

# Picture 1: The Assembly



Seven Pictures of God's People (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to look together into the mirror of God's Word and finding out what kind of people we are as God's redeemed people. The title of my talks this week is, "Seven Pictures of God's People." In my two introductory talks this week I've explained that God's Word is a mirror which shows us ourselves as God sees us. It's important that each one of us individually looks regularly into this mirror to check on our own personal spiritual condition and relationship to God.

But this mirror of God's Word not merely shows us what God intends each one of us individually to be. It also shows us what God intends all His believing people to be collectively. Without this overall view of God's people as a single whole, we tend to get lost in our own individual needs and problems and blessings, and so to miss the larger overall plan and purposes of God. As the saying goes, "We fail to see the forest for the trees." So, for this week and next week also, I'm going to be holding up to you the mirror of God's Word in such a way that you will gain new understanding of how God sees His redeemed people in this world as a single, corporate whole. Hence, my title for these talks, "Seven Pictures of God's People."

Each one of these pictures is taken from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. The first picture is found in Ephesians 1:22, which says this:

> "And God placed all things under His feet [that's the feet of Jesus] and appointed him [Jesus] to be Head over everything for the church." (NIV)

That's the first picture, the Church. But we need to understand the root meaning of the word that's translated "Church." In Greek, the word is ecclesia, from which we get such English words as "ecclesiastic" and so on. Now that Greek word has a specific derivation and a specific application. There's no mystery about it. The noun ecclesia (church) is derived from a verb which means "to call out." So the root concept is a group of people formed by calling them out from a larger group of people. A group of people called out for a special purpose. And that, of course, applies to God's people, the Church. We are called out of this world

through faith in Jesus Christ for a special purpose of God. In the contemporary secular Greek of the New Testament times, this word ecclesia had a very specific recognized meaning. It meant a "governmental assembly." And it's used that way, for example, three times in the 19th chapter of Acts. In this 19th chapter, we read about a kind of uproar that broke out in the city of Ephesus because of Paul's ministry there, and it says:

> "All the crowd gathered together in the theater [the public theater of the city]."

And they were holding a kind of unorganized, unauthorized meeting, and the town clerk of the city came along and rebuked them and told them they had no right to hold a meeting there in that way. And then he went on to say this, in Acts 19:39:

> "If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly." (NIV)

That word is ecclesia, a "legal assembly." And then again at the end of the chapter, Acts 19:41, it goes on:

> "After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly." (NIV)

So the real plain root meaning of that word that we habitually call "church" is very clear, it means a legal or governmental assembly. And so, throughout the rest of my talks, rather than use the word "church," of which the meaning has been obliterated by misuse on many occasions, I'm going to stick to the word "assembly." That's the first picture of God's people, it's the assembly, the governmental assembly.

Now in Scripture there is a title, a particular name, that's regularly used for the assembly of God's people when they meet in divine order. And that name is "Zion." And I want to read to you now something that the Scripture says in Hebrews 12:22–24, about Zion and our relationship as believers to Zion. This is what the writer says:

> "But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the City of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of better words than the blood of Abel." (NIV)

First of all, I want you to notice that this is not future. The writer doesn't say, "You are soon going to come." He says, "You have already come." Not physically, of course, but spiritually we are already part of that total governmental assembly of God which governs this universe. And although part of it is in heaven and part of it is on earth, we are all one assembly. Included in that assembly are "thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly." Another, I think better, translation says, "in festal array." It's a very dignified, glorious, solemn assembly.

I spent a number of years in the military, not by my own choice, and I always remember what happened when we had a commanding officer's parade. Everybody had to polish all their pieces of brass and their boots and stand to attention, and there was usually a band, and everything was particularly smart and official and dignified. And there was a sense of authority. Well, in a much greater measure that's the picture here of Zion. And we're part of it. We are in it as the Church, but it's "assembly"—of the firstborn—those who have been born again through faith in Jesus, and whose names are already enrolled in heaven. You remember Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't rejoice because the demons are subject to you. Rejoice because your names are already enrolled in heaven." So that's where we are as believers. Through our faith in Jesus Christ we're a part of the great governmental assembly that governs this whole universe. The Head of that assembly, under God the Father, is Jesus Christ. Specifically, we as the Church, God's people, the assembly, are the representatives of God's authority in the earth. It's God's purpose to govern the earth through His people, through His assembly.

I want to give you one picture of how God governs the earth through His people, the assembly, the church. It's found in Psalm 110. The first two verses go like this:

> "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet.'"

Now Jesus in the Gospels applied that to Himself. So God the Father says to Jesus the Son, "Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet. And the New Testament clearly reveals that that's where Jesus is right now, He's seated at God's right hand. The next verse goes on to describe the process of the government of God at this time, in this age. It says:

> "The Lord will stretch forth thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of thine enemies.'"

I believe all three Persons of the Godhead are there. God the Father says to Jesus the Son, “Sit at my right hand.” And then God the Holy Spirit stretches forth the scepter of Christ’s authority from Zion, the assembly of God’s people, and says, “Rule in the midst of thine enemies.”

That’s what Jesus is doing now. We need to see that. Jesus is not going to rule at some future date, He is ruling now. He’s already on the throne. He’s waiting till all His enemies have been brought under His feet. But the instrument of His authority on earth at this time is His assembly, His redeemed people, the church. And out of that assembly of God’s people met in divine order, the Holy Spirit, through prayer, through the ministry of the word, through the gifts of the Spirit, extends the scepter of Christ’s authority over the nations and kings and rulers of this earth.

Now, as we close, I want to give you a two-fold application, which I’ll do with each picture from now on. I want to point out what is the essential feature of this picture, and I also want to point out what is required of us as part of God’s people in this picture.

Now, the first picture is the governmental assembly. What’s the essential feature? Well, my answer would be governmental authority. That’s the main thing that’s set forth in this picture, the governmental authority of God in His people. What’s required of us? My answer would be respect for God’s order. And my comment is we cannot govern others if we cannot govern ourselves. That’s the application.

I remember some years ago looking at the television presentation of the national convention of one of the two major political parties. And I’ve seldom seen a greater disorder. Nobody paid any attention to the chairman or the emcee. The chairman said, “Please be silent,” and everybody went on talking. It was total disarray, complete disrespect for authority. And I thought to myself, “Those people certainly cannot be fit to govern this nation. They can’t even govern themselves.” Well, it’s possible that critics could say that of God’s people. We cannot be fit to govern the world until we’ve learnt to govern ourselves.

Our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I’ll be bringing you the second picture of God’s people.

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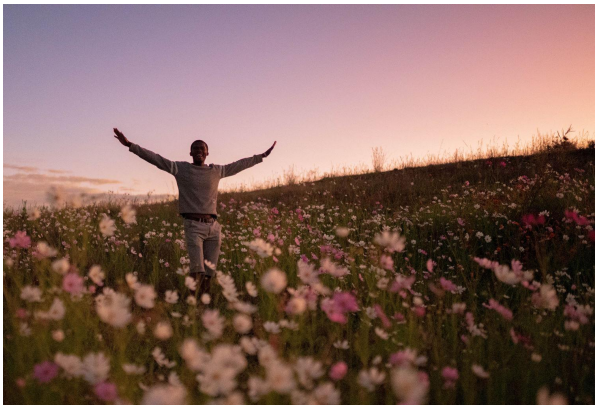

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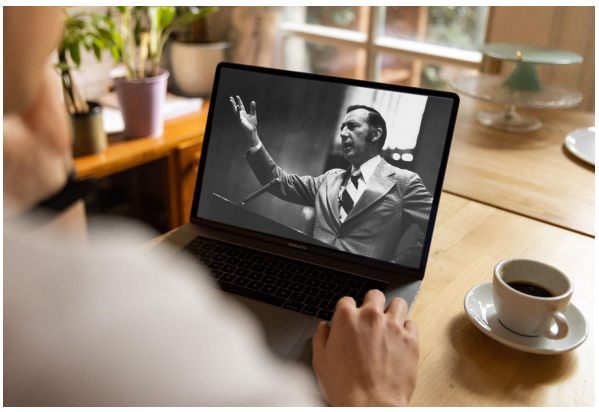

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