

BUILDING THE CHURCH

Another role of Jesus is as Architect and Church Builder. The first passage that Jesus mentions the church is in Matthew 16:13-28. Jesus asks his disciples....Who do you say the Son of Man is? God reveals to Peter that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus then says:

Upon this rock (revelation of who He is, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome, prevail or prove stronger than it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom to bind and to loose.

Key words and truths to ponder.

I Jesus is the head of the church. There is only room for one big I in the church. All others must submit to Him and his big plan, vision and wisdom. At the transfiguration Jesus gave his closest disciples a glimpse of his glory. Then God the Father spoke to them:

This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased. **Listen to him!** - Matt.17:5

The early church operated with one heart and mind and God blessed that unity. A body can have only one head and one vision. The word division means more than one vision. Double-mindedness leads to confusion and instability. The church at its finest is **one with Jesus**. The word **WE** was predominate among the early church not I. They shared their lives and all they had with one another.

WILL BUILD Jesus is the master builder. What is he building? The disciples had a religious concept which also has permeated the church for centuries.

As he (Jesus) was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, **'Look Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!'** Jesus replied, 'Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down..' - Mark 13:1-2

Jesus is not into buildings or monuments but a movement of people. He is growing individuals and his body of followers to be conformed into the fullness of his character. It was the initial plan God gave to mankind who were made in his image / Genesis 1 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue and reign over it.'

The original 3 R's: **REFLECT** God's image / **REPRODUCE** / **REIGN** in life

Jesus expects his church to grow in 4 different ways:

GROW UP into full maturity in Christ / **GROW TOGETHER** in love and unity
GROW OUT in influence around the world. / **GROW MORE** in numbers
(numerical growth is not the goal but it is a natural byproduct of the first three types of growth. When God's people grow up, grow together and grow out, the church will naturally grow in numbers as God honors those who are in tune with his heart and purposes. God has not called us to grow big churches but to grow big people in Christ who naturally expand the growth.

MY CHURCH No church is 'our church'. The church belongs to Jesus and is to be

led by the Holy Spirit. Those who follow this pattern are called Sons of God (Greek huioi = **mature sons**) Romans 8:14. The apostle Paul warns us in Galatians 5 about living according to the sinful nature such as selfish ambition, dissension, factions, biting and devouring one another. Instead we are to live according to the fruit of the Spirit. He goes on to write: Since we live by the Spirit, let us **keep in step with the Holy Spirit.** / Galatians 5:25

Who is the Holy Spirit?

He is Holy and is grieved when we operate in the sinful nature and without love.

He is Spirit which means breath or wind. What does wind do? **It Moves!**

God is not static but dynamic, He is always on the move and wants his people to keep moving with Him. Throughout the Bible we see man's desire to settle and be comfortable. God's people are to be pioneers.....not settlers. It took persecution for the early believers to finally leave Jerusalem and go into all the world / Acts 8:1

To quench the Spirit is to **resist the movement** of God among his people. Jesus saw this in the religious people of his day. They always were looking for reasons to accuse Him and resisted the Spirit of God due to their blindness and hard hearts. They wanted to kill Jesus and stop his ministry. God calls us as his people to become like little children with open minds and tender hearts. Jesus operated this way. He said.....I only do what I see the Father doing. Now back to the Matthew 16 passage. The first mention of the church by Jesus reveals there will be spiritual warfare.

THE GATES OF HELL In Bible times, gates were where the city council and leaders would make their plans. The Gates of hell are the plans and strategies that Satan and his evil forces have against Jesus, his church and the kingdom of God. We see this in evidence all through the Bible. There is demonic resistance to God and all things precious to him.....his plans, purposes and people. Jesus spoke of this warfare....

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. - Matthew 11:12 NKJV

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. - NIV

God has given keys to the church.....to open and close doors.....to forbid and permit things on earth as they are in heaven. At first, Peter misused those keys.

In Matthew 16, Jesus speaks of his suffering at the hands of the religious leaders, being killed and then rising from the dead. Peter responded withNever Lord, this shall never happen! Jesus then turned to Peter and said.....

Out of my sight Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

We can learn from this. Peter had a revelation from God about Jesus and then a few moments later, he was an instrument of the devil who would hinder God's purpose and plan. If we are honest, all of us have played both roles at times. We have heard from God at times and at other times we have listened to the deceptions of Satan.

Jesus offers the solution to this in his next words:

If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself**, take up his cross and **follow me**. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Jesus says.....die to your self, your ideas, your plans, your personal agenda and kingdom
Jesus says.....follow me, my ideas and my plans. **Seek first my kingdom**

Jesus told us to make disciples.....although he expects us to love and care for people of all ages and backgrounds, Jesus spent most of his time with **youth**. His disciples were anywhere from teenagers to men in their 20's.

Jesus was planning for the future! We honor and remember those who preceded us in the past. We stand on their shoulders but lay aside distractions and fix our eyes on Jesus...

.....the **author** and and perfecter/ finisher of our faith. - Hebrews 12:1-2
The word author there means **Pioneer**.

Pioneers pave the way for others but bear the most attacks and resistance from those who cling to the old patterns and places. Not all the tribes of Israel were willing to enter the promised land and face the giants and enemy forces. Some chose to settle east of the promised land. My ancestors were pioneers who crossed the ocean to America and one of them was a church planter to a rural area of western NY state. Their work continues as God has raised up new pioneers to continue the growing of the people of God

Many blue chip companies were once great in their day but failed to keep up with the ever changing world and have either diminished or even gone out of business eg. Sears, Toys-R-Us, Kodak etc. Many mainline churches are dying and have become sideline churches because they failed to keep pace with a changing society. Jesus said it is hard to put new wine into old wineskins. The truths of the Bible never change, but methods and approaches do in order to stay relevant in reaching the world for Christ. God raises up new churches in each generation. Let us continue to bless what we see the Father doing in and through them. Some may question whether these new church plants are of God. I remind you of the words of Gamaliel, a Pharisee.

Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. - Acts 5:38-39

God has called us to go in and possess the land for him, but let us first allow him to **fully possess us** with his presence and purpose in our hearts and lives. Jesus is building HIS church. We have the privilege of being co-workers with Him.

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