

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT

"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? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, some, Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:13-18.

Jesus never built but one thing after He quit the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. That was His church. I believe that we shall find it both interesting and inspiring to consider four things concerning THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT.

I. The Origin Of It.

1. It was founded at the right time.

It was founded during the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It was founded in the right place -- Palestine.

3. It was founded by the right person -- Christ.

He was the Founder, Builder, Master, and Proprietor.

4. It was founded out of the right material.

They were believers in Christ who had been baptized in obedience to His command and were willing to carry forward His work in the world.

Jesus founded or organized His church during the days of His personal ministry here on the earth out of the material which had been prepared by John the Baptist. Our text states three things concerning the church that Jesus built: --

- (1) It would have a great foundation -- "Upon this rock".
- (2) It would have a great growth -- "I will build".
- (3) It would have a great conflict -- "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it".

What did Christ mean by "This rock"? There are various interpretations of this expression.

- (1) Some say He meant Peter.

If so, He surely did not mean his vacillating, impulsive, high-tempered, unreliable sort of personality, not withstanding Peter's big heart, generous motives, and strong declaration of devotion.

If He meant Peter surely He meant his regenerated and remade personality as the kind of material out of which the church should be established.

But Christ surely never meant to commit His church and its whole support and supreme authority to any one man. Even Peter, himself, disclaimed this.

- (2) Some say He meant Peter's confession.

If so, He must have had in mind the full meaning of that good confession which accepted fully the revelation of the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God and the fulfillment of their meaning in Christ as the very Son of God.

- (3) Some say He meant Himself.

"This rock" refers to Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11. His deity, His virgin birth, His perfect life, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection and His second coming are the component parts of this foundation. If Christ is the rock, and He is, then we are assured of a safe, solid, enduring, and eternal foundation.

It is well for us to note that He said He would build His church -- not tear it down. In other words, He would approve whatever would contribute to the building process but disapprove whatever would hinder it. He began with Himself, then the four, then eight, then seventy, and when He went away there were one hundred twenty. At Pentecost three thousand were saved, baptized and added to the church. They could not have been added to the church if it had not already been in existence.

II. The Ordinances Of It.

1. Baptism.

Baptism is immersion in water of one who has become a child of God.

(1) Baptism is a picture of the burial and resurrection of Jesus.

(2) Baptism is a picture of the experience of the Christian.

He has been forgiven of his sins, cleansed from unrighteousness, renounced or buried the old life, and resolved to walk in the new life of fellowship with Christ.

We are obligated to observe this ordinance because of the example of Christ, the command of Christ, the exhortation of the Scriptures, and the invariable practice and teachings of the Apostles.

2. The Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is symbolic of the suffering, sacrifice, and death of the Saviour. Salvation and baptism are prerequisites to the observance of it. And we must ever remember that it is strictly a church ordinance.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are called ordinances because they were ordained by Christ to be observed by His church. The word "ordinance" implies "That it is given by authority and that its observance is required as an act of obedience."

III. The Officers Of It.

1. Bishop, Elder or Pastor.

The word translated into each of these terms or expressions means an overseer. He has no authority to govern or control in the sense of commanding and enforcing obedience. He is simply a ministering leader.

2. Deacon.

This word means a servant. A deacon is simply a ministering servant.

Other officers, such as clerk, treasurer, trustees, etc., have been chosen as the needs have arisen.

IV. The Objectives Of It.

1. Evangelism.

"Make disciples of all the nations." "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

(1) Meaning explained.

Evangelism means winning lost souls to Christ. This is the aim or objective of the church which Jesus built. To do this effectively we must realize that there is something to save men from, which is sin; there is something to save men with, which is the blood of Christ; and there is something to save men to, which is the life of respectability, personal victory, Christian service, and a home in heaven.

(2) Motives epitomized.

- a. The example of Christ -- Luke 19:10.
- b. The command of Christ -- Matthew 28:19.
- c. The condition of people.
- d. The welfare of the church.

When people love the church they want it to grow.

e. The desire for reward.

When one wins souls to Christ he has the joy of helping others, he receives the gratitude and affection of the ones whom he wins, he has the assurance of the fellowship of additional persons in heaven, and he experiences the bliss of praising and glorifying the Lord.

2. Education.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

(1) Meaning explained.

- a. Make known the gospel message.
- b. Show people their need of Christ.
- c. Teach them the way to Christ.
- d. Persist until they are brought to Christ.
- e. Teach them all things commanded by Christ.

He was the world's greatest Teacher. All recognized Him as a Teacher. He taught privately and publicly. He taught individuals and multitudes. He sent His disciples forth for the same purpose. When educational methods are neglected the cause of Christ suffers.

(2) Motives epitomized.

- a. Love for Christ.
He has set us an example and asked us to follow Him. If we love Him we will want to please Him.
- b. Love for others.
If we love others we must try to help them.
- c. Love for the church.
If we love the church we will try to perpetuate it and make it a power for righteousness. The church that puts the proper emphasis on teaching will prosper.
- d. Desire for personal blessings.
Obeying this command of our Saviour will bring us a real joy.

3. Enlistment.

(1) Enlistment in real loyalty to Christ.

(2) Enlistment in real loyalty to the church.

We should be loyal to the worship, the work, the officers, the membership, and the good name of the church. We should support the church with our prayers, our purses, and our presence. The church is a necessary institution. It is the best teacher of righteousness which we have. We prove our loyalty to Christ by our attitude toward and support of His church. The Lord deserves our gratitude and demands our loyalty to Him and His church.