

# Rethink Church



# Rethink Church

Robert R. Davis

## **Rethink Church**

**© Copyright 2019, Robert R. Davis**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise – except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without written permission from the author.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. All rights reserved. The author has inserted italics and bolding used in quotations from Scriptures.

# **Table of Contents**

What is the Church	7
The Kingdom	17
The Name of Israel	29
Jesus the Messiah	39
Model of the Church	51
True Worship	57
Salvation	63
Church Leadership	71
The Sabbath	79
Tithes and Offerings	91
Spiritual Maturity	101
What God Wants	111



# What is the Church?

We assume we know what the Church is because we see them everywhere, but those are merely the buildings. What does it really mean to be called the Church? To be more specific, what was Jesus referring to when He spoke of the Church?

Let's look at the scriptures, in order to have a foundation to build upon.

*St. Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

*St. Matthew 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*

*St. Matthew 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*

*St. Matthew 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

*St. Matthew 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

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

*St. Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

St. Matthew chapter sixteen is the first time Jesus uses the term we have translated as Church. He said, “Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”<sup>1</sup> In the original Greek, the word Jesus used was “Petra.” This is close to the name Peter (“Petros”) in Greek.

Most Catholic denominations agree that Peter is the rock. However, they differ on whom received the keys of the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

“In the Roman Catholic Church, Jesus’ words are interpreted as the foundation of papacy infallibility and the continuous succession of popes.<sup>3</sup> The Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches reject the succession of popes and believe in the infallibility of the Church as a whole and not the Pope. They contend any individual regardless of their position is subject to error.”<sup>4</sup> “Protestants on the other hand, reject the infallibility of the Church and its leaders. Instead they believe it signifies the Church will never be destroyed.”<sup>5</sup>

We should look at this logically and scripturally to determine the true meaning. If Jesus is going to build His Church on this rock, whatever it is, the rock must be foundational. Is Peter the foundation of the Church? Is this even a biblical notion? There are no scriptures to support this assertion.

*Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

The book of Isaiah gives us clarity concerning the identification of the rock. The only foundation or stone God intended to build His Church on is the Messiah. How can Jesus both build the Church and be its cornerstone? To understand this we should look at Peter's declaration, which precedes Jesus' statement about the rock. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (St. Matthew 16:16) Jesus built His Church upon this rock, which is the truth of Him being the Son of God, the Anointed One and the long prophesied Messiah.

Can the words Peter spoke really be consider a rock? Jesus said, flesh and blood did not reveal this truth to Peter, but His Father in heaven revealed it. Therefore, this is a truth of God, not Peter.

*St. Matthew 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

*St. Matthew 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

Clearly, the Word of God is the true rock Jesus was referring to with His disciples. The Word or Truth of God is our sure foundation. Jesus is the Word become flesh, according to St. John 1:14. Therefore, He can be both the builder and foundation of the Church.

The next question we should ask is did Jesus intend to build a new religion (Christianity) upon the fact He is the Christ, the Son of the living God? In order to answer this question we first need to understand one of the prophecies concerning Him.

*Acts 7:37 This is that **Moses**, which **said** unto the children of Israel, **A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.***

*Acts 7:38 **This is he, that was in the Church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina [Sinai], and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:*

There was never a Church during the time of Moses, not as we understand the term. The word Church in the New Testament is “Ecclesia” in the original Greek. It means called out ones or assembly. Acts 7:37-38 is a quotation from Deuteronomy. Notice the original text does not read Church, but assembly.

*Deuteronomy 18:15 **The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;***

*Deuteronomy 18:16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God **in Horeb in the day of the assembly**, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.*

*Deuteronomy 18:17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.*

In the Old Testament, the term translated “Assembly” comes from the Hebrew word “Qahal”, which means

congregation, assembly or company. The root of the word means to gather or summon. The meaning of the Hebrew “Qahal” is almost identical to the Greek “Ecclesia.”

Therefore, Jesus was not making a distinction between the Church and the congregation of Israel. The difference comes from how we translated the Hebrew versus the Greek words. Today, when we use the term, “Church” it automatically excludes the Jews (Israel). However, this was not the original intent of the expression. When the Church started it was almost completely Jewish.

We should look at the second and last time Jesus uses the term translated, “Church.” It is also in the book of Matthew.

*St. Matthew 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*St. Matthew 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

*St. Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

In this passage Jesus is talking about civil matters, not spiritual. This directive is for any disputes among God’s people. Earlier in the book of Acts we saw Jesus was likened to Moses (the lawgiver). This passage shows Jesus acting in the same capacity as the prophet. Observe a similar procedure listed in Exodus.

*Exodus 18:13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.*

*14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?*

*15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:*

*16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.*

*17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.*

*18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.*

*19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:*

*20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.*

*21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:*

*22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.*

*23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.*

*24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.*

*25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*

***26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.***

Jesus simply refined the process Moses used with a three-step method for settling disputes. This reinforces His identity as being the prophet, like unto Moses (St. John 5:46).

1. Discuss the matter one on one
2. Bring one or two others (the witness of two or three)
3. Let the congregation (Church) decide the matter

We think of the Church as purely a spiritual entity. How could Jesus expect it to settle personal disputes? The answer is simple. He did not require a spiritual entity called the Church to handle these types of problems. These words were spoken to the Jews and they understood it pertained to the kingdom of Israel.

This directive is for His government, not the Church as we know it, but the Kingdom of God. The Church today is a result of the schism between the followers of the Law and the followers of Christ. It was not a construct of Jesus, due to the apostasy of Israel. He did not come to create a new religion (Christianity) or a different type of worship.

Remember, the Church was entirely Jewish in the beginning.

The Church is actually a fragmentation of Israel over the Cornerstone (Jesus) and His teachings. Christ never came to institute a Church. The term translated as “Church” is only mentioned twice in the Gospels. However, God’s government, the Kingdom occurs over a hundred times. Jesus came to establish the Kingdom, not a Church.

*Isaiah 9:6 **For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.***

*Isaiah 9:7 **Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.***

This scripture is generally accepted among Christians as pertaining to Jesus. It does not mention the Church, only the Kingdom (His government). The two entities were originally the same, but now they are vastly different. Today the Church is an organization of believers, designed for religious worship. In contrast, a kingdom is a monarchical form of government, designed to establish the rule of God in the lives of humanity.

The Church is a visible entity, but the Kingdom of God is not discernable to the human eye. The Church has members that can be counted. It can be seen and measured. However, the Kingdom is invisible and immeasurable.

*St. Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:***

*St. Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, **behold, the kingdom of God is within you.***

“Since the beginning of time, God’s plan for humanity centered on the fact that God desired to have a personal relationship with mankind. It was never the Lord’s plan to establish a religion. Religion is the human response to a deep spiritual vacuum in the recesses of our soul, for something we cannot describe or identify. For many, religion has been and continues to be a tireless preoccupation distracting them from the unresolved fears of the human heart. It is interesting to note that the Bible does not prescribe a formal method for worship or prayer.”<sup>6</sup>

The Church as we know it today is an outgrowth of religion. There are about 34,000 different Christian groups in the world since AD 30. This is according to the World Christian Encyclopedia published in 2001. A denomination is a nicer word for divisions.

*1 Corinthians 3:3 **For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?***

Does this mean we should leave the Church? No, I am not advocating this at all. At the time of Jesus, Israel was anxiously awaiting the Kingdom of God. Let’s look at the Kingdom a little closer to see God’s true intention.

# Bibliography

---

<sup>1</sup> Holy Bible. St. Matthew 16:8

<sup>2</sup> The people's New Testament commentary by M. Eugene Boring, Fred B. Craddock 2004 ISBN 0-664-22754-6 page 69

<sup>3</sup> Papal infallibility: a Protestant evaluation of an ecumenical issue by Mark E. Powell 2009 ISBN 978-0-8028-6284-6 pages 35-40

<sup>4</sup> Cornel West Reader, op. cit., page 357

<sup>5</sup> Cornel West Reader, op. cit., page 357

<sup>6</sup> Rediscovering the Kingdom. Ancient Hope for our 21<sup>st</sup> Century World by Myles Munroe (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers Inc., 2004) ISBN 0-7684-2217-5 page 27