



World Christian Fellowship

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Church Christ Builds!

Matthew 16:18-20

Matthew 16:13-20, *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. ¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹And 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." ²⁰Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.*

V 18, “I will build my church.”

Everything else amplifies that great statement.

Jesus is saying to the disciples, “I will build my *ekklesia*.”

I am not building this Church but Christ.

This church doesn’t belong to anyone but Christ.

There are churches that men have built, but that’s different than the Lord building His church.

I am not interested in techniques.

I am not interested in programs, plans, promotions, and methods that guarantee a crowd.

However, I am extremely interested in having a church that Christ is building!

The Lord will build His church, I want to be part of that church.

Imagine how comforting it was to the disciples that day. They were walking along the dusty roads around Caesarea Philippi.

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 people understood only a political economic kingdom, they understood only a military political Messiah. They missed the whole point.

The whole Kingdom concept, as the disciples had understood it, with all its glorious Messianic expectation. The whole idea of the Messiah coming and setting Himself on a throne. The throne of David. Restoring dominion to Israel. All the Messianic expectation just wasn't happening.

Quite the contrary. They were a little band of nobodies a group of the ill-equipped who were rejected but toward greater hostility.

They had even to retreat into this obscure place populated mostly by gentiles to find some rest, privacy, and safety.

They were with Jesus, wondering whether 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.

V 21, *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.*

It was bad enough that it had been this bad, but for you to die, that is an inconceivable thought.

The Messiah should be rejected was tough enough.
On top of that He should be executed was beyond belief.

They don't have a lot of confidence!
They don't have a lot of hope.
There's not any comfort in what they have seen.

The Lord needs to reveal to them that in spite of what appears on the surface, the program is moving ahead.

It is so marvellous that in this very moment He says, "I will build my church."

There is no variation from the original plan.
There is no loss.

The program hasn't changed.
He is building the church.
What appears on the surface isn't the reality at all.

They needed that confidence, just like we do, just like those people of God throughout all the history of the ages have needed it when it looked bleak.

You can imagine how it looked to the early church when they were being massacred.

You can imagine how it looked to the Chinese believers when the communist revolution took over and they were crushed.

There have always been times when it looked as if the people of God would be wiped out.

- In the Old Testament when Israel was in Egypt, they could have been lost there.
- When Israel was in Babylon, they could have gone out of existence there.
- When they were worse yet in apostasy and intermarrying with the nations of the world, they could have been lost there.

There were always those times when the train of God's people looked like it was going to come to a halt.

But it never did!
It wouldn't now!

So, this is a message of great hope that the beleaguered, persecuted, martyred, rejected, maligned, poor, ignoble people of God are still going to go on, and when they look like losers, you just aren't looking close enough. There is victory at the end.

I will build my church.

This is the heart of the passage.

You must understand this before you can understand the things around it.

What is the church that Christ builds?

What are its characteristics?

What are its features?

1. Certain Church.

The church that Christ builds is a certain church, assured, and secured.

V 18, "I will build."

What makes it so certain is the "I."

Who was the one who said that?

Christ.

He is God.

God cannot lie.

God is the faithful God who always keeps His Word.

Isaiah 55:11, *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 Savior.

This is not to say that He has never built it in the past. It is a future tense verb, I will build, it does not mean I never have!

It does imply that I will continue to build.

Despite what looks like defeat, we will go on and I will build in the future. Not that He hasn't in the past, but that He will continue in the future.

God has been building and will go on doing so. So, the certainty of the church is its unchanging, unwavering absolute foundation, which is the promise and the power of God to fulfil that promise.

So, the Lord builds the church. That's the certainty of it.

This is so thrilling to know that it is the Lord who builds the church.

All we want to do is be in the place where He's building it.

What is that place?

In the New Testament, you find there are obvious patterns presented for righteous living.

We are called upon to walk in the Spirit.

We are called upon to obey the Word of God.

The Scripture tells us how to live, how to think, how to speak, and how to act.

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

Now, as soon as we stop obeying the Word, as soon as we detour from a life of righteousness and obedience, as soon as we abandon the biblical pattern, then the channel is blocked.

The church isn't blocked!

It will find another place to go.

It will move on being built, but we won't be a part of it.

You may know a church over here, and nothing's ever going on there. Nobody ever gets saved there. Nothing ever happens.

It is a dead place, they might as well bar the windows and board up the doors and forget it. Nothing's happening.

That doesn't mean the church isn't being built.

That means those people aren't in the position so that God can do it there.

But He will cut that fresh channel as many times as He needs to keep the flow of the life of the church.

Jesus will build His church.

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

My commitment in my heart has always been the same.

Just do what the New Testament says and when you do whatever the Word of God says in building the church.

We are letting Him build it His way.

I believe with all my heart that our Church is what it is because Christ made it this way.

People ask me that all the time, "What's your method? What's your approach?"

We don't have any guarantee that that's permanent, because the day we stop walking in the obedience to God's Word and we stop doing things by the book, then the Lord's going to sort of dam up the situation, He's going to shoot off in another place.

We have seen that. You know as well as I do churches at one time that were flourishing, and the Lord was building the church, and He was using a certain local assembly. Today it's nothing but a shell of what it was.

It's happened all over the world.
The Lord will build His church.

God help us to be in the place where He is doing it because that's the exciting reality.

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

After Peter's sermon, he calls for repentance and baptism.

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. ³⁹For 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."*

Peter's mind, who's building the church?

Who is calling people?

The Lord our God.

It is the Lord who's building His church.

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.*

All that the Father gives shall come. It is the Lord building His church. In

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.

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.

Lord calls.

Lord 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.*

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.

It is the Lord who builds His church.

The epistles will add more detail as to how this happens.

- It tells us how the church is to function, to be the channel the Lord can bless.
- It tells us how the leadership is to be chosen.
- How the leadership is to fit certain qualifications.
- It tells us about elders, 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.

It just 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. What a great confidence.

What is the goal?

Or why does Christ build His church?

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.

To present it to Himself a glorious church.

What does He mean by that?

He means 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."

But God will say, "This is solely and only to my glory."

Ephesians 3:10, *to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,*

Christ is doing this to display to the angels His infinite wisdom. The angels are saying, "what a God who can make something out of that miserable bunch of human beings."

So, God is building the church!

All we want to do is be in that place where He's doing it.
That is why we oppose human wisdom.

That is why carnality, lack of ability, indifference, lack of interest, apostasy, liberalism, denominationalism, charismatics, fanaticism, ritualism, ceremonialism and all the other stuff doesn't stop the church.

It may stop a congregation from being used to be part of it.

But the church will go on.
Christ will build His glorious body.

If God is for us, who can be against us?
Great to be a part of a winner!

2. Christ is the owner.

Not only the certainty of the church but the intimacy of it.
Jesus says, *“I will build”*

Not the church,
Not the great church,

but *“My church.”*

I love that personal pronoun. *“I will build my church.”*

Christ is the builder.
Christ is the architect.
Christ is 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.

In **Acts 9**, when Saul was persecuting Christians, and he was confronted on the Damascus Road.

Acts 9:4, *Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"*

Jesus did not ask Saul Saul, why are you persecuting the church?

Why are you persecuting Me?

You touch His church, you touch Him.

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

It's in the Old Testament this way.

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.*

Apple of My eye!

God says when you mess with Israel, you are messing with that apple of My eye.

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.

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 Christ 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 10:14, *I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

John 10:11, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

John 10:28-29, *And 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.

What a blessed thought.

David in the Psalms sensed that intimacy with God.

The saints of old did.

We and all the saints who have ever lived who have walked with God have sensed that God is not impersonal, God is not far off, God is not indifferent, but God is a God who draws near.

God is more than 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.

I want you to know how special it is to meet somebody who personally knows Jesus Christ.

We personally know Jesus Christ. We are His. His redeemed people are His possession.

3. Identity.

"I will build" - the certainty of it – "my church" - the intimacy of it - and the church - the identity of it.

What does Jesus mean by *ekklesia*?

People would have us believe that here He's talking about the church as we know it.

Suddenly if we were walking down the road in Caesarea Philippi and He says, "I will build my church," immediately all the disciples are supposed to see a dispensational chart.

Or they are supposed to understand First Baptist or Second Presbyterian or United Methodist or Episcopalian or Church of Christ or Anglican or they were supposed to see a big building with a steeple on it.

We can't read into the text a 20th century technical definition of the church because the word used here is *ekklesia*.

To do justice to the passage, just change the word "church" to "assembly" because that's what the word 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 Anglican, no denominations, no organizations, no pastors, no elders, no deacons, no congregations, no nothing, no dispensational chart, no anything's.

Jesus is using the term in a nontechnical sense. He is using the term in a very general sense.

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

It cannot be seen as a technical term for it was used in that period as a general term for an assembly of people.

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. It doesn’t have the fullness of definition that it later gathers as it moves through the epistles and is added to it the fullness of Paul, Peter, and John meaning.

In fact, very likely if Jesus spoke in Aramaic, He would have used the term **qahal** which means congregation, a very general nontechnical term.

Jesus is really saying,

“I will build my assembly.

I will build my congregation.

I will build my people.

I will build my redeemed community.”

Further in the New Testament in the book of Acts we find the same word **Ekkelisa**.

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,*

Here he 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 yet in their own land.

The word *ekklesia* is general enough even in **Acts 7**, general enough even in the sermon of Stephen to refer to an assembled group of Jews under the old covenant.

So, we certainly don't want to read too technical a meaning into it in **Matthew 16** if it doesn't even have that technical meaning in the **Acts7**.

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 word that translated as church and it has to do with a mob of gentiles who rejected the gospel.

So, again, I only point out that the word cannot be forced into a very technical meaning early in the revelation.

Hebrews 12:22-23, *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,³ 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,*

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

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's a very general term.

Matthew chapter 16, very much like it's used in Hebrews, to refer to the whole company of redeemed people, Old Testament, New Testament, in general.

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

In fact, it is a synonym with the Kingdom of heaven in verse 19. The key interpretive concept.

- You interpret the word "church" in verse 18.
- You interpret by the word "Kingdom" in verse 19.

Because Jesus uses them in a synonym fashion, parallel. So, He is saying "I Am still building my Kingdom."

The future tense of the word "build" does not mean He never has built but will in the future.

The idea here is that He will continue to build, the emphasis being on the continuing, not that it has never been done in the past.

Now, that's important for you to understand.

So, what the Lord is saying is "I have been gathering my redeemed people and this rejection of me and this hostility and what you see going on is not going to change that, I will go on gathering my redeemed people."

The essence of the text is there is continuity in the church. In fact, maybe that's a better word than identity, the continuity of the church, its certainty and its intimacy.

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

Today we could say no matter how liberal the church gets - quote/unquote church - no matter how apostate Christianity becomes.

No matter how godless and Christless our society gets, that will not thwart the building of the church.

Do you believe in political action?

I believe in preaching the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the principles of the Word of God.

I believe in changing men from the inside and then as a citizen outside of my ministry.

I will do the best to vote my conscience and do what is right and preach on sin and morality when it conflicts with the Word of God.

Whether our country rises or falls will have absolutely nothing to do with the church. That isn't the issue in building the church, that never is the issue.

Jesus said, "I will build my church" certainty, intimacy, and the identity, the continuity of God's redeemed people.

We are a part of something marvellously successful.

My prayer for our Church is that we will always be, as long as Jesus tarries, we will always be so committed to the Word of God, the Spirit of God, that we will be a place where He can be building His church.

Because there are a lot of places that call themselves church where God can't build His church.