

Subject: *Reasons to Love the Church*

Scripture: *Matthew 16:13-19*

There is a lot of misunderstanding about the church today. Some people say they love the Lord, but they have little use for the church. That kind of attitude shows a real ignorance of the Bible.

1. Importance of the Church

We see in Matthew 16 the close connection between Christ and the church. We need to understand who Christ is and what the church is. We need to love and respect Christ and his church. And we need to be committed to Christ and to His church. Nine of Paul's thirteen letters in the NT were written to local churches. Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation were messages sent to seven local churches. God's Word reveals a lot about the church and just how important it is in the life of God's children.

2. Institution of the Church

Our text deals with two primary questions that bring into focus the nature of Christ and the church.

Verses 13-14 – human speculation about Christ (Whom do men say that I am?)

Verses 15-17 – divine revelation about Christ (Whom do you say that I am?)

When Christ said, “upon this rock I will build my church” (vs. 18), what did He mean? He didn't mean Peter. Jesus was using a play on words. The name Peter (“Petros”) means “rock” (pebble, small rock), but Jesus said, “upon this rock (bedrock) I will build my church.” That bedrock was the truth that Peter stated in vs. 16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus is the one and only foundation of the church:

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. ¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-20 ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. There is a sense in which the apostles and prophets had a foundational role in building the church, but only Christ is the foundation. The church is unique because Christ is not only the foundation, He is the builder.

a) The church was built and blessed by Christ

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 2:46-47 ⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

In verse 18 of our text, Christ says “I will build my church.” He is the designer and builder of the church. It is His church, not man's church. It is not our job to build the church. Christ said He would build it. Any person who attempts to build the church is competing with Christ, not serving Him. If a

church in one place grows cold, disobedient, or indifferent, Christ doesn't stop building; He just works somewhere else. He is always building His church, both numerically by evangelism and spiritually by edification.

b) The church is local and global, visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly

At first there was only one church in Jerusalem, but as time went on, other local churches were started.

Ephesians 3:14-15 ¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

3. Identity of the Church

We should pay careful attention to how the Bible describes the church. Christ and the church are not identical, but they are inseparable. There is a living union between Christ and the church.

a) The Body of Christ

Ephesians 1:22-23 ²² And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

This image of the church as the body of Christ goes back to Paul's conversion experience in *Acts 9:1-5*.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

b) The Bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

c) The Family of God

Ephesians 3:14-15 ¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

d) The Temple of God

Ephesians 2:19-22 ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²² In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

e) The Chosen People of God

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

f) The Flock of God

1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you...

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

We have seen a lot take place in churches across our nation that is hard to comprehend. Some churches that don't even believe the Bible is the Word of God. Some churches ordain women as pastors and deacons. Some churches support and even perform gay marriage. We need to understand something. Not all churches are true churches. These are the false churches of men, not the church of Christ. Christ builds His church and His church has nothing to do with that nonsense. Christ's church is based on Biblical truth. Christ's church stands for holiness.

4. Involvement in the Church

As God's people we have the privilege of belonging to the church and being involved in the church.

We should be...

- Personally involved
- Sacrificially involved
- Gratefully involved
- Joyfully involved
- Consistently involved

These are reasons to love the church:

1. Importance of the Church
2. Institution of the Church
3. Identity of the Church
4. Involvement in the Church