

THINKING ABOUT THAT CHURCH JESUS BUILT

It wasn't easy to choose what to speak about this morning, in light of so many things that would have made for a great study in our New Testament Studies this past week.

- There was that curious passage in chapter 15, where it looks like Jesus was calling a woman a dog.
- You have Jesus saying to the apostle Peter, "*Get behind me Satan!*" in **chapter 16**, as well as that demanding passage where Jesus speaks about the demands of discipleship.
- There's the transfiguration in **chapter 17**, and I love that account of Peter and the temple tax. Can you imagine the look that must have come on Peter's face as he opened the mouth of that fish!
- There is the radical way of dealing with temptation in **chapter 18**. Jesus says, if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out! I know that probably raised a few questions.
- Also in **chapter 18** is the matter of church discipline. I know that is something that troubles a lot of people. In my experience it is one of the things that has not been restored to any significant degree
- There is also Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage in **chapter 19** that is a hot potato for most people. You also have the young man who came to Jesus wanting to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life but after Jesus told him, the Bible says he went away sorrowful.
- You have the workers who worked all day for one denarius, and the ones who worked one hour for the same pay in **chapter 20**. How fair was that? What was Jesus trying to say in that that parable?
- You have Jesus throwing the money changers and sellers out of the temple in **chapter 21**, as well as Jesus causing a fig tree to wither and die all because it did not have fruit on it.
- And of course in **chapter 22** you have that parable about the wedding feast, where none of those who had been invited to a king's son's wedding showed up, and a lot of other people were rounded up to fill the hall, but then you have that one guy who was improperly dressed, and gets thrown out.

So any of those passages would have made a profitable study for us this morning, but after weighing all the choices, I felt compelled to select the passage there in chapter 16 where Jesus spoke about building His church.

I know most of you have heard a lot of sermons on the church. I didn't decide on this passage because I thought it was something you hadn't thought about already. I chose it because in today's world and even among many Christians, thinking about the church has been too superficial and simply filled with too many errors.

Let's read **Matthew 16:13-19** together and do some serious thinking about the church Jesus built.

Now in order to bring this lesson in the time allotted for us this morning, we will not have time to deal with many of the things dealt with in this context. It is not important for the sake of our study to know the location of Caesarea Philippi. I am not going to talk about why some thought Jesus was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah. Those are important things to consider but they do not have a direct bearing on what I want to talk about this morning. I am not going to give any time to a discussion of the word for rock, which is *petra*, and the name Peter, which in the Greek is *petros*—an obvious play on words.

We are going to give some consideration to what Peter was saying when he told Jesus, “*You are the Christ the Son of the living God.*” Most of our time, however, will be devoted to what Jesus was saying when he said, “*Upon this rock I will build my church.*”

Christ’s promise to build his church does have a direct connection to Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ. It is significant that this is the first time we find any of the apostles confessing that Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah. Up to this point they have known him as Teacher, as Lord, which was a fairly common term of respect and didn’t necessarily refer to a divine being. They have even heard others calling him the Son of David. They have heard him speak of himself as the Son of Man, as well as the Lord of the Sabbath. Earlier in Matthew we read about Herod the Great making inquiries about where the Christ was to be born. Also, John the Baptist, had earlier sent some of his disciples to Jesus, wanting to know if he was in fact, the Christ. But it wasn’t until what is reflected in chapter 16 that we have any record of his disciples calling him Christ. That is extremely significant; not just that the disciples recognized that he was the Christ, but that He actually was and is, the Christ.

The word Christ, is not, as some people mistakenly imagine, Jesus’ last name. The word *Christ* was a title given to the person prophesied in the Old Testament who was going to come and establish a new people, a new kingdom. You can read about the coming of that kingdom in passages like [Daniel 2:44](#) and [Isaiah 9:6-7](#). When John the Baptist began his work, his message was that the kingdom of heaven was near. When Jesus began his preaching, he had the same message.

The kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven (it is also called the kingdom of Christ, Eph. 5:5) was about to begin and that was the purpose of Christ’s first coming. It is true that he came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), but saving the lost was the way he would build his kingdom. It would be made up of people who confessed him as Lord and demonstrated their confession by their obedience. By the way such people lived their lives after being born again (see John 3:3-5) they demonstrated that Jesus either was or was not their Lord. Jesus came to redeem a people, His people. We remember the words of the angel to Joseph prior to the birth of Jesus. Speaking about Mary, he said, “*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21). This is what Jesus meant when he said, “*I will build my church.*”

Jesus came to show the world and to prove to the world that he was the divine Son of God, and he did that through his many miracles and teachings. He made it a reality by dying on the cross, shedding his blood for the forgiveness of sins for every man. As preparation for that work, and to assist him in building the church, Jesus also took a group of men, and devoted himself closely to them for a period of at least two years, possibly three. He did that in order to put into place the infrastructure necessary to secure and guide that church throughout the ages to come. You really need to read and think about the words of the entire **2nd chapter of Ephesians**, but listen to these words found in **verses 17-22**: *“And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18) For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20) **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”*

So the first thing I really want you to get hold of this morning, is that the church Jesus built, came into existence and continues to exist today because of one all-important fundamental truth, which is, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And if you will recall, that was the confessions you made when you decided to become a Christian. You were saying you believe that, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Christ is the one who saves you from your sins, and he is the one you are to call. You need to keep in mind, Jesus cannot be your savior if he is not your Lord. In **Acts 2:36**, the apostle Peter, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, said: *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* He said that to the Jews who had gathered on the morning of Pentecost to hear the apostle preach the gospel for the first time. Jesus is both Lord and Christ! If He is not your Lord, then He is not your Christ. I believe one of the great deceptions of Satan today is that he has convinced generations of believers that Jesus can be their Christ, their savior, and they can continue to be the Lord of their own life. People love the idea that God loves them, they love the idea that Jesus sacrificed his life for them, they love the idea of God’s grace. They love the idea of their sins being forgiven, but they absolutely refuse to obey Christ as Lord.

Last night we and the Barnharts had some wonderful fellowship together. Brother George was telling me about a young man who he was teaching and had brought to our assemblies on several occasions. The young man enjoyed our times of worship and he wanted to become a member of our church. But guess what, it’s not “our” church! Whose church is it? [Christ’s] The problem was this young man was shacking up with his girlfriend and he wasn’t willing to give that up. He talked to the elders about becoming a member but the elders told him he would have to give that up. He wasn’t willing to do that. He told George that other churches told him all he had to do was to believe in Jesus, and confess his sins at night. George said to him, “What about repentance?” Now did George throw a roadblock in that man’s way? Where did he get that idea, that the man had to repent; did he just make that up? Was George just being Mr. High and Mighty? No, he was telling the man what Jesus said. In **Luke 13:3**,

Jesus said, *“Unless you repent, you will perish.”* He said the same thing again, in **verse 5**. In **Luke 24:47**, in giving the apostles the great commission, Jesus told the apostles *“that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”*

To repent of our sins means more than simply confessing them. We can confess them all day long, but if we do not change our thinking and change our practice, those confessions are worthless. If we want to confess our sins to God in the name of Jesus as our Savior, then we have to repent of those sins in obedience to the command of Jesus our Lord.

And that leads me to the fundamental proposition that I wish to get across this morning, which is—and we are thinking about that church Jesus built—the only way we can know anything about Christ’s church is what we read about in Christ’s word, which is the New Testament.

The church is not some man-made denomination that men are free to design and develop anyway they wish. It is a divine institution and woe to anyone who presumptuously tries to make of it something that Christ has not authorized. Again, in giving the great commission, according to Matthew’s account, Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Who has all authority? [**Christ**]. If Christ has all authority, then how much do I have? [**none**]. How much do you have? [**none**] Now then, based on Christ’s authority, what are Christians supposed to be doing? [**going and making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**] What are we supposed to do with those who become baptized disciples? We are to teach them to observe what? [**all that Christ has commanded**].

We who are Christians are supposed to be going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature (see Mark 16:15,16). And we do that by what authority? [**Christ’s authority**]. Who’s gospel is it? [**Christ’s gospel**]. So we are to go and preach Christ’s gospel by Christ’s authority. When we do that and some people obey Christ’s gospel, what does that make them a member of? [**Christ’s church**]., What are we supposed to teach those who become a part of Christ’s church? [**to all of Christ’s commands**]. So folks, when it comes to the church: who we are, what we are, what we do, and what we teach and preach, it all has to be authorized by who? [**Christ!**]

- So do you understand that’s why we gather together on the first day of the week? That is what Christ’s Word teaches.
- That’s why we gather around the Lord’s Table every Lord’s Day. That is what Christ’s Word teaches.
- Why do we immerse people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rather than sprinkle? Is it because that is what Christ’s Word teaches?

- Why do we practice a free will offering every Lord's Day rather than observing the old covenant teaching of tithing? Is the Law of Moses the authority for Christ's church? If Christ has commanded us to tithe, I would like to see where He did that!
- Why do we sing in our worship times without the use of musical instruments? Has Christ told us to use instruments? If so, tell me so I can read that for myself. *Incidentally, has Christ commanded us to sing? If so, how many of you obeyed Christ in doing that this morning?*
- Has Christ commanded us to assume titles and wear special clothing? Where did the idea that ministers should be called "reverend?" Did Christ teach us that? I don't think so
- Did Christ commanded the apostles to teach and train women to be preachers, or elders or deacons? Where do people get the idea for those things? Is it from Christ, or from men?
- Has Christ commanded that churches be led by a single individual that we call a pastor? That isn't taught anywhere in the New Testament, is it?
- Has Christ commanded us to take the Lord's Supper on a Saturday or a Thursday night? If he has, I must have missed it!
- Has Christ commanded us to go tell people that if they will just accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior they can be saved? I raise that question because that is what thousands of so-called Christian preachers are telling people this very hour. And yet, where did Christ say that?
- Did Christ say that you don't have to be a member of the church to be saved? Did He say that? Where?
- Did Jesus say you don't have to meet with the church when it is assembled for worship?
- Did Jesus say that he wants people to "join the church of their choice?" Did he say that he wants all of those who believe in him to divide up into hundreds and hundreds of denominations, each with their own peculiar set of beliefs and practices? Did Jesus say that? Really? Or did Christ not say something about all being one; one flock with one shepherd, being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment?

I am sure you get the idea: we are thinking about that church Jesus built. Hopefully, we understand why that thinking has to be guided by and based on what Christ has told us in the pages of the New Testament. The church of Christ is based on the Word of Christ because Jesus is the Christ! The church is not based on what I like or don't like, or on what you like or don't like. It should not be based on what appeals to people.

That church that Jesus built belongs to him, and if we are willing to put our faith and trust in Him as the Son of God, and if we are willing to obey Him as Lord, then we have the opportunity and privilege of becoming and being a part of that church. The Bible says that when we become obedient to the gospel, God adds us to Christ's church (Acts 2:47). As Jesus said in another context, "***What God joins together, let no man put asunder!***" If one leaves the church, they do so only to their own hurt.

The church that Jesus built. There is so much more we could say about that. We barely touched on the fact that the church is God's kingdom. Nevertheless, our time is gone for this morning, so let me close by reminding you, according to the Word of God, Ephesians 5, the church is what Christ is coming back for. Listen to me carefully! He is not coming back for you, or for me. He is coming back for the church, his bride. He is coming back for those who are His people. The question is, are you one of them? Have you obeyed Christ's gospel? Have you been a faithful member of His church? Are you daily living by His Word, to the very best of your ability fulfilling his expectations of you as a part of his church?

Invitation

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