

The Church

What is It?

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18)

Who or what is “this rock”?

Interpretive Options

1. The rock is Peter. Peter is the rock, the leader of the church on earth, and there is a link between him and the papacy.
2. The rock is Jesus. When the image of a foundation stone is used in relation to the Christian church elsewhere in the NT, that stone is Jesus himself, not Peter. (1 Cor. 3:10-11)
3. The rock is Peter's confession. It is not upon Peter but upon the immovable bedrock of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
4. The rock is Peter. The interpretation and/or application is different than #1. Peter is the rock, in that he is the first among equals. Jesus built his church on the foundation of such men. (Eph. 2:20)

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18)

What is the Church?

- Jesus uses the word, “church,” twice in the Gospels. Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.
- The Greek word is *ekklēsia*.
- It comes from the Greek word, *ekkaleō*, and refers to those who are called out.
- It can refer to assemblies of people in a non-religious setting, but in the book of Acts and in the Epistles, it usually refers to Christ congregations or to all God’s people redeemed by Christ
- In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, *ekklēsia* is the equivalent of the Hebrew, *qāhāl*, meaning assembly, or congregation.

What is the Church?

“The church is that assembly of people who belong to the Lord, who are gathered together for Him. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls individuals out of the world of sin and death and into eternal light and life; it takes people who were no people and turns them into a special people for God (1 Peter 2:9-10). That’s what the church is. It’s the assembly of people living under the rule of Jesus and committed to each other in the faith.” - Thabiti Anyabwile

Building His Church

- Jesus said, *I will build my church.*
- There is an authority. There is oversight.
- It is His Church. He is the Head of the Church.

The Gates of Hell

- “Hades” is the NT equivalent of the OT, *Sheol*, the place of the dead.
- The “gates” thus represent the imprisoning power of death: death will not be able to imprison and hold the church of the living God.
- The imagery is rather of death being unable to swallow up the new community which Jesus is building. It will never be destroyed.

The Invisible Church and Visible Church

The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ its Head; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. (WCOF 25.1)

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. (WCOF 25.2)

The Local Church

It is the visible church.

“What is the local church? It’s the institution which Jesus created and authorized to pronounce the gospel of the kingdom, to affirm gospel professors, to oversee their discipleship, and to expose impostors.” – Jonathan Leeman

The Local Church

The visible church is also the local church. Of course, we have to ask what are the marks of the local church? What makes a church? Is it a just a gathering of believers. Is it where two or three are gathered.

What Are the Marks of a Local Church?

“Wherever we find the Word of God surely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a church of God.” – John Calvin

What Are the Marks of a Local Church?

“Strictly speaking, it may be said that the true preaching of the Word and its recognition as the standard of doctrine and life, is the one mark of the Church. Without it there is no Church, and it determines the right administration of the sacraments and the faithful exercise of Church discipline. Nevertheless, the right administration of the sacraments is also a real mark of the Church. And though the exercise of discipline may not be peculiar to the Church, that is, is not found in it exclusively, yet it is absolutely essential to the purity of the Church.” – Louis Berkhof

The Local Church and Its Marks

- The local church is God's way of providing an embassy in a foreign land.
- The local church is not something you join, like a club.
- May we not neglect the local church.
- Pray for the local church. Pray for unity, that we would love one another, that we would serve one another, that we would go and make disciples. Pray for its leadership.
- Thank God for the local church.

Jesus said, *I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*

“That is a promise and there’s no reason to believe this promise has an expiration date.” –
Tim Keller.