

(Message #2 of **The Church: A Divine Design**)

The Authority of the Church

Matthew 16: 18-19

Our text tonight reveals the plan of Christ for His church. At this time He has yet to go to Calvary. Redemption's plan has not yet been fulfilled and He is already preparing the disciples for the work to come. He is revealing the design of the church and the authority that it possesses.

As we've already considered, it is a blessing to be counted part of the church. The saved are born into the family of God and made part of the church, the Bride of Christ. There is nothing on earth like the church. There is no other group of people or organization that possesses what the church has. We are not just an organization or a gathering of people; we are the church of the living God.

As we spend some time tonight focusing on the church, I pray these verses will encourage and embolden us in the work we've been called to do. Being part of the church is a wonderful privilege, but with membership comes responsibility. If we are to fulfill our responsibilities, we need the power of God. This significant passage reveals that the power of the Lord is available to the church. Tonight as we consider the **principles** regarding the church, I want to preach on: **The Authority of the Church.**

I. The Construction of the Church (18a) – **And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;** In this one simple statement Jesus reveals the architectural design for the church. In many ways it is similar to other building projects and yet it is divinely unique.

A. The Sovereign Ordination – **I will build my church.** Christ declares that it is His church and He will be the One doing the construction. The church was not hatched out of an idea that humanity needed a place to congregate, get motivated, feel good about themselves, and remain reclusive from the world. The church is an institution that was ordained of God Himself. Our blessed Lord founded the church, died for the church, determined when it would be born, and He built the church.

▪ The church is not an average, ordinary gathering of people. It is made up of the redeemed of Christ. Although I fear that many have lost sight of that divine truth. Many church bodies view the work of the Lord no differently than they do the work of the world. They have no more concern or devotion for the church than any other aspect of life.

- It ought to excite us to be part of the church. We ought to rejoice that we have been saved and placed in the church. We are part of the church of the living God!

B. The Solid Foundation – **Upon this rock I will build my church.** There can be no doubt that the church was built upon a solid foundation. She has been here for some 2,000 years. Storms have come, persecution has been persistent, and many have tried to tear her down, and yet she remains.

I want to take a moment to consider the rock on which the church was built. This has been the subject of debate and controversy for ages.

1. The Myth – Some look at this verse and assume that the church is built upon Peter. Peter's name in the Greek language was *Petros* which means “*a rock or a stone.*” The Roman Catholics teach that Christ built the church upon Peter, the rock. They claim that he was the first pope of the church.

- Clearly we know that Peter is not the rock to which Jesus referred. He was just a mortal, sinful man. He did not possess the ability or the deity to have the church built upon him.
- Closer examination of the text will refute this false doctrine. There are two different words translated rock in this verse. Jesus said, thou are *Petros*, and upon this *petra* I will build my church. The word *petra* means “*a rock or ledge, a large stone, a prominent projecting rock or cliff.*” Peter was a stone, but Jesus was and is the Rock upon which the church was built.

2. The Messiah – The disciples had not yet embraced the fact that Jesus had come to offer Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This declaration points toward His death at Calvary and His being the foundation, the chief Cornerstone of the church.

- Had there been no Calvary, there would be no church. Had Christ not died, we would yet be in our sin without hope. The Rock is Jesus Christ our Lord, Savior and Redeemer of the world, and the foundation of the church.

3. The Message – We need to take a moment to consider the context of this passage. Jesus had asked the disciples, “**Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? Whom say ye that I am?**” Peter responded, “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” He had rightly answered. He had recognized and received Jesus as the Christ. He saw Him as the Son of God. Peter's faith was essential to his relationship with Christ.

- Now, the church is not built upon our faith; it is built upon Christ and Christ alone, but our faith is essential to being born into the church. Our faith is essential for the spiritual well

being of the church. We must see Christ for who He is and believe upon Him in salvation. Jesus is the Rock, the foundation, and our faith is laid upon that foundation!

C. The Spiritual Construction – **I will build my church**. Jesus is very clear in this regard. He is the One who will do the building. He will select the materials and place them in the church as it pleases Him.

- The modern church has lost sight of this fundamental truth. It appears that many have no confidence in His ability to build the church. Many have abandoned this principle for a quick prayer, a handshake, and a pass through the baptistery. They are trying to build the church based on their methods and motivation. Christ alone has the power to build the church.
- We too seem to have figured out which materials are suitable and which are not. It is not up to us to judge, but to welcome all that Christ adds!

I. The Construction of the Church (18a)

II. The Conquest of the Church (18b) – **And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**. This too is a biblical truth that has been misunderstood and misrepresented. Most view this as an offensive attack of Satan. I have never known a gate to be used as an instrument of war. This simply reveals that the gates of hell no longer have the children of God bound. We have been delivered from that state of captivity, never to be imprisoned again! I thought of a couple of things that we have been delivered from.

A. The Power of Satan – The gates of hell will not prevail against the church. We have been set free from Satan's bondage. We still have to deal with his deception and temptation, but we are no longer enslaved to this tyrant. He no longer has the ability to control our lives!

B. The Prison of Sin – Once we are saved, we are delivered from the penalty of sin and set free from its bondage. Our lives are no longer dominated and controlled by sin. We have been set free from its chains and have the privilege of living in the freedom of Christ our Lord.

C. The Pain of Separation – As sinners we were separated from fellowship with the Lord. We were captive to our sin and condemned before God. Being born again does not deliver us from temptation or the presence of sin, but we have the assurance that we will never face eternal

separation because of sin. Disobedience may hinder us from receiving the presence and blessing of God, but we will never be cast away, enslaved to sin again. **Jn.8:36 – If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.**

- The church has been delivered from the gates of hell and we need not fear ever being held captive. Christ has built His church and He will preserve His church. We are secure upon this solid foundation!

I. The Construction of the Church (18a)

II. The Conquest of the Church (18b)

III. The Commission of the Church (19) – **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** This is another verse that is somewhat difficult to understand and often misinterpreted. Here Jesus is simply giving a command for the church to follow. He has commissioned us with a work to do.

A. The Church's Ability – Jesus promised the **keys of the kingdom.** That is simple enough to understand. Keys are used to open things that are locked. They are used to gain access to areas that were otherwise inaccessible.

- We have been called to a great task, but we have been equipped with the ability to accomplish this great work. There is not a door or obstacle that the Lord doesn't have the ability to open or move on our behalf. We are here to carry out the kingdom work and He will provide the access that we need.

B. The Church's Authority (19) — **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** The church has been given the authority to bind and to loose. That in no way implies deity on our part or divine wisdom and discretion. It simply means that we have received the truth of God and have the authority to proclaim that truth. The church has the authority to share the gospel, encourage the church, and to rebuke sin. In fact, we have a divine mandate to do so. Much of the world's problems are a direct result of the church avoiding or ignoring our obligation.

- God ordained human government and He ordained the church. Both receive their authority from God. But I am convinced that the church possess authority that human

government does not have. Government ought to be subject to the mandates of Scripture. Humanity ought to be governed by biblical principles.

- Much of the trouble we face today is a direct result of our leaders no longer governing according to the Word of God! I am not one to mix politics and the church, but we have a biblical mandate to declare truth at all levels and at all costs! It is time for the church of the living God to be heard.

C. The Church's Accountability – The Lord did not give this mandate just to carry on a conversation. This was not something that was optional. The church is obligated to declare truth and exercise the authority it has received from the Lord.

- This is not an easy task. I can assure you that it isn't popular and it will not be well received, but we are obligated nonetheless. It is time for us to stand for the truth and proclaim it to a lost and dying world. It is time for the church to awake from our complacency and coziness with sin and stand for God! We will give an account of this generation and how we responded to the call.

This has been a most revealing look at the church. I rejoice to be included in the church that was founded upon the Rock and built by Him. It is good to know that the church has been set apart and delivered from the bondage of Satan and sin. But we cannot look at that aspect of the church without considering our commission as well. We have an obligation to stand for the Lord and ensure that truth is proclaimed.

Is there a need in your life today? If so this altar is open. Why not come before the Lord and receive what you need?