their "Fruits."

But the part of that Scripture that we better take to heart, is where it says: “If our Tree is Bad, then we better make our Tree Good.” Because If we don’t, were not going to be a part of God’s Kingdom...

There are many preconceived ideas running rampant in the COG today, as many continue to search for the one true “incorporated” church.

I ask, could those preconceived notions & ideas as to where the “true church” is, be blurring ones vision, and possibly stunting ones growth?

Should we be searching for pulpits, or should we be on a quest for fruits, and how to produce them?

I received a text from Evans Ochieng over in Kenya last week, it read as follows:

“I met Oriang congregation who “moved out” with Charles. And have decided to “come back” after noticed that they were misled by Charles. They are just like prodigal son, so we received them back with Joy, how about you?”

The small congregation that Evans is speaking of had been fellowshipping with us for a while, but someone came along and stirred them into following them, so they left our fellowship for a while, and now have decided to come back.

Due to preconceived ideas & misconceptions about the identity of the church, this group (and its dittoed numerous times with others) thinks that the “True church” is in some incorporated organization. They apparently feel that our group (which they previously left) is the one, and there asking for permission to return.

Here’s my reply:

Yes, pass my greetings on to them, we welcome them back with open arms, But let us All remember, it is God’s Church, NOT man’s church. If we still have His spirit that He gave us at baptism & hands, then we are part of His church, and NO one can put us out (bar one) self.

Salvation is an individual thing which one must work out his own (and with fear & trembling) so let us fear no man, but God only.

(End of quote)

Some feel we all have to be in the same group, same organization (like we were back in “World Wide CoG”) for us to become “united” & “on the same page”. Well, we weren’t too united or on the same page back then.

Even though the same exact doctrines were taught World Wide to all of its members, at the end of the day, the members were not only on different pages, they were in totally different books!

(True Unity amongst the brethren come another way)

In John 17, Christ told His Disciples: *“I and my Father are one”*. He then prayed to the Father for all of us here today saying: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hath sent me, and hast love them, as thou hast loved me.*

(That word “perfect” means: “complete in mental & moral character”.)

(All the trees branches complete, full, and flourishing!)

Want unity in the church of God? Want to come together and not only be on the same page, but also of the same mind & spirit? Then become at one with God, by keeping His commandments... “Good Trees” producing plenty of “Good Fruit”.

Those who are at one with God will also be at one with one another. We don't have to be in the same particular physical group, we have to be of the same spiritual mind...

(Isn't it amazing how trees can grow & mature to perfection, when there not cluttered up against other trees, and have room to grow?)

I recently flew out to “Fort Walton Beach” near Pensacola, Florida to give a Kenya presentation. One of the church members picked me up at the airport, and as we drove back to where we were having services, we began discussing our beliefs.

(And we touched on quite a variety of subjects during our approximately one hour drive) Funny thing, I didn't know this man from Adam (When I walked off the plane, he was standing in a crowd of people who were all holding up signs. His sign read “Bill” (he didn't even know my last name.)

We were total strangers, and he had never even attended World Wide CoG, let alone be one of its members, but our understanding of the Scriptures & our beliefs, dittoed one another (and to the T.) We were completely on the same page.

As we reached our destination, he had this smile & look of amazement on his face, and he said “Wow, I only met you about an hour ago, but I feel like I've known you my whole life.

Trees get their nourishments from the ground, from the soil; they need water, and lots of it. They need space and room to grow, so their branches are not hindered or quenched. And they need light, sun light and plenty of it.

(If these conditions are not met & maintained, they will wither away & die)

(If these conditions are met, the tree will flourish & produce plenty of good fruit.

Well how about our tree, how about us? What are our requirements in order for us to flourish & produce plenty of good fruit?

(John 15 please)

*John 15: 1 I am the vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He pruneth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

*Now you are clean (pure) through the Word which I have spoken unto you. (It's the "Word of God" that purifies us & sets us apart, not any man made organization) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you except you abide in me.*

*I am the vine you are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.*

*If a man abideth not (in the correct incorporated church? No!) If a man abideth not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

*If you abide in me, and my Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.*

*8, Herein is my Fathers Glory, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.*

Disciples are what we need to be brethren, but not disciples of men, but Disciples of Christ. And disciples of Christ bear much fruit.

There another misconception that needs to be addressed. Some feel that unless we are all together, under one leader exclusively, God will not work with us, or use us. But that reasoning is contrary to the Word of God.

There's an example of that in Numbers 11. It took place back when the people were complaining about the "Manna" (the bread from heaven) that God had given them to eat. They weren't satisfied with just manna, they lusted after meat to eat. (Physical meat that is)

Moses was burdened (to say the least) at the complaining of the people, so God had Moses gather 70 men of the elders of the people, and took some of His spirit that was upon Moses, and put it upon them.

(Let's take a look at that in Numbers 11)

(We can pick up the story in Numbers 11: 16)

*Numbers 11: 16 And the Lord said unto Moses, gather unto me 70 men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.*

(elders here means “aged”) & (officers mean overseers)

*17, I will come down and talk with thee there, and I will take of the spirit which is upon you, and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bearest it not thyself alone.*

(dropping down to verse 24)

*24, and Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.*

*And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied and did not cease. (Spoke by inspiration)*

*But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out to the tabernacle; and they prophesied in the camp.*

*And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad & Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, my Lord Moses, forbid them.*

*29, and Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!*

(I better read that in the NIV)

*29 But Moses replied, are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people would prophesy, and that the Lord would put His spirit on them.*

Oftentimes there is envy & jealousy with in the congregations (a jockeying for position) (Even the “ministry” quick to exclude those who are not of “Their particular fold.” That's a very bad attitude to harbor.

(There was a similar story in Mark 9:38-41.)

The disciples wanted Jesus to forbid others to drive out daemons, because they were not part of their group. But this type of narrow attitude was condemned by both Moses & Jesus.

Mark 9:38 (Better start in 36 as I begin to wrap this up.)

*Mark 9:36 And He took a child and set him in the midst of them, and when He had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*

(Going to read verse 38 in the NIV) *“Master, said John, we saw a man driving out daemons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.*

*But Jesus said: do not stop him, no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me. For whoever is not against us, is for us. I tell you the truth; anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not loose his reward.*

We can't put limits on God – He can work through whomever He chooses. (And He does.)

Brethren, lets eliminate misconceptions & preconceived ideas concerning where's the church & who is in it.

Residence in the “House of God” is Not determined by which man made incorporated group we attend, it's determined by our actions, our behavior, by our production of fruit “Good Fruit.”

(NJ fruits consists of: tomatoes - cranberries - blueberries & more.)

(Fruits of the spirit consists of: Love - Joy - Peace - Longsuffering - Gentleness - Goodness - Faith - Meekness & Temperance.) All those attributes describe the Father (They come from the Father)

And there a requirement for being in good standing in God's church, and we do have to “work out our own salvation with fear & trembling” The Axe is still readily available.

(Definition of Axe in the Hebrew is: “To cut off” (Still used today in employment [or rather unemployment] when one gets fired.)

Sully Sullenburger's plane was going down (This world is going down) Sully set his eyes on the Hudson; we need to set our eyes on the Kingdom of God. How do we do that? By producing Fruit “Good Fruit” and plenty of it!