

Matthew 16:13-19 (Paul L Johnson) 171956

Church That Christ Built, Church That Christ Built, The

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Please read Matthew 16:13-19

It is in the verses we have read that the church is first mentioned in Scripture, as has been often pointed out. The Lord speaks of it as "My church" which He will build. The church is presented in Scripture in various ways, but it is presented here as that which the Lord Jesus could call "My church." It was to be something for Himself, belonging to Him. While the church is spoken of in Matthew, it was not at that time in existence nor was it in process of being formed. Its existence was entirely future for the Lord says, "I will build." He anticipates the day of Pentecost when the church was formed on earth by the descent of the Holy Spirit. These Scriptures suggest that the Lord is to build in this world that which will be for Himself, His church, while He has nothing in regard to Israel and the world at large.

Matthew does not unfold the church in the way Paul does, as in Ephesians, 1 Corinthians and in the first epistle to Timothy; but we do have in Matthew the church unfolded as that which is the building of Christ. As such it replaces Israel on earth as God's administrative center. It is the place where the authority of Christ is found. It is the depository of the testimony of God; the place where His interests are maintained. Christ says in verse 18, in the middle of the verse, "Upon this rock I will build My church." When Peter makes his confession, the Lord says, as it were, "Now there is something upon which I can build." This is a foundation which can bear the structure which He is to build.

"Thou art Peter." He gives him a new name, indicating that it is as Peter he is to be part of this new structure. He will correspond to the foundation. He will be in keeping with the foundation which is a rock, since the name "Peter" means a "stone." As Peter, a stone, he is suitable material for this structure which Christ is to build. He was not suitable as Simon Bar-jona. He must have a change. No one is brought into the church of God as a natural person. God meets one as he is in his sins just as He met Simon Bar-jona and revealed His Son to him. He reveals the Lord Jesus to us as our Saviour. We believe and are saved through His blood. Then we are suitable material. We have become living stones and we come unto Him who is a living stone and are then as living stones built up a spiritual house. We know the church includes every believer on the Lord Jesus—living stones built by Christ into that which He says is "My church." He has built it. We do not want to hold any narrower view. That is the church according to the mind of God.

The Church in Ephesus

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the church is presented in its universal character as the body of Christ and the habitation of God. Believers are seen there as united in one body and linked with their Head in heaven. This is spiritual union in which every believer on earth has part. Everyone who believes the gospel, thus having the heart purified, is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a member of the body of Christ.

The Church in Corinthians

In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the church is brought before us in its local aspect. It is spoken of as "the church of God which is at Corinth." It is where the church is, so that we have the church in its local aspect. In Corinth and in each locality where there are members of the body of Christ, they are to function as the body of Christ in that particular locality.

While Paul gives instruction to the church of God in Corinth, he links them with "All that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Wherever there were believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, they constituted the church of God in their particular locality, and the instructions which Paul gives to the Corinthians were not to be limited to them alone, but were for all the assemblies wherever they were, for there is one body. "Every place" where saints assembled, they were to be governed by what Paul wrote to Corinth. In every place when they were come together in assembly, they would be guided by instructions given in 1 Corinthians, chapters 11 through 14.

Instruction for the Present Day

Every believer belongs to the church, and so it is the responsibility of all to walk in the truth of the church even though it is a day of scattering, confusion, division, false teaching and ruin and failure as to the testimony. Even though it is such a day, God's thought is the same as it ever was in regard to the assembly. The current instruction for us in seeking to maintain the testimony is found in 2 Timothy 2. Separation is the keynote. So we read in verse 19, "Let every one that nameth the name of Lord depart from iniquity." J.N.D. Trans. Then follows personal responsibility to flee youthful lusts and to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (v. 22)

Paul L. Johnson

clickbible.org