

## House on the Rock

29.5.05

**“Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock”  
Matt 7.24**

**Images of tall buildings** Here are some modern examples of the house on the rock from an exhibition of the world’s tallest buildings. With the use of computer design and modern materials, these buildings are the ultimate statement of wealth and economic power. Who has the most tall buildings today? New York, Tokyo, Shanghai Hong Kong, Chicago, London? Hong Kong soon to be overtaken by Shanghai. They are a reliable indicator of where the world’s wealth is to be found.

They illustrate Jesus point very well. They can only stand so proud and so tall because they have foundations that go deep into the ground. The new design for the twin tower in New York will rest on a wide foundation on solid rock. Where there is sand or clay, as in London, tall buildings rest on deep concrete piles. The Gherkin building is a famous example.

Jesus said that if our own lives are founded on the rock of his teaching, then we will cope with and overcome the struggles we face. As David said “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge ... who is God except the Lord? And who is a rock besides our God? ... The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock and exalted be the God of my salvation.” Psalm 18.

**The Church.** When Jesus talks with Peter In Matthew 16, we see this idea turned round. “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” The foundation of the church is on the faith of Jesus’ disciples. Peter is an interesting rock, I’m not sure I would want to rely on him. He is impulsive and impetuous with a tendency to cowardice and betrayal. Yet if Jesus can call someone like Peter to his work in the world, surely he can call us. Peter could walk on water when he kept his eyes on Jesus. At Pentecost, he stood up to preach, full of the Spirit.

Do you feel like a rock on which Jesus can build his church? Neither did Peter. Hear his words and act on them.

**A twist.** There is something wrong with the illustration. Tall buildings with deep foundations have a sense of permanence and security about them, Chelsea tower in Dubai, built to look like a sail, is literally founded on sand, and oil revenue. Here is the problem. These high buildings are founded on the values of the Dow Jones, The Nikkei index, the FTSE index, the financial markets, the indices of western materialism. In geological time, this is very short term indeed. Even the oldest towers in New York are not yet 100 years old.

So they are really a very poor illustration of the lesson Jesus was teaching through this story. He wanted his followers to learn to build their lives on the rock like qualities of the Kingdom of God and the eternal power of the word of God. “Kingdoms may rise, kingdom’s may fall ... but the word of the lord endureth forevermore”

**The Kingdom of God** What are the values of our own nation?

This year the UK has a unique role as Tony Blair hosts the G8 summit and the presidency of the European Union (EU). The summit – at which the G8 leaders will meet to discuss global issues such as poverty – will be held in Gleneagles, Scotland

from 6-8 July.

On 2 July, before their meeting takes place, thousands of campaigners will gather in Edinburgh to put pressure on Tony Blair and the G8 leaders to make poverty history.

The G8 last met in the UK was in May 1998. They were greeted by 70,000 campaigners who took to the streets of Birmingham to urge them to drop the debt.

This time, we hope even more people will join us to speak out for the world's poor. It will be the biggest Make Poverty History event of 2005!

Since 1975, the heads of state or government of the major industrial democracies have been meeting annually to deal with the major economic and political issues facing their domestic societies and the international community as a whole. The G8 Summit has consistently dealt with economic management, international trade, and relations with developing countries. Questions of East-West economic relations, energy, and terrorism have also been of recurrent concern. From this initial foundation the summit agenda has broadened considerably to include microeconomic issues such as employment and the information highway, transnational issues such as the environment, crime and drugs, and a host of political-security issues ranging from human rights through regional security to arms control.

The nations are: France, United States, United Kingdom, Russia (as of 2006), Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada. Throughout the year, the leaders' personal representatives – known as sherpas – meet regularly to discuss the agenda and monitor progress.

This is a good modern example of the values that Jesus taught, being put into practice. We can apply them in our lives day by day. When we do, we are building our lives on a rock that will endure forever. Amen