

**Sermon Title: The Relevancy of the Church**

**Sermon Text: Matthew 16:13-19**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to a deeper understanding of the Biblical mandate and mission of the church.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 7 clear principles related to the relevancy of the church.**

**Introduction:**

- I. The **assignment** of the church. Vv.13-14
- II. The **answer** of the church. Vv.15-16
- III. The **absolute** of the church. V.17
- IV. The **anchor** of the church. V.18a
- V. The **architect** of the church. V.18b
- VI. The **adversary** of the church. V.18c
- VII. The **authority** of the church. V.19

**I. The **assignment** of the church. Vv.13-14**

Caesarea Philippi was an inland city located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The city was the site of worship for a nature god known as Pan and the home of a temple dedicated to Augustus Caesar. The fact that Jesus chose this location to announce His identity as the Messiah, demonstrates that Jesus' kingdom is superior to Caesar's and that He is likewise superior to all the idols and mythical gods of the culture.

Following Jesus can involve sacrificing the comforts of home (**Matthew 8:18-22**), and family relationships. Jesus is more than worth the sacrifices because He is the Son of Man. This title is a reference from (**Daniel 7:13-14 below**) where it describes rules of heavenly origin who would reign over a universal and eternal kingdom, this was Jesus favorite term for Himself and is used 28 times in Matthew.

**Daniel 7:13-14** "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. **14** Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

The assignment of the church is to reflect and proclaim the sovereign rule of their King to a confused and lost humanity.

**II. The **answer** of the church. Vv.15-16**

Matthew refers to Jesus as Messiah in (**Matthew 1:1, 16 below**) this is the first time the disciples called Him this.

**Matthew 1:1** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

**Matthew 1:16** And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

Peter used the title "living God" to contrast Yahweh with the lifeless pagan gods, such as those represented in nearly all pagan temples. This Old Testament name for Jehovah (**1 Samuel 17:26, 36 Deuteronomy 5:26** `For who *is there* of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?

**Joshua 3:10** And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites:

**Psalms 42:2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

**Psalms 84:2** My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Must be contrasted with manmade dead, dumb idols.

**Jeremiah 10:8** But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol *is* a worthless doctrine.

**Jeremiah 18:15** "Because My people have forgotten Me, They have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, *From* the ancient paths, To walk in pathways and not on a highway,

**1 Corinthians 12:2** You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

### III. The absolute of the church. V.17

Every true believer like Peter understands Jesus to be who He is because of divine revelation (**Matthew 11:25-27**). Christ's messianic claims have always been subtle allusions to Old Testament prophecies, combined with Jesus miraculous works that validated His messiahship. Up unto this point Jesus had not taught the disciples the fullness of His identity.

God the Father had opened the eyes of Peter, as He still does today, to the full significance of these biblical claims, and revealed to Him who Jesus really is.

In other words, it is God the Father by the Holy Spirit that illuminates the heart of an individual to a deeper, clear, exact knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith. This is more than just an academic opinion about Jesus Christ, it is a confession of Peter's personal faith, made possible by a divinely-regenerated heart. (**John 3:1-6**)

### IV. The anchor of the church. V.18a

The word for Peter, "Petros," means a small stone (**John 1:42**). Jesus used a play on words here with Peter which means a foundation boulder (**Matthew 7:24-25**). The New Testament makes it very clear that Christ is both

1. the foundation

**Acts 4:11-12** "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' **12** "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

**1 Corinthians 3:11** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

And He is the

2. Head of the church

**Ephesians 5:23** For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Jesus is not giving either of those roles to Peter or to the Apostles, they were to be responsible for proclaiming the foundation of the church (**Ephesians 2:19-20**), while submitting to the Head of the Church (**Ephesians 1:20-23**).

The role of establishing and building of the Church is reserved for Christ alone, and is based on the truth about Christ and of Christ alone. The play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from and is still to come from the small stones of regenerated people. Peter explains this picture in his first epistle: the church is made up of "living stones"

**1 Peter 2:5** you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Who, like Jesus by divine revelation, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ is the chief cornerstone.

**1 Peter 2:6-7** Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." **7** Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"

#### V. The architect of the church. V.18b

The term "church" is used here for the first time in Matthew. Christ called it "My church" this is a possessive noun in the Greek, emphasizing that Jesus alone is its Architect, Builder, Owner, and Lord. The Greek word for Church can mean "called out ones."

"In classical Greek, the term was used almost exclusively for political gatherings. In particular, in Athens the word signified the assembling of the citizens for the purpose of conducting the affairs of the polis. Moreover, ekklesia referred only to the actual meeting, not the citizens themselves."

[**Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible: Edited by Walter A. Elwell; p.95**]

The most important background of term ekklesia is the Septuagint, which uses the word in a religious sense about 100 times, almost always a translation of the Hebrew word qahal. **Deuteronomy 9:10** speaks of the (ekklesia) in the wilderness, and as the elders gather to conduct business. [**Ibid. 95**]

The church Jesus promises to build began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord baptized believers into His body which is the church. (**Acts 2:1-4**)

**1 Corinthians 12:12-13** For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. **13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

#### VI. The adversary of the church. V.18c

Hades is the place of punishment for the spirits of dead unbelievers. The point of entry for hades is death. This then is a Jewish phrase referring to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan **Hebrews 2:14-15** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Death and Satan have no power to stop the advancement of the church. Throughout history the blood of the martyrs, has advanced the gospel and the growth of the church, in size and spiritual power (**Smyrna Revelation 2:8-11**).

#### VII. The authority of the church. V.19

The keys have two functions, to lock or unlock. These keys represent authority and Christ promises to provide to all believers authority to declare what was bounded or loosed in heaven, declared by the church on earth. This is an echo of the promise of

**John 20:23** "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

**Isaiah 22:22** The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.

Where Christ gave the disciples authority to forgive or retain the sins of people based on the Scriptures. This all must be understood in the context of (**Matthew 18:15-17**), where Christ explains the specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church, as well as the world.

The summation of it all means that any biblically based constituted body of believers acting according to God's Word and the Holy Spirit, has the authority to declare if someone's sin is forgiven or remains unforgiven.

The church's authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the already clear biblical judgment of heaven based on the Word of God. When the church makes these judgments based on the Word of God, they can be sure heaven is in agreement. Whatever the church "binds" or "loose" on earth has already been "bound" and "loosed" in heaven. When the church says the unrepented person is still bound in their sins, with the corresponding condemnation, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a person has demonstrated biblical repentance, that person is freed or "loosed" from the condemnation and declared justified, heaven also agrees.