

Misconceptions (Matthew 16:13-20)

There was a FedEx commercial several years ago with a man named “Ned.” The setting for the commercial is some corporate office. Four or five people are working in the office. One of the office workers says they can ship their packages FedEx. Ned, who seems to be the office nerd, says something to the effect that “FedEx is too expensive.” Another office worker, a man, says, “Ned, you’re always wrong.” Ned says, “How am I always wrong?” His co-worker says, “OK. Let’s review.” “Steely Dan is not one person. We get fringe benefits, not ‘French’ benefits.” “James Dean is the actor, Jimmy Dean makes sausage. And it’s not the Leaning “Tower of ‘Pizza’ but the Tower of Pisa.” It seems Ned has some misconceptions of FedEx.

There are a lot of Neds in our world today. They don’t fully understand what something is about. They take bits and pieces of what they hear or read

and put them together to form their opinion or belief about

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something. Like Ned, they have a little bit of knowledge and they fill in the blanks themselves.

There are many Neds when it comes to Jesus. If you ask people, “Who is Jesus?” you will receive a variety of responses. I heard someone say, “He was a pretty good man.” For him, Jesus was a good man and nothing more. Others say he was a great moral teacher. Some skeptics even question whether Jesus of Nazareth ever existed.

There are also many Neds when it comes to the Church. They pick up a little bit here and add a little bit there. When they do this, they can develop a view of the Church that is not accurate. They end up with misconceptions about the Church. Like Ned’s co-worker, we need to clear up these misconceptions of the Church. We need to make

sure that we all fully understand what the Church is all about.

In our Scripture reading today, Jesus reveals a wonderful truth in verse 18, “I will build my church.”

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Let's set the context of this sentence. Jesus has asked the disciples who do people say he is. They say, “Some people say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets (Matt. 16:14). Then Jesus asked them, “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” (Matt. 16:15) This was a big moment! The disciples had been with Jesus for quite some time. They had walked with him, watched him, and listened to him. What had they decided about this Jesus they were following?

Peter speaks for all of them in verse 16, “You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God.”

One Bible analyst calls this the “key verse” in Matthew. Jesus tells them that they're right, and that

they did not come up with this one their own—God revealed it to them. And he says, “On this rock,” on the confession you have just made, “I will build my church.” What kind of church was Jesus going to build? What would his church look like, what would it consist of? What is this church, The Church?

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Since Jesus spoke those words, many opinions and misconceptions have formed about what this church is. **Misconception #1: The Church is a Building.** Some say the church consists of buildings. The church is made up of the Sanctuary, the Education Building, and the Fellowship Hall. We perpetuate this misconception all the time. When you get up in the morning, where were you going? To Church. When people ask you tomorrow what you did this morning, you’ll say, “I went to church.” Where is the church? Oh, it’s down the street, a couple of blocks. Many would say the church is just a building, a location, or a place to go. **Misconception #2: The Church is Only an Organization.** We have offices.

We have rules and regulations. We have set times to meet. We have membership requirements. We're an organization. The only difference between us and the Rotary Club or Kiwanis Club or Steelworker's Union is what our focus is. They do their things and the church does its thing. The church is no more important than any other

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organization. **Misconception #3: The Church is Open Only on Sundays.** We have church only one day a week. We take a couple of hours on Sunday and for a few, a couple of more on Sunday night.

Misconception #4: The Church Exists to Serve Me. When things aren't going right in my life, I go to church and they should take care of me. I don't have to do anything for the church, they have to do everything for me. If they don't serve me as I think they ought to, I'll find another church that will. I should be the central figure of the church.

Misconception #5: We Become Part of the Church by Joining it. We find a church we like and

then we join it. We get our name on the organization rolls. *These are some of the misconceptions about the church.* The thing about misconceptions is that they usually have some truth in them. But misconceptions consist of half truths and are therefore fully wrong. Let's clear up some of these misconceptions and look at some ***Biblical Truths About the Church.***

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The Church is the Body of Christ. In Ephesians 1:22-23, we read, "And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." And in Colossians 1:18, it says "And he is the head of the body of the church." So, the church is an extension of Jesus Christ. He is the Head and those who make up the church are his body. What Jesus did when he was physically on the earth, the church, his body, now does.

The Church is Not an Organization, but an Organism. “Now you are the body of Christ,” we are told in 1 Corinthians 12:27. Our churches do have organization and our churches do have structure. But those organizations and structures are only tools of the church, not the church itself. The Church is the body of the Living Lord. The Church is the presence of Jesus Christ in the world today. We are his presence

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24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. **We are the Church Building.** We are told in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” And in Ephesians 2:22, we can read, “In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” “Greet also the church in their house” it tells us in Romans 16:5. So, the church gathers together in buildings. But the buildings we gather in are not the church. The people who make up the church are the church buildings of God.

God's Spirit dwells in us. We are occupied by God. Wherever we are and wherever we go, we are the church. **The Church Exists to Serve God and Each Other.** "To him be glory in the church," we can read in Ephesians 3:21. So, the church's primary reason for existence is to worship God and give him glory. And in Ephesians 4:12, we are told that "To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. So, the church should serve you. But you should also serve the

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others who are the church. **We Become Part of the Church By Believing.** In Acts 2:41, we are told, "So those who received his word were baptized, and they were added that day about three thousand souls." And in Acts 5:14, it says, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord multitudes of both men and women." Are you a part of the Church because you joined or are you a part of the church because you believed?

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture reading in Matthew?

Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah highlights the importance of recognizing and affirming Jesus' divine identity. Jesus' declaration that Peter and his confession is the rock upon which he will build his church emphasizes the foundational role of leadership and community in the faith. The granting of the "keys

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of the kingdom" to Peter signifies the authority given to the church to guide and make decisions in faith. And finally, this passage encourages believers to act on their faith, suggesting that true discipleship involves both belief and action, particularly in the face of challenges and trials.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have drawn us with your cord of love to know the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior and heavenly Friend. I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, equal with the Father, and not created, and yet he chose to leave his heavenly dwelling to be born as a man, live a sinless life, and give himself to be sacrificed on the Cross. Because of Jesus, we have eternal abundant life. May my praise and thanksgiving ever rise to you, my Lord and my God. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**