

The Church that Jesus Built! Matthew Chapter 16 Explained.

Greetings, I'm Dr. Paul Felter. Welcome to my video podcast, where I expose church fallacies and flawed Christian tradition with Bible truth. I let the Bible speak for itself. I want to thank all my supporters for your prayers and support. May the Lord richly bless you in all that you do!

During His earthly ministry, Jesus promised that he would build a church, an assembly of believers. Many today believe Jesus was referring to us, we who are being saved during this present dispensation of grace. But is that true? Was Jesus referring to us, the church, the body of Christ, or did he have some other group in mind? Let's begin our study in Matthew's gospel.

In chapter 16 of Matthew's gospel, Jesus asked his disciples, "whom do men say that I the son of man am?" They responded saying, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Jesus continued questioning them asking a more direct question, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered stating, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus affirmed Peter's proclamation stating, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Jesus continued saying, "That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Three questions arise from these passages:

1. What does the term "Christ" represent?
2. What was the "rock" of which Jesus spoke?
3. What church would Jesus build upon that rock?

Question 1, What does the term "Christ" represent?

The word Christ means "anointed" or "Messiah." Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. The promise of the Messiah first appeared in Genesis chapter three where God prophesied the seed of the woman that would bruise or crush the serpents head.

Genesis 3:15 KJV - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The seed of the woman that would bruise Satan's head was Jesus, the Messiah. By His death and resurrection, Jesus would conquer death, hell and the grave and possess the keys of hell and death.

The title of "Christ" proclaims Jesus the Messiah of Israel!

Question 2, what was the "rock" of which Jesus spoke?

The answer is found in Peter's reply, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The rock is Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. The Jews during Christ's ministry, would have immediately understood the concept of the rock, harkening back to the rock that followed the children of

Israel in the wilderness providing life-giving water for the people and their livestock. After the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Without the precious water that streamed from the rock, a quick and certain death awaited them. The Apostle Paul wrote of that rock in the following passage:

1 Corinthians 10:4 KJV - "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that **spiritual Rock** that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ.**"

The word "rock" is used many times in the Old Testament referring to the Lord, here are few examples:

Deuteronomy 32:4 KJV - "He is the **Rock**, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

2 Samuel 22:2 KJV - "And he said, The LORD is my **rock**, and my fortress, and my deliverer;"

Psalms 18:46 KJV - "The LORD liveth; and blessed be my **rock**; and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

Psalms 62:2 KJV - "He only is my **rock** and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved."

Psalms 95:1 KJV - "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the **rock** of our salvation."

The Rock is the Lord Jesus Christ, the life-giving water is His word. Those that drink of His word drink unto eternal life and will never again thirst.

In John chapter 4, Jesus said the following to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well:

John 4:14 KJV - "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Jesus, as the Christ, the Messiah, is the rock upon which he would build His church.

Question 3, what church would Jesus build upon the rock?

Again, the "rock" is Jesus. He is the Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the Son of the living God, the Lord! In Him alone is eternal life!

Peter affirmed Jesus as Messiah on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts chapter 2:

Acts 2:36 KJV - "Therefore let all the **house of Israel** know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ.**"

- Peter's audience at Pentecost is clearly defined as the house of Israel, both Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:10).
- Peter rebukes Israel for the crucifixion of their Messiah. Israel rejected their Messiah, the Rock of their salvation.

- a. Psalm 118:22 (KJV): "The stone which the builders refused is become the **head stone of the corner.**"
- b. Isaiah 8:14 (KJV): "And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a **stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**"
- c. Matthew 21:42-44 (KJV): "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The **stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:** this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And **whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.**"
 - Peter proclaims Jesus as both Lord of Israel and the Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

So, the church that Jesus built was founded upon Him as both Lord and Messiah of Israel.

Before we continue our answer for questions 3, let's take a quick look at the word "church."

The word "church" is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* (Strong's G1577). It means a gathering or assembly and can be used to represent an assembly of Jews (Congregation) or an assembly of Christians (Church).

An assembly of Jews in the Old Testament was called a "congregation." The word "congregation" is used 363 times in the Old Testament and only once in the New Testament. The word "church" is not found in the Old Testament but used 77 times in the New Testament. The two words, "congregation" and "church," are synonymous. We see this statement affirmed by Steven in Acts chapter 7:

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

The "church in the wilderness" was the congregation of Israel gathered at Mount Sinai after their exodus from Egypt.

The point is that the word "church" can be a gathering of Jews or a gathering of Christians. The word "church" is NOT unique to us, the church, the body of Christ. So, when you read the word "church," do not automatically assume the phrase or passage was written to you. Also, Jesus never went on a mission trip, nor did He ever plant a church. He later delegated that responsibility to the Apostle Paul, as recorded in Acts chapter 9 where Paul's ministry to the Gentiles began. Paul went on at least three missionary journeys and planted dozens of churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia.

The "little flock"

Let's continue our answer to question 3, what church did Jesus build? Jesus spoke of this assembly of Jews in Luke chapter 12, verse 32, affectionately calling them his "little flock," a remnant of Jewish believers.

Luke 12:32 KJV - "Fear not, **little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

We know the "little flock" were Jews because the Father will give them the kingdom, that would be the earthly kingdom promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers of Israel. Jesus affectionately called those that believed in him as the Messiah of Israel, his "little flock," because they came from the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus earthly ministry was to Israel, the circumcision, as our Apostle Paul validates this in the following passage:

Romans 15:8 KJV - "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a **minister of the circumcision** for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:"

The "circumcision" is Israel and "the promises made unto the fathers" are the promises of an earthly kingdom given to the fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That kingdom will one day stretch from the Nile River to the Euphrates River as recorded in Genesis chapter 15.

Genesis 15:18 KJV - "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"

The little flock, Jews that believed in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, will one day inherit the kingdom promised to Abraham. That promise was not fulfilled 2000 years ago. The "little flock" did not receive the kingdom. Israel's kingdom program was postponed because they crucified Jesus, their Messiah. God the Father, set Israel aside and implemented the dispensation of grace to save Gentiles, as Paul records in Romans chapter 11.

Romans 11:11-12 KJV - "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather **through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles**, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and **the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles**; how much more their fulness?"

The current program of grace to save Gentiles was initiated by God after the fall of Israel and will continue until the Rapture. After which, God will once again turn His attention back to Israel during the 7-year Tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, during which He will save a remnant of Israel, the future "little flock," that will finally inherit the promised kingdom.

One final concept on the church that Jesus would build.

I am he

Jesus made an astounding claim in John's gospel about himself as follows:

John 8:24 KJV - "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that **I am he**, ye shall die in your sins."

John 8:28 KJV - "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that **I am he**, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."

John 13:19 KJV - "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that **I am he**."

What did Jesus mean by the phrase "I am he?"

Since Jesus did not explain what He meant, He assumed that the listening Jews understood the phrase He claimed unto himself. Their understanding would come from Old Testament passages like the following:

Deuteronomy 32:39 KJV - "See now that I, even **I, am he**, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

Isaiah 41:4 KJV - "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; **I am he**."

Isaiah 43:10, 13, 25 KJV - "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that **I am he**: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. ... Yea, before the day was **I am he**; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it? ... I, even **I, am he** that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Isaiah 48:12 KJV - "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; **I am he**; I am the first, I also am the last."

Isaiah 52:6 KJV - "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that **I am he** that doth speak: behold, it is I."

Jesus was clearly stating that He is the Lord God of Israel, the Creator, the Redeemer of Israel, their long-awaited Messiah. Peter validated Jesus' claim saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And again, Peter spoke in Acts 2:36, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ**."

The church that Jesus began to build is as follows:

- Jews that believe in Jesus as the Lord and Messiah of Israel, his little flock.
- That church or assembly would inherit the kingdom promised to the patriarchs of Israel.

We, the church, the body of Christ, of this present dispensation of grace, inherit heavenly places, not the earthly kingdom promised to Abraham. Therefore, Jesus was not speaking of a Christian church in Matthew chapter 16, but a Jewish church of believers in him as Messiah of Israel.

Jesus delegated the building of the Christian church to our Apostle Paul, beginning in Acts chapter 9, with his Damascus Road conversion.

Also, our faith, during this present dispensation of grace, is **NOT** built upon the fact that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. Our faith is built upon the gospel of grace, that Jesus died on the cross for our sin, was buried, and rose again the third day (1st Corinthians 15:1-4). Our faith is built upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not the fact that He is the Messiah of Israel.

So, the church that Jesus began to build during his earthly ministry never reached fruition. His Jewish followers did not inherit the kingdom. The inheritance of the kingdom was postponed because the nation of Israel corporately rejected Jesus as the Messiah/King. The kingdom was offered to them, but the offer was rescinded with Jesus' rejection and crucifixion. God the Father, set Israel aside temporarily and implemented the dispensation of grace to save Gentiles. Israel's kingdom program will resume after the Rapture, when the Father, once again, turns his attention back to Israel. Israel will be tested and tried by fire during the seven-year tribulation. A believing remnant in Jesus, as the Messiah, will persevere and be saved at the second coming of Jesus Christ, at the end of the seven-year tribulation. That believing remnant will be joined in the kingdom by other resurrected believers as follows:

- The Old Testament saints, those righteous saints that believe in God from Genesis to Malachi.
- The righteous followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry in the early chapters of Acts: His little flock.
- The Tribulation saints, those martyred for their testimony of Jesus Christ during the seven-year tribulation.

The above three groups of believers will be resurrected at the first resurrection defined in Revelation chapter 20. See my previous video for more on the first resurrection.

At the start of the Millennial Kingdom, the church that Jesus desired to build will finally be established; being comprised of his brethren, Jews, that believe in him as Lord and Messiah of Israel. They will enjoy 1000 years of peace and rest with their Messiah. The future Millennial Kingdom is just the prelude to a glorious, magnificent eternity.

Summary

Let's summarize what we have learned from Matthew chapter 16 and supporting passages.

1. The word "Christ" is an epithet or title given to Jesus, signifying Him, as the Messiah of Israel.
2. The word "rock" refers to Jesus as both Lord and Christ, the Messiah of Israel.
3. The church that Jesus began to build during His earthly ministry was comprised of Jews who believed in him as the Messiah of Israel.
4. The establishment of that Jewish church was postponed because Jesus was rejected and crucified by the leaders of Israel.

5. The Lord Jesus Christ will resume building the Jewish remnant church during the seven-year tribulation.
6. This remnant of Jewish believers is written about in Revelation 12:11, 17 and Revelation 14:12. These keep the commandments of the law and have the faith and testimony of Jesus.
7. That remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus, as the Messiah, will be saved at Jesus' second coming, at the end of the seven-year tribulation. "*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*" - 1 Peter 1:13 KJV
8. The "little flock" church will finally be established by Jesus Christ, and receive the promised kingdom, at the beginning of His Millennial Reign.
9. Those living believers in Jesus, as Lord and Messiah of Israel, will enter the Millennial Kingdom. They are joined by the resurrected Old Testament saints, the little flock believers, and those martyred for Christ during the seven-year tribulation.
10. They will enjoy peace and rest with their Messiah for 1000 years.
11. Israel will be the head of the nations on earth.
12. We, the church, the body of Christ, have a heavenly program wherein we will rule and reign with Christ in heavenly places, over the entire universe.

Two programs: an earthly program for Israel, and a heavenly program for us, the church, the body of Christ. Both programs point to Jesus Christ!

1 – Jesus, as the Messiah of Israel, ruling over their earthly kingdom program.

2 – Jesus, as the head of the church, the body of Christ, ruling over His heavenly program.

Keep these two programs separate (rightly divided), and your understanding of scripture will be greatly enhanced. For centuries, Satan and church tradition have blinded believers to the simplicity of these two programs. They have mixed, mingled, and harmonized things that must be rightly divided! See my video entitled "The Grand Theme of the Bible" for a detailed study on the two programs the Father has implemented for the redemption and reconciliation of heaven and earth. We have a splendid and exciting future with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!!!

Thank you for joining me in this video. I hope you enjoyed it. If you did, please like and subscribe, and I'll see you next time, God bless!