



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Head of the Church Christ or Peter

Matthew 16:13-19, *When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

¹⁵ *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷ *Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

- ✓ If the ultimate goal of the universe is to glorify God,
- ✓ If the ultimate reason why God made everything is for His glory,

- ✓ If all things are made by Him and for Him,
- ✓ If God has created man for His own glory,

Then we should not be surprised to see, as the purpose for all human history, that God should be collecting a redeemed assembly of people who will be forever to the praise of His glory.

This is the theme of history and the reason of human existence.

A very familiar text and one that has been a battleground between the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant church. This text has been traditionally among dispensationalists. But at its very heart, a simple, profound, rich, glorious passage of Scripture.

For centuries now, the Roman Catholic Church has said that it is a passage that tells us that the church is built on Peter. Therefore, Peter has been made as the first pope, establishing papal succession. The papacy itself the very heart and soul of the divine authority on the earth.

Protestants have reacted to that and said the church is not built on Peter at all, but it is rather built on the confession that Peter made.

V 16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Christ, who is the head of the church and there is no papacy found in the passage. So, it becomes a very critical passage. Dispensationalists have said it is a passage in which Christ introduces something new, “I will” - future tense – “build my church,” the implication being there never has been a church but there will be a church, setting off the church as distinct from Israel.

Non-dispensationalists say it is not nearly so technical as that, it is simply the Lord saying He will continue to build His people in the future as He has in the past.

There have been great debates as to what are the gates of Hades or the gates of hell or the gates of the grave, just exactly what does that mean?

What sense does the church conquer these gates?

Jesus Christ and the disciples were walking along the dusty roads around Caesarea Philippi, which is in the north-eastern corner of the land of Palestine. They had been rejected by the nation Israel. There was really no place of acceptance for them in Judea in the south. There was no place of acceptance for them in Galilee of the north. The Jewish leaders, religious and political, were both after Jesus and would have been well pleased if He were dead.

The public understood only a political economic kingdom, they understood only a military political Messiah.

So, the whole Kingdom concept that the Messiah coming and setting Himself on a throne, the throne of David, and restoring dominion to Israel.

Quite the contrary they were a little group of nobodies who were rejected and going towards greater hostility.

The disciples were with Jesus, wondering whether or not the whole program of God was really on schedule because from external appearance, it looked as if everything was the very opposite of what had been planned.

This moment when their hopes are beginning to fall, and they are beginning to question their Messianic expectations.

The Pharisees and the scribes had missed Jesus altogether and hateful of all those who were with Him. The whole thing was so strange to them. It looked as if the Lord wasn't building His Kingdom.

If things were strange by now, they were going to get stranger yet because from that time on Jesus began to show unto His disciples how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed.

Matthew 16:21-22, *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"*

They don't have a lot of confidence.

They don't have a lot of hope.

They did not find any comfort in what they have seen.

V 21 to 23, Jesus was talking about His cross.

V 24 onwards Jesus starts to talk about their cross!

In the midst of their confusion Jesus unravel this great truth.

"I will build my church."

There isn't any variation from the original plan.

There isn't any loss.

The program hasn't changed.

He is building the church.

What is the church that Christ builds?

What are its characteristics?

What are its features?

1. Certainty - "I will"

V 18, *"I will build."*

Who was the one who said that?

Christ.

He is God and God cannot lie.

God is the faithful God who always keeps His Word, whose Word never returns void but always accomplishes that to which it is sent.

Isaiah 55:10-11, *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, ¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

When Jesus said, *"I will build my church,"* then that means the church is certain to be built. It is built on the promise of the divine Saviour.

The Lord who builds the church. All we want to do is be in the place where He is building it.

The Bible lays out the pattern. As we begin to live in obedience to God's Word, people and leadership walk within the parameters set by the Word of God, we become a channel through which Christ can build His church.

Isn't it more exciting to be in the place where He's doing it?

Just do what the New Testament says and when you do whatever the Word of God says in building the church, you are letting Him build it His way.

The day you stop walking in the obedience to God's Word and then the Lord's going to sort out the situation and leave to another place.

Churches at one time that were flourishing, He was using a certain local assembly, and today it's nothing but a shell.

What happened?

The Lord will build His church. God, help us to be in the place where He's doing it because that's the exciting reality.

If you look at the book of Acts you see this, this element of God building His church.

Acts 2:38-39, *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy*

Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

In Peter's mind, **who is building the church?**

Who is calling people?

The Lord our God.

It is the Lord who's building His church.

Jesus said in

John 6:37, *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

But all that the Father gives shall come.

It is the Lord building His church.

Acts 2:47, *praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

The Lord is building the church.

After the death of Ananias and Sapphira for lying to God.

Acts 5:14, *And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,*

They weren't added to the church, they were added to the Lord.

You don't join an organization; you unite with the Lord.

- He calls.
- He builds.
- People are united to Him.

Acts 11:24, *For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.*

To the Lord.

The Lord is building, calling, redeeming, adding to Himself His own body.

Acts 13:48, *Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

The ones that God had chosen and ordained to eternal life believed. He drew the ones He had predetermined to set His love on.

Acts 18:10, *for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."*

The Lord knew who they were.

The Lord who builds His church.

The epistles give us more detail as to how this happens.

- It tells us how the church is to function and the channel in which the Lord can bless.

- It tells us how the leadership is to be chosen and their qualifications.
- It tells us about elders and deacons and deaconesses.
- It tells us about the order of prayer and the teaching of the Word.
- It tells us about holiness and righteousness and church discipline.
- It tells us in the epistles how we are to conduct ourselves.

Epistles gives us the whole layout of how this works itself out in practical living. But the bottom line is the Lord is building the church. When we walk in obedience to Him, we become the channel in which He will build His church.

Why?

What is the goal?

Ephesians 5:25-27, *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

Why the Lord is building the church?

To present it to Himself a glorious church.

To present the church to Himself as a vehicle through which He can manifest His glory.

Ephesians 3:21, *to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

God is building the church so that when the church is built, no man will be able to say, "Look what we did."

God will say, "This is solely and only to My Glory."

2. Intimacy – "My Church"

Jesus says, *"I will build My church."*

Personal pronoun. "I will build my church."

He's the builder. He's the architect. He's the owner. We are to be to the praise of His glory.

We are His personal possession. We are His body. We are one with Him in marvellous holy intimacy. He purchased us,

Acts 20:28, *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

With His own precious blood.

When Saul was persecuting Christians and he was confronted on the Damascus Road, the Lord said to him.

Acts 9,

He said, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting”*

What did He say?

“Why are you persecuting Me?”

You touch His church, you touch Him.

Now, that’s intimacy.

1 Corinthians 6:17, *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

In the Old Testament God says when you touch Israel, you touch the apple of my eye.

Zechariah 2:8, *For thus says the Lord of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.*

The apple of the eye means the pupil in Hebrew. God is saying you touch Israel, and you are poking your finger in My eye and that irritates Me.

The most sensitive part of the exposed human anatomy is the apple of eye. God is saying you touch Israel, you poke your finger in my eye.

You touch the church, you irritate Me.

It's My church, I gave My life for that church.

Jesus purchased it with His own blood.

- He is its architect.
- He is its builder.
- He is its foundation for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.
- He is the living cornerstone.

John 10:27-29, *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand*

God's people intimate union with Him forever.

God is not far off, but God is a God who draws near. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. The intimacy of it.

We don't belong to some organization; we belong to an intimate union.

3. Identity- Church

What does He mean by ekklesia?

If you want to really do justice to the passage, just change the word “church” to “assembly”

The word ‘ekklesia’ means, called-out ones, people called together under a certain authority or under a certain banner or under a certain purpose.

There were no Baptists, no Presbyterians, no Lutherans, no denominations, no organizations, no pastors, no elders, no deacons, no congregations, no nothing.

Jesus using the term in a very general sense. It’s the first time the word **ekklesia** appears in the New Testament.

It is later translated “church” and it’s well understood as church by the time we get to the epistles, which help to define it for us.

But it’s a very general word.

It’s used once here in Matthew 16, and again at 18, those are the only two times it’s ever used in the gospel.

For example, the Greeks used ekklesia for a town meeting. They used it for a group of people who came together as free men under the government of a certain state.

It was a very secular word. The Jew would understand it in the same way you would understand the word synagogue, in a nontechnical way, a gathering together, a collection of people.

It is not a technical term for the institution that we have come to know at this point.

In the seventh chapter of Acts we find the word 'ekklesia' again used, and this is early in the life of the church. Stephen is speaking, and he uses the word to refer to the nation Israel.

Acts 7:38, *“This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,*

“This is he that was in the ekklesia in the wilderness.” Stephen is identifying Moses with the assembled people of God in the wilderness.

So ekklesia there refers to the assembly of Jews gathered in the wilderness. They haven't even really gone into the land yet; they are not a duly constituted nation quite as yet in their own land.

So, we certainly don't want to read too technical a meaning into it in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew if it doesn't even have that technical meaning in the seventh chapter of Acts.

Then if you will notice the nineteenth chapter of Acts, even more interesting.

Acts 19:32, *Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.*

The riot is triggered in Ephesus because of the miracles and the ministry of Paul.

Now, there is the word that we translate church and it has to do with a mob of gentiles who rejected the gospel.

Another note on that is in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:22-23, *“You are come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable number of angels - innumerable company of angels.” ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

Here is a picture of heaven, and all the redeemed and all the angels and God is there and everybody's there.

The writer calls it in verse 23 the general assembly and 'ekklesia' of the firstborn. Ekklesia is big enough to encompass all the people of God in God's heaven. It is to all the spirits of just men made perfect.

So, even in Hebrews you have this concept of ekklesia in a nontechnical sense referring to the whole redeemed community.

So, it is a very general term.

What the Lord is saying is "I will continue to build my assembled redeemed people."

It is a synonym with the Kingdom of heaven in verse 19, and that's really the key interpretive concept. You interpret the word "church" in verse 18 by the word "Kingdom" in verse 19 because He uses them in a synonym fashion, parallel.

So, He is saying "I Am still building my Kingdom."

So, the church here is the assembly of redeemed people gathered to God. It is the same as His Kingdom.

He is building it.

He will build it.

Jesus is saying, “No matter what the world does, no matter how the world reacts to me, to you, to the gospel, I will go on building the church. No matter how apostate the nation Israel, I will build the church.”

4. Build on the Rock

V 18, And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Now, the Lord is going to build His church on a rock.

What is that rock?

Now, the normal language appears to say, “You are Peter,” and Peter translated means stone, rock, “and upon this rock, I will build my church.”

The very normal and first impression as you look at it is “*You are Peter. I am going to build my church on you, Peter.*”

And at that point, some of us who are Protestants get a little bit anxious because we say, “Now, that’s what the Catholics say.”

They say that this verse means the church is built on Peter. Therefore, it establishes Peter as the first pope, the first head of the church.

Catholic theology says that the pope is crowned with a triple crown,

- king of heaven,
- king of earth, and
- king of hell.

He wields two swords:

- Spiritual and
- Temporal.

The Lord conferred on Saint Peter the first place of honour and jurisdiction in the government of His whole church. That same spiritual authority has always resided in the popes and bishops of Rome as being the successors of Saint Peter.

Catholic theology says that, to be true followers of Christ, all Christians, both among the clergy and laity, must be in communion with the pope of Rome where Peter still rules in the person of his successor.

Peter is given the papacy and that he established papal succession, and that every pope that's come out of the Roman system and sat in Rome.

Pope, who is from the loins of Peter and bears his same authority therefore, he speaks authoritatively the truth of God, and when he speaks ex cathedra, it is as binding as the Bible.

Now, that is the papal system, and they get that out of this passage.

But the Word of God doesn't say anything about that at all. Peter can't be the head of the church, Christ is. Peter or no earthly individual on his own can hold up the whole church by his authority.

Protestants very often approach this text, and the one thing they want to do is make sure that we get rid of the thought that the church is built on Peter.

So what they will say, and this is a very common interpretation, "Thou art Peter," **petros**, it's a masculine form of the word, "and upon this rock," **petra** different word, different form of the same root, "I will build my church."

The traditional interpretation then has been, "*You are petros,*" which means stone, "*but upon this petra*". It means a rock bed or a rocky mountain or a rocky peak.

In other words, "You are a stone, but upon a rocky peak or a rocky mountain, I am going to build my church," so that the

statement is a contrast. “You are a little rock. I Am going to build my church on a big rock.”

Then they go back to the previous in verse 16, the confession of Peter, and they say that is the rock bed, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

So, the Lord is saying, “You are a little rock. Upon that rock bed confession of the reality of my deity, I Am going to build My church.”

Now, that’s fair to do that with the text because there is a difference in those two words.

At one time or other in my life, I have held that viewpoint, too. But over the years I have studied other passages and come to a different conclusion.

Ephesians 2:20, *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

It says here that the household of God - or the temple of God or the church of Christ, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

It says the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles. in Matthew 16 it just says it is on Peter.

When Peter spoke, he spoke on behalf of the whole group, did he not?

Peter spoke the consensus of the group, and when Christ replied to Peter, in a very real sense, He replied to the group.

How do we account for the petra/petros difference?"

Petros must be used in the case of Peter because it's a masculine form and he is a man.

"You are a rock, and upon that rock, I will build my church." Now, if we accept that, all we are saying, then, there is the very same thing it says in Ephesians 2:20. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles, Peter being representative of them. Peter was sort of a major representative!

For example, in the book of Acts, we will find his name mentioned 50 times in the first twelve chapters of Acts.

The sermon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost was not just Peter, but it was Peter speaking on behalf of all those who believed. For they all held to that same message and as a result three thousand were converted. It was again through the testimony of Peter in John, chiefly of Peter, that two thousand more were added later to the church in chapter 4.

- It was through the testimony and ministry of Peter that the lame man was healed.

- It was through Peter's leadership that the election of Matthias took place to replace Judas.
- It was the heroic message of Peter before the Sanhedrin.

Peter was a key person and was acting as a representative of the ministry of all of them.

The Lord saying to Peter, *"You are the rock, and, on that rock, I will build my church."* Saying the same thing essentially as we saw in Ephesians 2:20.

key question:

In what sense is the church built on the apostles, Peter being the leader of them?

The Roman Catholics say it is built on his rank, or his elevation to authority, or his elevation to office, or his elevation to worthiness, or his elevation to some high-level position.

But the Bible doesn't say that.

If it was built on the apostles, it was not built on their persons **but built on their teaching.**

That's why when the early church came together, they did not worship the apostles.

Acts 2:42, *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

They studied the apostles Doctrine and teaching!

So that what Jesus is really saying is, “You are Peter and I can build my church on you as one of the foundation stones because you have affirmed ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ **Matthew 16:17**, *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

Jesus is saying that since you are the vehicle through whom the Father is revealing His truth, I can build My church on that.

So, the church is built. It’s built on those apostles initially who affirmed the divine revelation coming from God and thus laid the foundation that is spoken of in Ephesians 2:20.

So when we look at Ephesians 2:20 and we see the foundation of the church being the apostles and prophets,

- it isn’t their rank,
- it isn’t their office,
- it isn’t their title,

it is the fact that they laid that foundation because they proclaimed the Word of God, so much so that they themselves were in many ways’ inseparable from their very message.

“All who agree with the confession of Peter are Peters themselves, setting a sure foundation.” Martin Luther.

The Lord is still building His church and putting up those living stones that Peter talks about, He is still building His church on those people who affirm the revelation of God about Christ to be true.

The foundation of the church is the revelation of God as given to us through the apostles. Today we lay down that foundation by establishing God's Word, we keep it there.

1 Corinthians 3:11, *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

That is not to be a direct contradiction to Ephesians 2:20.

Letter to Corinthians you have Christ the foundation.

Letter to Ephesians you have the apostles' and prophets' foundation.

The only reason the apostles and prophets were allowed to be the foundation stones was because they affirmed the reality of Christ as the true foundation.

The Lord is collecting all those disciples into that confession and He says you have said it, Peter, and it's upon that affirmation of divine revelation about who I am as the Son of the living God that I can build my church.

The Lord builds His church on His truth, but always has chosen to reveal His truth through His people so that they become inseparable from that truth.

His people are one with Christ.

The apostles were so intimately attached to Jesus Christ that in one place Christ is the foundation and, in another place, they are the foundation.

They were so intimately attached with and so true to His Word that in one place His Word is a sure foundation, in another place, the apostles are the foundation.

But whether it's Christ or the apostles or the Word, it's all saying the same thing because all were inseparably linked.

The Lord is still building His church on people

- who confess His Word,
- who confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ,
- the deity of Jesus Christ, and
- the Word of God.

He is still building the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the apostles.

Primacy of Peter

Also, we need to know that Jesus didn't establish the primacy of Peter.

a) Jesus

Matthew 18:1, *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*

If you go back **Matthew 16:19**, *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

The Catholics say that's papal authority, the authority to open and close and control.

So, if Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom, and the disciples come to Jesus and they say, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom?"

One thing for sure about that question, they wouldn't ask it if they already knew who it was, right?

They didn't have any idea that Peter was being given some papal primacy or they wouldn't have even asked the question.

If Jesus had given the papal authority, then Jesus should have answered saying that you know who it is?

It is Peter.

Look at Jesus answer.

Matthew 18:2-4, *Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?

Whoever.

Whoever humbles himself like a little child.

Jesus didn't say it is Peter.

Whatever was going on in the dialogue in chapter 16 certainly didn't assign to Peter any great primacy in the Kingdom.

b) James and John

Matthew 20:20-21, *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹ And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”*

What is she asking?

Would you let James and John be the primary ones in the Kingdom?"

This shows us very clearly that that James and John also never thought Jesus gave any particular primacy to Peter. It was then they wouldn't have been there asking that question.

So, neither James nor John nor their mother nor the rest of the disciples nor Jesus Himself ever meant that that should be construed from that passage.

c) Peter

What about Peter?

Did he think he was made pope?

1 Peter 5:1, *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:*

What Peter is saying?

I am just one with all the rest of you elders.

I am just another witness of the sufferings of Christ, a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

1 Peter 5:2-4, *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

Peter goes on to say God resists the proud, gives grace to the humble, so humble yourselves.

Peter is not pulling rank rather saying that I am just one like you. Don't do it as a lord over the flock, do it as a faithful shepherd, humble yourself, and don't be proud.

This is the humility of Peter not primacy.

- ✓ The disciples never perceived Matthew 16 as giving Peter primacy.
- ✓ James and John never perceived it that way and they were intimate with Jesus.
- ✓ Peter never perceived it that way.
- ✓ The Lord Himself never perceived it that way or He wouldn't have said the greatest in the Kingdom is anybody who humbles himself like a little child.

Summary:

What we have learnt so far is this:

- ❖ Jesus is building His Church,
- ❖ The church is built on the foundation.
- ❖ The foundation is the doctrine revealed by God,
- ❖ Jesus is the Lord and Son of the living God,
- ❖ Peter made the confession becoming foundation,
- ❖ Anyone who confess the same revelation becomes the foundation.

Invincibility of the Church:

When Christ builds the church, it is invincible.

Matthew 16:18, *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

When an army comes to attack, they don't carry their gates from their city and throw the gates at the enemy.

Gates are not weapons!

Gates are used to hold people in like in prison gates, jail gates. So, the gates refer to something that's going to try to keep the church captive.

They are the gates of Hades.

What is Hades?

Hades simply means the abode of the dead.

It's the same as the word Sheol.

This isn't talking about the torment of eternal hell, it's simply the term used for the grave.

It is the grave, the place of the dead, the realm of the dead, the place where all go when they die.

Death can't hold in God's redeemed people.

The gates of the grave can't keep us.

That is the heart and soul of everything for the Christian!

There is victory through the grave, life after death. That is why Jesus died.

John 14:19, *"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also."*

What is the worst that the devil can do to the church?

Kill!

Martyr!

He has the power of death.

Satan will try to kill Christians, destroy the church, but the gates of Hades can't hold it in.

Hebrews 2:14, *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

Acts 2:24, *whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*

It wasn't possible for death to hold Christ, and it isn't possible for death to hold us.

1 Corinthians 15:55, *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

That is the great hope of the Christian.

Jesus is going to die, He is going to be killed, and He is going to be raised the third day. Later on, He's going to say to them, men are going to kill you, they are going to destroy you, they are going to throw you out of the synagogues, you are going to have to give up your life.

Jesus is saying to them, "I will be building my church and the gates of the grave will never hold it in."

Almost all the apostles died as Martyr for Christ.

Great truth!

This is the promise of resurrection. Everyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, leaves this world to enter into God's glorious world, absent from the body, is instantly present with the Lord. We wait just the redemption of the body when Jesus returns to take us to be with Him, our bodies rise out of the grave to be joined with the spirits that are already with Jesus Christ in that glorified form in which we shall give Him praise and glory forever and ever.

Revelation 1:18, *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Jesus Christ has the keys!

Our Lord went down and took them from the devil, Hebrews 2:14, He destroyed the one who had the power of death. He took the keys and now He unlocks the grave and lets His own out.

That's our hope.

All the redeemed throng will gather at the foot of the throne of God forever and ever. Hades and the grave and death will never hold us.

That's our hope.

Authority of the church.

Peter:

Matthew 16:19, *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

That is authority!

That is a lot of power to give one guy, Peter. No wonder the Catholics got that out of there.

Peter got the keys to the Kingdom of heaven and he can say who's in and who's out?"

That's right.

Peter was given that authority?

That's right.

Disciples:

John 20:21-23, *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."*

- a) The Saviour gave to His apostles his Commission that they might make known his will.

- b) He commanded them preach "remission of sins."
- c) He gave them a measure of the Holy Spirit and asked them to wait until "endued with power from on high" by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- d) When the Holy Spirit fell, they spoke as it "gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).
- e) They then declared, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the terms on which "sins could be remitted." To anxious sinners they answer, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, {for the remission of sins}." Here, then, they, directed by the Holy Spirit, "remit" and "retain" sins by declaring the terms on which Christ will pardon.

Thus, also, they do in their preaching recorded through the Acts of the Apostles the very thing that the Saviour gave them power to do. This power was not imparted to a hierarchy, nor to any ecclesiastical body, but to the apostles, and was fulfilled by them in declaring to the world the conditions of pardon and condemnation under the Commission of our Lord.

Now Jesus has gone beyond Peter and He has given all of them authority to say,

- your sins are on you, your sins are off of you,
- your sins bind you, your sins are loosed from you,
- you are forgiven, you are not forgiven.

**Did Jesus give those men the right to say that to somebody?
Your sins are forgiven, your sins are not forgiven?**

That's right.

All the disciples had got the authority.

Everyone in the church:

Jesus talking about discipline, when someone sins then you go to a person in private, he doesn't respond, then you take two or three witnesses, doesn't respond, if he neglects to hear then tell it to the church.

Matthew 18:17, *And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

Jesus says that you tell the whole assembly to go to that man and confront him about his sin and tell him he can't do that.

What does that mean?

You go to that man and say, "your sins are bound on you, you are still sinning, you are out of line with God's Word, you are to repent."

Do we have the authority to do that?

We are supposed to go out and tell people.

Matthew 18:18, *“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

- ❖ Initially Jesus said that to Peter.
- ❖ Then He said it to all the disciples.
- ❖ Then He said it to the whole duly constituted assembly of redeemed people.

Where did we get that authority?

How in the world can we have that authority?

Where is all of the truth needed to apply to every situation?
It's in the Word of God.

It says what you are doing shall have already been done In heaven.

You want to know how we can know what heaven is approving and disapproving?

It's right here!

I have the authority, if a person comes up to me, I can say to that person, “Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour?”

If he says yes, I say then your sins are forgiven, your sins are loosed.

If someone says to me, “I have never received Jesus Christ,” I have the authority based on the Word of God to say to that individual your sins are retained, your sins are not forgiven. I have the authority to know that what I said to that individual, heaven has already said because heaven has revealed it right here.

It is not some authority isolated from the Word of God.

That’s why the promise of the keys came on the heels of a divine revelation from the Father.

As long as the Father is giving you the Word on the basis of the revelation of the Father, you have the authority.

Can you say to a person you are forbidden to do that?

Why?

Because the Bible says so. I can say to another person you are free to do that because the Bible says so.

So that Peter had that right. The disciples had that right. So does the church because we have heaven’s word on the matter.

So, it isn’t some authority based on title.

It isn’t some authority based on

- office, or
- some human worthiness, or
- some elevation, or

- some intelligence level, or
- some wisdom levels.

It is that the authority of the church lies in the fact that the church has heaven's word on everything, and it can take heaven's word and make it authoritative in the lives of people.

that is why we never compromise the Word of God because it's the only authority we have.

God has put His church in the world and given His church His Word so that His church can stand as a light, as a standard setting the pattern that is God's pattern.

We pray thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and it can be as we enact heaven's decisions by the implementation of this Word of God which is authoritative.

Now you know why our church has to take word of God seriously.

We are God's standard in the world.

We have to say to this world you can't do that. Your sins are bound on you. That's what heaven says in this Book and heaven agrees with us, it's already settled there.

So, the church is the authority of the world.

Those who are in the church are authoritative in the world as long as they enforce the Word of the living God revealed to them through the Spirit.

We don't worry about what the world says, we are not going to change our message.

We are not going to compromise.

Our reason to exist in this world is to glorify God and we glorify God when we hold up the standard of His Word!

Conclusion:

Matthew 16:20, *Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.*

The people were looking for a political economic Messiah. He says, don't tell them I Am the Christ, their expectations are warped and all it does is confuse them and put pressure in the wrong area.

We are not a political earthly economic kingdom. It's a spiritual reality and that's part of the problem. People don't understand the spiritual dimension.

Ours is a spiritual message, a message of Christ the Son of the living God.

We will not offer any other Jesus than that One who is revealed in the Scripture.