

When Did The Church Start? (cont.) (Matthew 16:13-19)

A few months ago a discussion was started regarding when the church started. We learned that we can find that the assembly of believers in Jesus Christ, known as His church, started with the Lord Jesus and His disciples. We also discovered that Jesus Christ is the owner of His church, since He bought it with His own blood (**Acts 20:28**). With this in mind, we must understand that our doctrine and methods are all given to us by Christ to do His work on Earth, which we call the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

II. The Power of the Church

Just as the church is owned by Jesus Christ, He also has given it power through His Spirit (**Acts 1:8**). As we consider the text presented, we must know that this power is the power to conquer the gates of Hell. Imagine, if you will, the massive city with unbreakable gates that is the City of Destruction (this is not a real city, but a figurative one). Every soul that has ever been born is locked within these gates with no hope of escape, because of the curse of sin that keeps them inside, separated from a holy God. Jesus states that His church alone has the power to march up to the gates of Hell and help lost, sinful souls escape!

Imagine the power that the church of Jesus Christ has at its fingertips! Why do we have such power? Because we have had the Gospel preached to us (**Romans 1:16**) and bear within us the witness that Jesus is the Savior, the very Son of God. Jesus alone has overcome death, sin, and Hell! When we tell others about Him and they believe in Him, we have just helped to pull them through the gates of the City of Destruction, using the keys to the kingdom of Heaven: the Gospel itself!

Beyond this power, the church of Jesus Christ has the power to make decisions regarding itself on Earth. The Bible commands many things regarding the administration, method, purpose, doctrine, etc. of the church, but it allows each assembly to be an independent body that makes its own decisions regarding the things that are not covered. This passage explains that, as long as the assembly is following the rules of Scripture, God agrees with its decisions to bind or loosen certain things on Earth and binds or loosens them in Heaven. **Matthew 18** is a similar passage that speaks on the decision making authority of the local church (spec. **Matthew 18:18**).

III. The Purpose of the Church

To conclude, we can also find the purpose given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Many churches believe their purpose is to draw in the world by becoming more like it to give them the Gospel. They change their music from God-honoring music to that of the world. They even emphasize programs, pragmatism, business models, and entertainment, instead of the preaching of God's Word! The truth is that the assembling of ourselves together is not for those lost in their sin; it is for those that follow Christ!

The Lord Jesus Christ had one purpose upon this Earth: to seek and to save the Lost (**Luke 19:10**). Yes, He did preach, heal, and do many other good works, but every action He performed was for the purpose of drawing men to Him. In like manner, when Jesus ascended to Heaven and left His disciples on Earth, He gave them only one purpose: preaching the Gospel to the lost and teaching His doctrine to those that believed in Him (**Matthew 28:19-20**). Like the Lord Jesus, our church does good works in His name, but everything we do must have the purpose of getting out the message of the Gospel to make disciples. If we fail to do these things, we will have failed to do what Jesus commanded us to do.

Many believe today that it is enough to simply clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and help the sick without giving the Gospel message. However, if we fail to preach the message of Christ to others, we are only helping to send clothed, well-fed, healthy people to Hell; failing to please the Lord Jesus in the process. Only the Gospel has the power to save lost sinners and only Christians that believe in the Gospel for salvation know that it is the power of God unto salvation; not good works or religion. Because of these truths, it is every believers' duty to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost!

Many others believe that it is enough to simply preach the Gospel to the lost without personally teaching them the doctrine of Christ. If we fail to do both of these things, we are effectively throwing spiritual infants to the curb; leaving them to fend for themselves spiritually. This often ends in spiritual catastrophe for the newborn believer, since they have no defense against the world, flesh, and Devil. It is as much a church's duty to personally disciple new believers as it is to preach the Gospel to the lost. Both are parts of the Great Commission and are the duty of every local church; to neglect either one is disobedience to the clear command of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The church has one owner that bought it with His own blood: the Lord Jesus Christ. We have power given to us by the Lord Jesus to storm the gates of Hell with the Gospel and make independent decisions that are upheld in the courts of Heaven. We also have one purpose, which is to get the Gospel message to the Lost that they might be saved and be mentored and trained to one day tell others about Jesus themselves.

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