



# THE CHURCH AS THE HOUSE OF GOD

SESSION 1 – MATTHEW  
16:18

# 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 [hades] shall not prevail against it.”
- ▶ A new subject in the scriptures, which the Lord Jesus opens up Himself
- ▶ Something yet to be done – I will build.



# Matthew 16:13-19

- ▶ Before we look into verse 18, let us read its context, verses 13 to 19.
- ▶ V13 “But when Jesus was come into the parts of Caesarea- Philippi, he demanded of his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”
- ▶ V14 and they said, some, John the Baptist,; and others, Elias; and others again, Jeremias or one of the prophets.
- ▶ V15 He says to them, “But ye, who do ye say that I am””
- ▶ V16 And Simon Peter answering said “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”.
- ▶ V17 And Jesus answering said to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed [it] unto thee, but my father who is in the heavens.
- ▶ V18 “And I also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades’ gates shall not prevail against it.
- ▶ V19 “And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens...”

# Matthew 16:18

- ▶ A new subject, part of a new revelation of God's dealings with men. It is what we call a new dispensation
- ▶ No mention of the church in the Old Testament.
- ▶ Because we now have the words of the Lord Jesus and the NT writings, looking back, we can see foreshadowings, patterns of things in, for example, the Tabernacle.
- ▶ But we look in vain for an OT scripture that mentions the church, or prophecies such a thing.
- ▶ This is not just semantics. The church is neither a continuation of, nor is it a substitute for, Israel.



# Matthew 16:18 continued

- ▶ Israel's portion – all the Old Testament prophecies about Israel, its trials and its blessings – are completely untouched by what we now learn about the church.
- ▶ Fundamental but true.
- ▶ Disregard headings over the text of Isaiah's writings that refer to the church.
- ▶ A brother, now long with the Lord, used to say that Israel is parked in a siding while the express train of the church goes through; later it will resume its journey
- ▶ Matthew 16:18 is the first mention of the church



# Was it a new idea?

- ▶ A danger when we read a single scripture, without comparing it with others is that we can get the idea that God tries one thing and, when it doesn't work out tries another. For example, the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21.....
- ▶ “last of all he sent unto them his son, saying they will reverence my son.....”
- ▶ God is never taken by surprise, or has to alter His plane because of what men do.
- ▶ The stone the builders rejected is become the head of the corner (Psalm 118:22 prefigures Matthew 21:42)



# So, how does that relate to Matthew 16:18

- ▶ God purposed the church before the world began.
- ▶ Ephesians 1:4 says: “According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world ...”
- ▶ V5 says: “Having pre-destinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself ...”
- ▶ Those mentioned here are the same as those who are part of the church as described in Ephesians 2:19-22 (session 2)
- ▶ So what was in the mind of God before creation is being made known by the Lord Jesus in our verse – for the first time





# The setting v13

- ▶ The Lord has come to Caesarea Philippi, in the north of the country, and near to Mount Hermon
- ▶ From here He is to make His way step by step down towards Jericho, and thence to Jerusalem
- ▶ His public ministry has occupied two years or more by this time. What do men think of who He is?
- ▶ There were all manner of ideas – John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, another prophet?
- ▶ What kind of answer would men give today?
- ▶ What do His disciples think, after all they have seen and heard?



# The setting (cont'd)

- ▶ This is a vital question – one that each of us should answer for ourselves
- ▶ There is a verse by the English poet William Cowper:

What think ye of Christ is the test  
to try both your state and your scheme  
you cannot be right in the rest  
unless you think rightly of Him.



# Verse 16

- ▶ Peter's confession is all important
- ▶ It is the basis of what follows
- ▶ "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"
- ▶ (See John 20:31 – the purpose of John's Gospel)
- ▶ The blessed Man who is speaking here, who is now in heaven is the Christ (the Anointed), and is the Son of God

# Verse 16 continued



- ▶ He is not “another prophet”.
- ▶ He is a prophet but much more besides.
- ▶ Followers of certain “other religions” will admit that Christ was a prophet.
- ▶ But that stops far short of saying who He is.
- ▶ As believers in Him, we must insist on what is contained in John 20:31, as Peter did here.

# John 20:31

- ▶ “but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name”
- ▶ The purpose of John’s Gospel, and the key to what is life more abundant.



# Matt. 18:17



- ▶ “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”.
- ▶ What is in the mind of the Father, had been made known to Peter – how?
- ▶ In the OT, some of God’s thoughts are revealed (eg in the Psalms); they mainly concern God’s government and thoughts about life on earth
- ▶ But here is the thought of communication of thoughts beyond the earthly – that have to do with things eternal
- ▶ Moreover, it was because Peter had believed on the Word of the Son of God, that the Father could reveal to Peter.
- ▶ This opens up the thought of revelation of the Father by the Son (because it was Peter’s acknowledgment of the Son)
- ▶ Taken on elsewhere – not here- the reality of fellowship or communion can be opened up.

# Matthew 16:18

- ▶ “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock...”
- ▶ Peter – a new name for Simon
  - ▶ The Greek word is “petros”, a piece of rock (bigger than a stone)
  - ▶ Rock – the Greek word is “petra”, a mass of rock (think of Gibraltar or the White Cliffs of Dover?)
  - ▶ Note the petros is a piece of the petra, of the same substance?
  - ▶ This helps when we come to sessions 2 and 3



# Matthew 16:18

- ▶ “I will build...”
- ▶ Christ is the builder (though we may have some part – see session 4 – yet it is Christ who is both the Foundation and the Builder
- ▶ “My church....” It is His for His own purpose, and will be for His glory. A help meet for him (Genesis 2:18, Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 21:2)



# Matthew 16:18

- ▶ The gates of hades shall not prevail against it
- ▶ The expression does not mean “hell”, or the place to which lost souls are destined.
- ▶ It is a general term for the place where departed souls go after death, see eg Luke 16:23.
- ▶ The place of unbelievers who have died has no claims on those who are part of Christ's church.



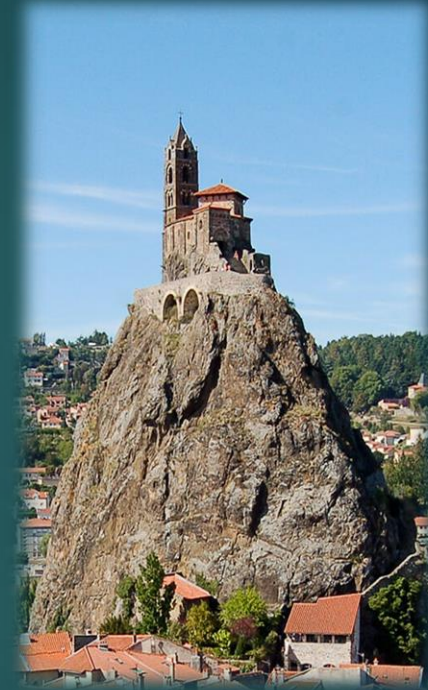
# Matthew 16:19

- ▶ What are the keys of the kingdom?
- ▶ The popular imagination has it that the Apostle Peter has a huge set of keys, which he uses to let some people into heaven (at his discretion)
- ▶ While no-one here thinks that, popular ideas or imagination can affect what we think.
- ▶ First of all the keys given to Peter were to do with the Kingdom – not with heaven.
- ▶ Peter opened the Kingdom by his preaching to the Jews in Acts 2, and to the Gentiles in Acts 10.
- ▶ Think of these keys as symbolic – as, for example, when a public building is opened for the first time.



# The building – when did it begin?

- ▶ We have noted the Lord said “I will build”
- ▶ John’s Gospel, which does not describe the church as such, explains why the Lord Jesus must go away and why the Holy Spirit would come. The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem until the time when they would receive “power from on high” (Luke 24:49).
- ▶ On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4). On that day, believers were baptised into One body (the church) – see 1 Corinthians 12:13).
- ▶ The same day, the Gospel of God’s grace was preached for the first time (Peter was the chosen man for this) – see Acts 2:14-36.
- ▶ About 3,000 souls were added to the company of believers that day; this company had become the church by the Spirit’s baptism.



# Christ the centre

- ▶ We have said that Christ is the builder
- ▶ He is also the gathering-point (Matthew 18:20). He is the One to whom the church gathers, or assembles.
  - ▶ We have the global aspect of the church in Mt 16 and the local aspect of the church in Mt. 18 .
  - ▶ Yet the Lord does not introduce a new concept of a "local church" but simply speaks of "the church" in Mt 18.
  - ▶ This shows that the church locally is essentially the same thing as the church globally (the local representation of the whole church).
  - ▶ This also comes out in Acts 20,28: they were overseers (locally) in the church which God had bought (globally).



# Christ the centre

- ▶ It is His name to which we gather. Note, it is not to some idea, such as baptism or methodical living, or even to some national name. Nor is it to some specific doctrine, but to the Name above all other.
- ▶ The Lord Jesus has promised to be there. We cannot see Him with our eyes, but can, indeed SHOULD, recognise His presence.



# Later sessions

- ▶ In later sessions, we will look at the responsibilities of those who form part of Christ's church, as well as other aspects of it, eg the body of Christ, the Holy Temple, the Spiritual House.
- ▶ Because man has a part to play – both in building locally, and in the gathering together of the believers in assembly conditions, there has been failure over the years since Pentecost.
- ▶ But what Christ has done, is doing, and will do, can never fail.
- ▶ Do not let us speak of failure in the church when what we mean is failure in the testimony.
- ▶ Above all, let us keep in mind that Christ is going to present to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27).





# Finally

- ▶ In verse 16:21, the Lord Jesus shows how He will go into death. This thought is developed later in the Gospel.
- ▶ It is because He has gone into death, and risen again, overcoming death's power, that He can assert that the church He builds will never be overcome by death.
- ▶ If we belong to the Lord by faith, we like the Thessalonians can serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:9).