

I Will Build My Church

Part 2

Matthew 16:16-20

No power on earth can stand against Jesus' promise to build His church.

LTS: Eph. 2:10-21

Against the cry of leading modern evangelicals who prophesy that if the church does not reinvent itself it will die within the next half century, and against the forces of darkness around the globe which are determined to discredit and ultimately destroy the church, Jesus makes a defiant declaration: "I will build My church." He who vanquished death by promising to rise again in three days and then did it, now taunts the enemies of the church.

Matthew 16 is an important passage of Scripture for the church to have a firm grasp upon because we need to know that the success or failure of the true church is not ultimately dependent on our intelligence, our creativity, our resources, our talent, marketing ability, financial resources, growth strategies or sheer determination but upon the irrevocable promise of a sovereign God.

The story and message of the NT is simply this, that God is building for Himself a church made up of people from every kindred, nation, tribe and tongue by the power of His sovereign grace toward all who will trust in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ is as passionate about His church as an engaged young man is about the woman he loves. In fact, that's what the church is (according to Ephesians 5) the very "bride of Christ."

No one is more determined to build the church than Jesus. He is more resolved to bring her to maturity and usher her into the marriage supper of the lamb than any human being could ever possibly be. And nothing in heaven or on earth or under the earth has the power to sabotage His plan.

As we saw last week, the key phrase of the passage we are considering is Jesus words, "I will build my church." That single statement gives meaning to the rest of the text. Let's refresh what we learned last time.

1. First we considered the foundation of the church; "this rock" which consists of the teaching and ministry of Peter and the apostles – Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, and every believer living stones.
2. Second, we learned about the Certainty of the church; Jesus spoke with an

authoritative determination. He didn't say, "I hope my church gets built", or "I'll try my best to build the church", or "Barring any unforeseen opposition I think I think the chances are pretty good that I will build my church." No, His pronouncement is a unilateral, unequivocal, nonnegotiable declaration of His sovereign purpose: "I will build my church." This is what we learned about the certainty of the church. And it is a great comfort to God's people. There should be no anxiety over the future life and impact of the church. Jesus has declared that he will build it. Our only concern should be that in the end we will be found faithful to have done what he has commanded. This is the foundation of the church and the certainty of the church. Next, we discover The preciousness the Church.

III. The Preciousness of the Church:

1. Building the church is not just some kind of religious exercise or impersonal enterprise with Jesus. The church is Christ's most precious possession for which He paid the highest conceivable price. So, Jesus said, "I will build MY church."

A. The church is described as Christ's body, over which He is the Head. Can there be any more personal connection between two things as a body and head? Indeed, the two are one. So much so that Jesus views any attack upon the church as an attack upon Him personally.

- 1) When Saul is on his way to Damascus to persecute the church, Jesus intervenes by calling out, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4)
- 2) Jesus says at the judgment he will say to the condemned "In as much as you have shown contempt for the least of these, My brethren, you have shown contempt for Me. (Mat. 25:45)
- 3) This is a very personal issue with Jesus. The church is Christ's body, and she is precious to him. He values her above all creation!

B. Second, the church is described as Christ's bride.

- 1) Could God have chosen any better analogy to portray the intimacy between Christ and the people He loves?
- 2) Paul tells us in Eph. 5, He loved her so much that He "gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory" (5:25-27).

- 3) Paul goes on to say that a husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body. “He who loves his wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (vs. 28-29)
- 4) Do you see the picture here? The church is precious to Jesus. He gave His life for her and now, as he awaits the day of his return, he nourishes and cherishes her.
 - a) The word “nourish” here means to “provide for.” He makes sure she is well taken care of and has everything she needs. Nothing escapes His notice. He knows when she is hungry or sick or suffering or lonely or just plain tired – and He provides for her. He “nourishes” her.
 - b) The word “cherish” here means “to warm, comfort and tenderly care for.” It conveys the kind of affection that’s behind Christ’s ministry to His bride. He doesn’t approach her like a hired servant. His ministry isn’t motivated by a sense of duty. He sacrifices for her and serves her out of pure delight! He is her husband! He cherishes her like a precious bride.
- 5) Do you see the intimacy here? Jesus says, “This is My church.” Let me introduce you to MY wife. Isn’t she beautiful? Isn’t she lovely? Isn’t she wonderful? Preparations are almost complete! The Bride is making herself ready. I am preparing a place for her in my Father’s house. And soon we will celebrate the wedding feast of the lamb!
- 6) You see, beloved, such is the intimacy between Christ and his church that he delights to speak of her as His own body and his precious bride.
- 7) I remember in the early years after Chris and I were married, I would sometimes put my arms around her and say, “Mine, mine, mine.” Why? Because I was so delighted to have her as my wife. In a similar way when Jesus speaks of the church, he say’s “Mine, mine, mine.” “I will build My church.

C. Third, the church is made of God’s children.

- 1) Again, this is a very personal and intimate expression. Eph. 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us...”
- 2) 1 John 3:1 “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we

would be called children of God.”

- 3) My point is simply this, that Christ’s interests in building the church are not impersonal. This is NOT a second-hand business enterprise for Jesus. He loves the church! His intimacy with her is like that of a body to it’s head; like a bride to her husband; Like children to their father. He loves the church personally and intimately. So, nothing is going to stop Him from making it into everything God promised it would be.

2. So we have learned about the Foundation of the church, the Certainty of the church, The Preciousness of the church, and now...

IV. The Invincibility of the Church:

1. Back in Matt. 16:18, Jesus says “and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
2. This is a phrase that is often misunderstood. Jesus is not suggesting that the church will be able to defend itself from the attacks of evil forces. “Gates” are not offensive weapons of war. They don’t push forward or attack anything. They are merely defensive by design.
3. Jesus was picturing Hades as a prison which lacks the power to defend itself against the offensive siege that Jesus launches against it. But what exactly is “Hades”?
4. Pay special attention to this term. The word “Hades” in the Gk refers NOT to Hell, but to the abode of the dead. It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sheol (cf. Ps. 6:5).
 - A. The KJV translates this word “Hell”, but that is a bit misleading. Jesus wasn’t referring to the place of punishment and eternal torment made for the devil and his angels. Rather, He was simply speaking of death and the grave.
 - B. So, when Jesus says, “The gates of Hades will not overpower it”, He is telling His disciples that death and the grave lack the power to keep his people captive.
5. Death could not hold Jesus in the grave and it will not be able to hold a single man, woman, boy or girl who belongs to Him. As Paul wrote, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55).
6. More specifically, Jesus’ words here are a promise of the resurrection of all who believe. Rev. 1:18 “I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades

7. So, Christ's building of the church is an invincible endeavor. It will be achieved by the omnipotent power of God Himself so that not even death – the archenemy of all mankind – will be able to thwart Christ's plan.
 - A. Beloved, think of how hope-giving this is to the persecuted church. These dear brothers and sisters desire to be pleasing to the Lord at all costs. They love the church and subject themselves to great risk by gathering together on the Lord's Day.
 - B. No doubt they experience the natural concern for the wellbeing of they church if they are killed. But the implication of Jesus' words is that not even the death of his people will hinder Christ's mission for the church!
8. Now one last thing we need to see. We have discovered the Foundation of the church, the Certainty of the church, The preciousness of the church, the Invincibility of the church. And finally, in verse 19 we are instructed about.

V. The Authority of the Church:

Read v. 19

1. Once again we find ourselves looking at a passage over which there is much disagreement between Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic church teaches that Christ was instituting the rite of absolution for the first Pope in this promise. Namely; that the Pope himself would be the final authority on the salvation of the saved and lost.
2. But let's take a moment to seek the counsel of the Word of God before we concede to that interpretation.
 - A. First, notice with me in John 20, that Jesus gives similar authority to all the apostles, not just Peter. (Turn to John 20:19-23)
 - 1) Once again Jesus appears to all the disciples after the resurrection as they are locked in behind closed doors.
 - 2) After proving by his scars that to that it is really Him and not a ghoast, He commissions them to ministry (read 21).
 - 3) Then after breathing on them to receive the Holy Spirit empowering them for the work, He says to all of them... "If you (plural) forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."
 - 4) So once again it seems in Matt. 16, Jesus was speaking to Peter as a

representative of all the apostles.

B. Now, look with me at another important text. This time Matthew 18.

- 1) Here the context of verses 15-20 is how to discipline a sinning brother.
- 2) Specifically, Jesus is saying that a brother who sins must be confronted, but if he refuses to repent, he should be confronted again with two witnesses. Then if he refuses to repent again, a public rebuke is in order and finally, he is to be treated “as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer” (v. 17).
- 3) After all that explanation Jesus then says (v. 18), “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
- 4) Now, let’s make a few observations about this text.
 - a) Jesus’ declaration here is not just to Peter but to all of the disciples. His words apply to all believers.
 - b) Second, binding and loosing has nothing to do with evil spirits. Remember, the context is not spiritual warfare or how to get answers to prayer. Jesus is specifically speaking about discipline in the church.
 - c) What is “bound” is the sin and guilt of the unrepentant person. What is “loosed” is the person’s sin and guilt when he or she repents. As John MacArthur notes: “Any believer can affirm those conditions on the basis of how someone responds to the call to repentance. The issue (in the next verse) on which ‘two of you agree’ is how to handle the sinning member of the church. Jesus was saying that the authority to deal with sin is granted to any assembly as small as ‘two or three ... gathered together in My name’ (v. 20).”¹
- 5) Clearly Jesus was not making Peter the head of the church. Jesus was simply commissioning Peter and the other disciples to make the Kingdom Message – the Word of God – authoritative in the life of the church. That’s what the “keys of the kingdom” are. They are a sacred trust from Christ to His church. They symbolize custody of the very entrance into the kingdom.
- 6) God has placed the church in the world and commanded us to preach the gospel. If we fail to do that, if we get side-tracked on a bunch of other

¹ John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel*, (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 1993), 180

stuff and cloud the gospel and compromise His word, we forfeit the only authority we have to use the keys of the kingdom. No one will ever gain entrance into heaven without someone in the church explaining to them what the apostles taught about Jesus' work on the cross and victory over the grave.

- 7) On the other hand, when the church is faithful to God and His Word, we can speak with authority to the issues in the church and to an unbelieving world. We can say with authority to an unrepentant sinner, "You are bound in your sin and have no hope of eternal life unless you repent." And to a person who repents we have the authority of Christ to say, "Your sins have been eternally and completely forgiven."²

3. The key point here is that Jesus has given His church authority. But it is NOT an arbitrary authority to do as it pleases. Rather, it is limited, delegated authority that is contained in the word of God as given by Christ through the apostles.

Conclusion:

1. Now, let's summarize what we have learned about the church:

We know that the church is God's most precious possession because...

- A. He founded her on the teaching of the apostles,
- B. He guarantees that her completion is certain.
- C. He relates to her personally and intimately.
- D. He makes the church invincible until he returns.
- E. He gives authority to the church to keep her holy and true.

² Ibid, 181

Small Group Questions below

Oct. 20, 2019

Small group Leaders Help Sheet:

Once again, the focus of our discussion is on God's great love for the church and what that means for you and me.

Review:

- Before we look at Matthew 16, let me ask you a question. As you see it, what indicators show that a church is successful (in the eyes of God)?
- Second, what are some of the greatest dangers a faithful church may encounter?
- Take five minutes with one or two people next to you and come up with some solid ideas in answer to this question.
 - Be on the lookout for well-intentioned but misguided answers that may need to be graciously acknowledged. Good answers will include expository preaching, evangelism, Lord's Supper & Baptism, Church Discipline, strong body-life, etc...
 - Dangers include: Allowing their focus to shift toward growing in numbers. Elevating unqualified (or disqualified) leaders. Slipping into the latest false teaching sweeping through evangelicalism, becoming personality driven (building the church around one exceptionally gifted man), etc...
- Read Matt. 16:13-19
- Last week we learned about the Foundation of the church and the Certainty of the church. This week we want to talk about Christ's Preciousness of the church. One of the ways we know that the church is God's most precious possession is by considering Christ's relationship to the church. What are some ways Christ is portrayed as relating to the church personally and intimately?
 - The church is described as Christ's "body" and he is the head. Jesus asks Saul, "Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts. 9. The church is also called Christ's Bride whom he loves and cherishes (Eph. 5). The members of the church are called the

“children of God.” This is family language. Children are precious to their Father.

- How should these truths effect the heart and life of a Christian? How should they affect the way the members of a church body relate to one another?
 - Knowing that we are precious to God should be profoundly encouraging. He doesn't merely tolerate us. He loves us! And he loves with full knowledge of our inadequacies and failures. This should instill in us encouragement and hope.
 - As Christ loves and is intimately involved in our lives, we should display appropriate affection toward one another and be intentionally involved in each other's lives.
- The fourth truth we discovered was the invincibility of the church. In verse 18, what is meant by the word Hades? What are the “gates of Hades”? What exactly is Jesus saying here?
 - “Hades” means the grave or death.
 - The “Gates of Hades” are what hold people in death's power.
 - What Jesus is saying is that his sovereign plan to build his church is so sure, nothing (no even man's greatest enemy – death – can thwart his plan. As Jesus was resurrected so will his church be rescued from the clutches of death.
- How can the knowledge of the invincibility of the church encourage and/or offer hope to Christians and to the leaders of their church?
 - The fact that Jesus has declared that he WILL build his church should encourage us to simply strive for faithfulness to what he has called and commanded us to be and do. We don't have to be especially clever, novel, or creative. And we don't have to seek for a better way to “do church” than the way he has revealed.
- Finally, we learned about the Authority of the church. In John 20:19-23 and Matt. 18:15-20 Jesus teaches on the authority to do a couple of specific things. What are they? How does this apply to the leaders (elders) of the church? How does this inform how we relate to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - Jesus has given us limited, delegated authority to address sin in the lives of professing believers. And for those who are burdened, discouraged, and shamed by past sin, we have the authority to declare that God completely forgiven all confessed sin.

Reflect:

- In what specific ways do these truths encourage us to worship Jesus Christ?

Renew:

Exhortation: Do you have a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus? Does that relationship include vital interaction with the body of Christ (other Christians in your church)? Are you willing to employ the limited, delegated authority God has given to

address sin in the lives of others? Do you possess the humility to receive the same kind of biblical correction from another member of the church?

Request:

How can we pray for you this week?

Remember: Rom. 12:5 “So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.