

Scripture Reference: Matthew 16:13-20 / Focal vv. 18b-20-33

Date: January 26, 2014

Title: "What Makes a Church?"

Focus: What a church is (Series 2 of 10)

Intro:

1. Jesus says things that challenge our ability to understand. We simply do not know what to make of them. It's not that Jesus isn't clear, it's that what He says does not resonate with our understanding or experiences.

Here is one of those moments. What do we do in times like these? We either move on to the next passage or dumb it down to match our experiences.

In the first part of His discussion with His disciples, He tells them what a *church* is, a group of people united in the common belief of Him as Messiah, the Son of God (vv. 13-18a). However, Jesus does not stop there. He goes on to say what the implications are for a body of believers living their lives based on Him.

Body:

Church is a Body of *Over-comers*

Jesus clearly pronounces that *His* church would not be overcome, even by Hell itself.

He was not saying that an institution known as a church would not fail. That is obviously not true. Church organizations have failed through the centuries, sometimes spectacularly.

Church buildings have been ransacked and burned. As an organized body they have gone to meeting in secret and hiding out in caves. Churches have been relegated to public insignificance.

In addition, organized religion has in the name of Jesus led crusades and persecuted others.

But, this *is not* what Jesus was referring to. Religion is man's attempt to reach God. Church is people who have placed confidence and assurance in Christ.

Those who place their faith, hope, and trust in Jesus will not be overcome by evil, instead, they will overcome evil - Rom. 12:20-21.

When people place confidence in Christ, though pressures will come, they will not be crushed - 2 Cor. 4:8-9.

A life built upon Jesus will be one of overwhelming victory - Romans 8:37-38!

Even if it is not your experience, this the assurance of Jesus!

Don't trust yourself, your church, your pastor, your situation, and expect overcoming. But, when a people, place their confidence in Christ, victory is the promised outcome.

Church is a Group *Moving Forward*

In referring to “The gates of Hades,” you ever think about the fact that gates don’t move? Gates are intended to keep people out. Jesus is not referring to His church resisting evil as it comes to them.

Instead, Jesus is talking about those who have placed their trust in Him moving forward in life, and where Satan tries to hem them in, He will not be able.

Why, because the church is so strong? No. Because Jesus "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20-21).

If people have faith in Jesus, they will not hold up because *they* are incapable of doing what Jesus said is to be done. Instead, they will press on, believing what Jesus has said.

Too often Christians are paralyzed out of fear, fear that they are not able, fear the task is too big, etc.

What is there to fear? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31)

Church is a Community with *Authority*

Jesus said He has given to His body of believers, “Keys.”

This is not a literal reference to a key. It is a euphemism for authority. One who has the key, has the right to use it.

This statement directly correlates to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 22:22.

Isa. 22:22; "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open."

Those who place their faith in Jesus have been given access to His authority. What God has declare, He has also provided the resource to bring to pass (Matt. 28:19-20)!

"Shall have been bound/loosed . . .";

A life founded in Christ, will bear the marks of trust in Jesus. Your marriage will reflect His Kingdom. Your service will demonstrate the degree to which you trust Jesus.

Heaven will reflect the works of those who trust Jesus.

Closing:

1. The community of faith is said to be a victorious lot. Sadly, this does not seem to be the present reality.
2. Therefore, we gloss over such passages as this, trivialize them, making them apply to some future state or being merely symbolic.
3. Maybe it is time for *you* to reconsider what church really is.