



IT'S JESUS' CHURCH
We Are the Church – Part 1
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When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Matthew 16.13-20

"It (Caesarea Philippi) has since returned to its ancient name of Baniyas... The name was derived from the fact that a grotto... there was reputed to be the birthplace of the god Pan, the most famous fertility symbol in ancient paganism... All around the land was filled with the temples of classical pagan religion. Towering above them, resplendent in its white marble and massive dimensions, was the new temple to the emperor from which the city derived its changed name. This was the place Jesus chose to see if any of His disciples really understood Him... It is as if most of the rivulets of various ancient religions converged here." - Michael Green, The Message of Matthew

1. THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE CHURCH RESTS

Personally understood

Personally experienced

Personally possessed

“Traditionally, three sorts of people had been anointed with oil: prophets, priests and kings. And Jesus in fact did fulfill the expectations of all those three roles. Like the priest (only perfectly) He put people in touch with God. Like the prophet (only perfectly) He showed people what God was like. And like the king (only perfectly) He exercised God's rule over God's people while Himself being uniquely the Servant of the Lord.” - Michael Green. The Message of Matthew

“You are Peter (little rock) and on this rock (of Gibraltar) I will build my church.”

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” 1 Peter 2.2-7

2. THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS

I will build My church

The law of first mention

“Those who study the Bible in a serious way sometimes refer to the Law of First Mention. It’s not so much a law, really, as a common principle in the Scriptures. If you select an important biblical word—say, worship—you’ll find that its first biblical appearance sets the tone for all the richness of meaning that will emerge. Through the Word we go on to find many new understandings and many variations on the theme, but the first cut is the deepest; the first mention gives us the essential picture.” - Dr. David Jeremiah

“When you do that, you also end up changing the bottom line of the church.” - Keith Miller

The word church is never used in Scripture to refer to a material building (and it occurs 140 times in NT)

ekklesia

Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. Acts 19.32

But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. Acts 19.39

*...when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.
Acts 19.41*

3. THE UNSTOPPABLE ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matthew 16.18

4. OUR REALM OF AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16.19b

"The world is waiting to hear an authentic voice—a voice from God—not an echo of what others are doing and saying, but an authentic voice." - A.W. Tozer

"The webbing together of God, humans, all creation in equity, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets called shalom. We translate it peace, but it means a lot more than that. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight, a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts are fruitfully employed, all underneath the arch of God's love." - Cornelius Plantinga

"To do justice in the context of biblical shalom means to go to the places where the fabric is broken, where the weaker members of society are falling through, they're just falling through and then take the threads of your life, your emotions, your time, your body, your presence, your stuff, your resources, your money and then just plunge it...plunge it into the lives of other people through thousands and thousands of involvements." - Dr. Timothy Keller

Our calling is to use the resources God has given us to reweave and repair shalom.

"I argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church... that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a crossroads so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and Latin and in Greek; at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where he died. And that is what he died about . . . that is where churchmen should be and what the church should be about." - George MacLeod

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think so many churches have drifted away from the basic elements that Christ laid as a foundation for the church?
2. Peter's confession "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" is a perfect encapsulation of the belief that makes us a part of God's church. We acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah, the Expected One, the One promised in the Old Testament to bring salvation AND that He is the Son of God, God in human flesh, God come to live among us. Describe to the group what led you to this decision, what it meant to you to trust in Christ, when and how that happened. If someone were to ask you how they, too, could become a Christian, what would you tell them?
3. Jesus makes clear that not only is the church His church but that He is the One Who will build it. It's been said and it's true, the church is the only thing God ever had to buy. Everything else, He made. But the church had to be redeemed, had to be purchased with the very blood of Christ. So, because the church belongs to Jesus, He personally makes the commitment to building it. So many pastors have inverted this thinking that it's their job to build the church when Jesus said the opposite. Why do you think this happens? What kind of distortions creep into the church when we believe it's our job to build it?
4. The church is not a building. We ARE the church. Explain how this one shift in thinking revolutionizes how we see both church buildings and ourselves.



5. There is no question, on this planet, we live in enemy occupied territory. The enemy is constantly claiming institutions and lives for himself. But Jesus assures us that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. They are utterly useless in stopping God's church from reclaiming lost ground and lost souls. We are in the redemption business. We are retaking ground the enemy thought belonged to him. Talk about the implications of this as a group. What institutions and who are the people God is longing to redeem? What examples do we have of this in history?

6. In the final part of the message, Pastor Keith talked about the Biblical concept of Shalom as being like a perfectly interwoven garment. But our world has shredded Shalom living the once perfectly interwoven garment full of holes. Our task as the church is to use the resources of our time, energy, talents and money to repair and reweave the torn shalom. How might God be asking you to use your resources to bring about His redemption in the torn fabric of society? How has God used you in the past? What do you long for Him to do through you right now? Pray for one another in this regard.

