

What is Meant by the New Testament Church?

Matthew 16:13-19

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Matthew 16:13-18** – When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"
- 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
- 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
- 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
- 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- B. Because (1) different words mean different things to different people, and (2) because people misapply Bible terms to things that are not Biblical, it is important that we define some terms that are used to discuss the church we read about in the Bible.
1. Our English word “church” is translated from the Greek word, “EKKLESIA”, which means:
 - a. “The called out.”
 - b. “That which is called out of.”
 2. The Biblical concept of the church is being referenced when we use such terms as:
 - a. “The church”
 - b. “The Lord’s church”
 - c. “The New Testament church”
 - d. “The church of the New Testament”
 - e. “The body”
 - f. “The body of Christ”
 - g. “The kingdom of God”
 - h. “The kingdom of Heaven”
 - i. “Church of God”
 - j. “Churches of Christ”

- k. “Church of the Lord”
- l. “Church of the first born”
- m. “Church of the Saints”
- n. “The bride of Christ”
- o. “The house of God”

C. Realizing that names have become divisive, I want you to know that when any of these terms are used from the Bible in these studies:

1. They are not being used to refer to man-made, humanly established denominations they call churches.
2. They are being used to refer to that church our Lord spoke of in **Matthew 16:18** – “. . . And on this rock I will build My church.”

D. It is important to know that the church is not a building or a meeting place . . . But rather is a spiritual body composed of people. The church is the people who have obeyed Christ in the Bible prescribed way.

1. **Acts 2:47** – “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The Lord was adding people to the church.
2. **Acts 5:11** – “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.” Great fear came upon people because people are the church.
3. **Acts 8:3** – “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” People were being dragged away.
 - a. The Lord’s church is made up of people and they were, and still are, the church even when they were still in their own homes And not just when they were together as a group in an assembly.
 - b. Christians constitute the church wherever they are and whatever they are doing.

E. In the New Testament, the word “church” is used in two very distinct senses.

1. A **UNIVERSAL** sense.
 - a. When such is the meaning, it includes all of the saved throughout the entire world.
 - b. **Matthew 16:18** is an example. “. . . And on this rock I will build My church.”
2. A **LOCAL** sense.
 - a. Refers to the local congregation of Christians . . . All the saved in one community or congregation.
 - b. Examples:
 1. The church at Corinth.
 2. The church at Ephesus
 3. The church at Thessalonica
 4. The church at Rome
 5. The church at Antioch

6. The church at Jerusalem

- F. Because of mass confusion on the subject, as well as the misapplication of the Bible’s teachings on the subject of the church, it is necessary to establish the truthfulness of the Bible in order to expose the errors of denominationalism . . . that is, man-made religious organizations called churches.
- G. The Bible can guide you to the Lord’s church.
 - 1. The writings of men will guide you to their religious organizations.
 - 2. The writings of God will guide you to His.

INDEED, THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH OF WHICH CHRIST SPOKE IN MATTHEW 16:18

- A. Jesus used other expressions to refer to His church. Over 100 times He referred to the church as “the kingdom.” Sometimes it is referred to as the “kingdom of God,” and sometimes as the “kingdom of Heaven.”
 - 1. While the terms “kingdom” and “kingdom of Heaven” are synonymous, they are used in two senses in the New Testament.
 - a. The kingdom on earth – **The Church.**
 - b. The eternal kingdom – **In Heaven.**
 - 2. In referring to the church as the kingdom, Christ gave an in-depth picture of His church as to:
 - a. Its purpose
 - b. Its nature
 - c. Its work
- B. New Testament recipients of God’s Word understood this clearly.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH THE APOSTLES SPOKE ABOUT AND INSPIRED WRITERS WROTE ABOUT ON THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE.

- A. The eight writers of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, James, & Jude), referred to the church some 212 times by using such terms as:
 - 95 times – “the church”
 - 68 times – “the kingdom of God” Matthew 13
 - 32 times – “kingdom of Heaven” Matthew 13
 - 11 times – “the church of God” Galatians 1:13
 - 1 times – “body of Christ” 1 Corinthians 12:27
 - 1 times – “churches of Christ” Roman 16:16
 - 1 time – “my church” Matthew 16:18
 - 1 time – “church of the Lord” Acts 20:28 (A.S.V.)
 - 1 time – “church of the firstborn” Hebrews 12:23
 - 1 time – “church of the saints” 1 Corinthians 14:33

B. These were inspired writers . . . Therefore, the terms they used to describe the church were Heaven-sent. **When you look at all the terms being used today, remember this . . . If it is not in God’s Word, then it is not in God’s will.**

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH OF WHICH CHRIST IS THE SOLE HEAD.

A. Christ is its only Head on earth as well as in Heaven. Listen to God’s Word in the matter.

1. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body . . .”
2. **Ephesians 5:23** – “ . . . Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”
3. **Ephesians 4:15** – “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ.”
4. **Colossians 1:18** – “And He is the head of the body, the church . . .”

B. Language could not be plainer!

1. The church we read about in the Bible has only one head, and that head is Jesus Christ Himself.
2. Heaven has made no provision for there to be an earth head, or heads, in the Church Jesus died for.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH OF WHICH JESUS CHRIST IS THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.

A. Are you aware of the importance of a corner stone?

1. Corner stones are of great importance in binding together the side of a building.
2. A corner stone is the first stone laid in place . . . And from which all other stones are placed and positioned.
3. Corner stones are usually laid sideways and endways alternately, so that the end of one appears above or below the side face of the next.
4. Some of the corner stones in the ancient work of the temple foundations are 17 to 19 feet long and 7j feet thick. That is a large cornerstone.

B. The chief cornerstone of the New Testament church is none other than Jesus Christ, our Lord. Listen to God’s Word!

1. **1 Peter 2:7** – “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,"
 - a. Explain selecting cornerstones. “This one won’t do.”
 - b. Christ, rejected by the religionists of His day, was given the honor of being the Chief Cornerstone.

2. **Acts 4:11** – “This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.”
 3. **Ephesians 2:19-20** – “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”
 4. **1 Corinthians 3:11** – “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- D. Christ is both the foundation and the chief cornerstone of the church. We are living stones in the church. **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.”
- E. In giving us the New Testament, the Holy Spirit plainly teaches that men do not have the right to build churches upon themselves . . . But rather they are to be a part of the one Christ built.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE ONE THAT IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

- A. John is speaking about Christ in **John 3:28-31** – “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’
 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.
 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.
 31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”
- B. **Revelation 22:17** – “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”
- C. In **Revelation 21:9**, the angel said to John, “. . . ‘Come, I will show you the bride , the Lamb's wife.’”
- D. When the New Testament church is likened to a bride, and Christ is the bridegroom, two things are surely established.
1. The church should stand for things that are pure, good, and holy. They should be done at all times and in all places.
 2. The bride should wear the bridegroom’s name.
 - a. Contrary to the thinking of many, names are important.
 - b. **Acts 4:12** – “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH THAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

A. As Christ is the head, the Church is the body . . . Christ’s body.

B. Hear God’s Word in the matter.

1. **Colossians 1:18** – “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”
2. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,
23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
3. **Ephesians 5:29-30** – “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.
30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”
4. **Ephesians 4:11-12** – “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

C. Many have too long and too often assumed that the church belongs to ecclesiastical orders and church potentates. Not so! The church is Christ’s body and it belongs to Christ as its head.

1. **Ephesians 4:4** – “There is one body . . .”
2. **1 Corinthians 12:13** – “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.”
3. **1 Corinthians 12:18** – “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”
4. **1 Corinthians 12:20** – “But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.”

D. Where and when did the world manage to come up with hundreds of religious bodies, all claiming to be Christ’s church?

1. Can you imagine one head with hundreds of bodies? That would be a monstrosity.
2. Christ is the head of His New Testament church.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS THE CHURCH IS THE ONE OF WHICH CHRIST IS THE SOLE OWNER.

A. We have already observed that the church belongs to Christ.

1. He owns it.
2. It belongs to Him and to Him alone.
3. He bought it with His won blood.
4. He is:
 - a. The Head

- b. The Founder
 - c. The Designer
 - d. The Owner
- B. If the church belonged to men, then man could make changes in it. Man Could change:
- 1. Its name
 - 2. Its organization
 - 3. Its avenues of worship
 - 4. Its plan of salvation
 - 5. Its work
 - 6. Etc.
- C. Christ is the sole owner, and we must follow Him exactly.
- 1. He said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18) . . . And He did (Acts 2)
 - 2. He purchased it with His won blood in His death. Acts 20:28
 - 3. We must listen to Him and follow Him faithfully.

CONCLUSION:

- A. The New Testament Church is a divine institution.
- 1. Divine in its **ORIGIN**
 - 2. Divine in its **OWNERSHIP**
 - 3. Divine in its **PURPOSE**
 - 4. Divine in its **PLAN**
 - 5. Divine in its **DOCTRINE**
- B. Even in the midst of a religiously divided and religiously confused world, the Lord’s church still stands . . . And it always will.
- 1. By knowing what the Bible teaches about the church, you will be able to distinguish the Lord’s church from the world’s denominations and false religions.
 - 2. Why be a member of a denomination when you can be a member of the Lord’s New Testament church?
- C. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**