

Episode 823 Matthew 16 Part 3-I Will Build of Me

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just demonstrated to His disciples that they need to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and showed them the lesson in the two feedings of the multitude. Then, He asks them Who men say He, the Son of Man, is? After giving various answers, He asks who they think He is, and Peter says the Christ, the Son of the living God.

III. Who is the Son of Man? Matthew 16:13-17.

A. Verse 17. Blessed is *makarios*, meaning how happy! He was blessed because he believed this, as were ten other disciples, but not Judas. He appears to have stayed with the disciples only in hopes of embezzling money from them! Bar-jona means son of Jonah, what we might call his last name. Bullinger says, “the Lord uses his human name and parentage in contrast with the divine origin of the revelation made to him.” Flesh and blood does not refer to the meaty portion of the body or what runs through the veins. Flesh stands for what a man is by birth, training, education, culture, position, and so forth. Blood stands for nationality. It was not because Peter was a Jew, a Galilean, etc., that he knew this. This knowledge came from the Father in heaven. Revealed is *apokalupto*, literally to pull the veil from, unveiled, revealed. In Greek “heaven” is the plural, in the heavens.

IV. I Will Build of Me the *Ekklesia*. Matthew 16:18.

A. Verse 18 *The Resultant Version*. And I say also unto you, that you are rock, and upon this the rock I will build of Me the ekklesia, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.

B. Peter is *petros*. It would be a silly statement for the Lord to just tell Peter his name. Throughout the Old Testament the word “Rock” was often applied to Jehovah of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 32:31. Exodus 33:21. Rock was a symbol for the very character of God: solid, something upon which one can build, Psalm 18:2. *Petros* is the Greek translation of the Chaldee word Cephass, which means “bedrock.” These eleven men had so partaken of God and of the character of Jesus Christ that He could say to them, “I say to you that you are rock.”

C. The first occurrence was *petros*, masculine, but in “upon this rock,” “rock” is feminine, *petra*, as evidenced by the fact that it is used with a feminine article, which makes it impossible to say that the Lord was to build the ekklesia on Peter. Yet it is equally impossible to claim the Lord was going to build the ekklesia on Himself, since He would be masculine as well. Some (like Bullinger) think that it was Peter’s confession of faith (verse 16) upon which the Lord was to build His ekklesia, suggesting that the feminine implies the word *homologia*. Yet *homologia* does not occur in Matthew or anywhere in the gospels. Sellers suggests that this refers to these eleven men as a company. On this company, men who by revelation of God knew that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, the Lord was going to build His out-calling. That is exactly what we see Him doing in the Acts period.

D. “My” is “of me.” He would be building up His body, His substance, on earth. He declares what He did after the fact in Ephesians 4:11. He was the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the shepherd, and the teacher, and He gave of Himself to men to

constitute them as these things. In fact, all of the gifts listed by Paul in his epistles were inherent first in Jesus Christ before He gave of Himself to others to make them, in measure, what He is. For example, I Corinthians 12:27-28.

- E. This is the first occurrence of the word *ekklesia* in the book of Matthew, which makes this one of the most important passages in it. This word occurs twice in Matthew and never again in any of the gospels. People might think the gospels would be filled with information about “the church,” but they are not. It is a tragedy that people would say that the organization they founded or of which they are a part, which is just a branch of organized religion, is the meaning of *ekklesia*. They talk about this word meaning “out-called” and the church is called out of the world so the church is the out-called of today, but this word does not mean “church.” *Kaleo* means “to invite, to bid,” and in about 50 occurrences in the New Testament it means this. Yet it means also “to name, to designate, to position, to set forth” and in about 100 occurrences in the New Testament it means this. *Ek* means “out,” and so *ekklesia* means an “out-positioned” or “out-named” one. It refers to one who has a position out of another. It is a governmental term, and when the Lord uses it, the word has to do with the kingdom of the heavens. What we have in *ekklesia* are the out-positioned ones, those who have a position out of God, and who can mediate between God and men. This is what the Lord was about to build. Yet men insist it means “church.” (Sellers) *Time Magazine* reported on the first meeting of the World Council of Churches, and it reported in 1948 that “The greatest church meeting since the reformation could not even agree upon a definition of the word ‘church.’” Nothing has changed from then to now. The problem is probably found in the fact that the word “church” has no definition. A dictionary will list what is supposed to be definitions, but one who studies it will find that it is a fickle and an ephemeral word upon which no approximate meaning can be fixed. In Acts 7:38, we read of the *ekklesia* in the wilderness, and that existed 1500 years before Christ said He would build His *ekklesia*. Considering that one had been in existence and another was about to be built, then two *ekklesia* are before us. To understand these two, we must understand what an *ekklesia* is. No one has a right to speak concerning any *ekklesia* before he can answer the question of what is “an” *ekklesia*. Despite all their talk about it, God’s people are without an answer to this important question. If we had a definition, all our questions about it would quickly disappear. Such debatable questions as “when did the church begin?” can never be settled until we know what an *ekklesia* is in the first place. Many argue whether “the church” will go through the Great Tribulation. How can we ever answer this until we know what a church is? Among men a church is a building set apart for worship, a single congregation, or a denomination. Some say the church is the whole company of the redeemed in the present administration. I know of no definition that Scripture denies as fully, as flatly, and as finely as this. Acts 7:38 demonstrates another company of the redeemed called by the Holy Spirit “the church in the wilderness.” So how can the company of the redeemed at the present time act as if the word “church” was descriptive only of them?

V. Conclusion: We have much more to say about *ekklesia* and “the church,” but we are out of time, and will continue our discussion next week.