

What does Hebrews 10:24-25 suggest we can expect to happen as we gather as “The Church”?

3. Challenge to the Church

18 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.

- Matthew 16:18 NIV

At the end of verse 18 Jesus refers to “the gates of Hades” which can also be translated as the grave, death, or hell. However you translate this term, there is clearly an enemy and opposition to Jesus’ church.

Based on Jesus’ statement, what do we expect to result from an assault on The Church? Do you feel this guarantees protection of individual believers?

Throughout history we have witnessed Christian persecution. Even today in many countries the Church is persecuted. Peter himself was martyred. But the faithful followers of Jesus continue to gather, worship and be transformed as Jesus builds His Church stone by stone.

WRAP-UP

Peter was the first to confess that Jesus was his Lord and Savior, the Messiah promised by God. His faith set the stage for the church to be built upon Jesus, the cornerstone. As more people embraced Jesus as Lord, He added to His Church. If we also confess Jesus as Lord of our lives, we belong to His Church. As we gather, we are transformed into the image of Christ. We are motivated to love and good works as we spread the good news to the world. And when the enemy opposes us, Jesus is our assurance that the church will not be overcome, but will continue in His purposes until His return.

MEMORY VERSE

*16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."
17 Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. - Matthew 16:16-17 NLT*

Challenge-This week as you assemble together with other believers, consider how you can motivate one another to love and good works.

Building the Church No Longer Strangers - Week 4

INTRODUCTION

In our current sermon series, we have considered how we belong to God, to His Family of believers and to His Body. But how do we belong to The Church? Is it a matter of membership classes, tithing, attendance or something else? In Matthew Chapter 16, Jesus first mentions His Church. As we study this passage, we find what the Church is based on and how we become a part of it.

Ice Breaker

What was the first church experience you remember, perhaps from childhood?

Key Passage

15 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. 18 Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. - Matthew 16:15-18 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who do you say that I am?

*13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."
- Matthew 16:13-14 NLT*

As Jesus was traveling with His disciples they entered Caesarea Philippi, a region well-known for its pagan worship. It was here that Jesus queried the disciples about who the people believed He was. *Note- There are many instances throughout the Gospels, including here, that Jesus refers to Himself as "The Son of Man".*

What were some of the ways people identified Jesus? What is the answer to that question today, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

In the Old Testament there are instances where the return of some of the prophets is either stated or implied. This is why the disciples were listing some of the popular and acceptable theories about who Jesus was. These choices were consistent with Jewish scripture, but none said that the people calling Jesus their Messiah. Their answers fell short.

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There was no hesitation in Peter's answer. Peter identified Him as both the Christ and the Son of God. This means Peter identified Him as the one and only Savior promised by God.

The term "Christian" hadn't been used at this point, but Peter is clearly the first Christian. He was the first to confess Jesus as Savior. How had Peter discovered this truth? How would you explain the difference between knowing Jesus is the Christ based on study of scripture, and knowing Jesus is the Christ based on God revealing that truth to you? Can you have one without the other?

2. Foundation of the Church

18 Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. - Matthew 16:18 NLT

This is the first time the word church is used in the New Testament. In the Greek it is the word *ekklesia*. It literally refers to those "called out", or a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly.

What does Jesus say he will build His church on?

Between verses 17 and 18 this disciple's name is changed. Let's look a little deeper into what happens to him.

In verse 17 he is referred to as Simon the son of John. But his statement of faith in Jesus as Savior had been revealed by Jesus' heavenly father, who is now also this disciple's heavenly Father. Now Jesus calls him *petros (Peter)* which translates as "a piece of rock". And Jesus immediately explains, upon this *petra*¹ I will build my church. He isn't building his church on Petros (Peter) but upon a larger rock (petra) of which Peter is a small piece.

¹Petra is "a mass of rock," as distinct from *petros*, "a detached stone or boulder," or a stone that might be thrown or easily moved.

Perhaps Peter is the best one to explain this. In a letter he wrote to "God's chosen people" Peter identifies who are small rocks and who is The Rock.

4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. 5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. 6 As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." 7 Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone."

- 1 Peter 2:4-7 NLT

Who does Peter refer to as the living cornerstone? How does he refer to those who come to Jesus? Based on verses 6 & 7 what do you think determines if you are a part of the church?

If believers are the living stones, or the building blocks of the church and Jesus is the cornerstone (The Rock in Matt 16:18) upon which the church is built, then you must ask yourself the same question that Jesus asked Peter.

Who do you say that Jesus is? The answer determines if you belong to The Church.

The church begins with salvation, but as the people gather, they are transformed. The church is built up together, accountable to one another, and growing to be more like Jesus.

24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. - Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT