

Matt. 16:18 I Will Build My Church

“I Will Build My Church.” This short sentence is packed with the story of the Bible. “I will build my church.” In fact, if we want to summarize the great work of God to save a people for himself in the Bible, here we have it: “***I will build my church.***” With this in mind, I want to break this sentence down into 3 parts. 1) What is this building? And then 2) Who builds this building? (where we will spend most of our time). And then, for the next sermon, 3) By what means does this building take place?

1. What is the Building? Jesus says, “*I will build my church.*” I think we should begin with the term “church” so we will know WHAT Jesus is building. It is interesting that this is the first time in our English Bible we see the word “church.” It is found only in the Gospel of Matthew, but then more than 70 times in Acts and the rest of the NT. It literally means “gathering” or “assembly.” And who gathers? PEOPLE gather, PEOPLE assemble; men, women, boys, girls . . . gather. We often think of the church as a physical “building,” but the church is a specific people that gathers for a purpose. And in every case, God is building a “people” that is distinguished from every other types of people gathering there may be in the world. He is delineating between a “particular” people as those who are “special,” those who are different than all the other people of the world. Sometimes the word “church” refers to the “whole” church throughout the world or the church in a particular area. Most of the time the word “church” refers to a specific people meeting in a specific place, even a house.

Most of Paul’s letters are addressed to specific churches. So from this broad perspective, God has always been building his “church.” We are here today because God has not and will not fail on his promise to “build” his church. We are the Church of God. And we, along with scores of other churches, make up the full church of God, to which He is adding and building until He comes back. Look with me to 1 Pet. 2:9-10: “**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**” With this in mind, let’s move our attention to the ONE who builds his church.

2. Who Builds the Building? Jesus says, “I will build my church.” In a world where pronouns are being horribly misused, we have two in our translation, “**I**” and “**My**.” Jesus is the Builder of the Church and it belongs to Him. What an amazing statement! It is true! But, before considering Jesus as the builder, let’s go back for a short history lesson from the OT. God has been building his church since the promise of Gen. 3:15. Even after Adam and Eve’s fall, as death and sin entered the world of mankind, God makes a promise. He speaks to Satan in the presence of Adam and Eve. He says, “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring . . .** And then he says: “**he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**” In this promise we see a distinction between Satan and his offspring and the woman and her offspring. In this promise we see that God distinguishes two peoples, the

“offspring” (also translated as “seed”) of the woman and the “offspring” (“seed”) of Satan. There is a lot here! But, in this promise we see that God will build a particular people. So, what does this look like in the OT.

Let’s begin with Cain and Abel. Cain does not obey God as he brings a sacrifice of his own choosing. He is a man without faith. Abel brings a sacrifice by faith that God accepts (Heb. 11). Cain kills his brother and God punishes him with banishment “**away from his presence**” (Gen 4:16). Here we have one man with faith and another without faith. In this distinction, concerning faith, we see one man from the “offspring” of Satan and another from “offspring” of the “woman.” There is a division. Later, Eve has another son named Seth. And she says, “**God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel.**” And from the line of Seth, we see God keeping his promise as “**people began to call upon the name of the Lord**” (4: 25-26).

Throughout the OT, we see this separation between the “offspring” of God (people of faith) and the “offspring” of Satan (people of no faith). And this separation continues with Noah (Ham is cursed, Seth and Japheth are blessed) Later we see this promise being kept with Abraham and his son Isaac (Ismael does not receive the blessing while Isaac does). We see this with Jacob and Esau: As Rom. 9:13 says: “Jacob I loved; Esau I hated.” This continues in the OT with the Nation of Israel beginning in Egypt and carried through to the Promised Land. And even through the ups and downs of sin with Israel, and even with the loss of Jerusalem and their captivity with Babylon, God does not forsake his PROMISE to build his “church” . . . his “people.” I think of the words of Isaiah, even in the midst of sin and judgment, God says, “**But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called you from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off’; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand**” (Is. 41:8-10). Brothers and sisters, God is building his church! Now, let’s fast forward to the NT and Jesus’ words in Matt. 16:18, particularly his pronouns.

Jesus says “***I will build MY church.***” Pause for a moment and think about this statement. Peter and the disciples would have known the promise of Gen. 3:15. They would have known the history of God’s people. They knew God was keeping his promise; God was building a people of faith. And now, in front of them is a man, and not man of great means. He was a carpenter from their “neck of the woods.” (Today, he would come from a place like “Landis.”) And he says, “***I will build my church.***” Do you see the shift? Do you see the claim He is making? It is “*as if*” He Himself had made the promise of Gen. 3:15! . . . Well, He did! In the NT Book of Colossians, we read: “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers**

or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross” (Col. 1:15-20).

Now, look over with me to Heb. 3. In vv. 1-6 the writer is comparing Moses with Jesus. In these verses Moses is merely a “part” of the house, God is building. But who is the builder? It is Jesus! Look at v. 3: **“For Jesus has been counted worth of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant . . . 6 but Christ is the faithful over God’s house as a son.”**

In all the OT, in all the Old Covenants, we never see a man making such a statement! It is always God who builds. And it is the same in the New Covenant! God is the builder. But, this honor and this glory (though still belongs to God), shifts to the Son. Why? Because of the incarnation. God takes on flesh! Think back to Gen. 3:15. God promises that one will come from the “offspring” of the woman, ONE who whose “heel” will be “bruised.” Think about it! God is Spirit. In his essence, He does not have flesh and blood. In his essence ALONE, He could never be the “offspring” of the woman in the narrow sense. In this promise we see a physical deliverer. And then comes the Son. He takes on flesh. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary (a woman). In her womb he grows and is born. As he grows, he obeys the Law of God completely in his actions and in his heart! And he lays down his life as a sacrifice, the sacrifice to fulfill all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. His “heel” is bruised. But, three days later, He rises from the dead. For death could not hold him! And in his death and resurrection, Satan is “crushed.” This is why HE can now say to Peter, **“I will build my church!”** And this is EXACTLY what HE is doing today . . . until his return! Jesus is building his church! (You’ll have to wait until the next sermon as we consider the “means” Jesus uses in building his church.) But, let’s finish with some applications.

Application: The church does not belong to us. We are stewards. And yes, we are fellow builders. And YES, by the Spirit, we are the church. But, the Church does not belong to us. We cannot do with it what we want. We cannot make up what we should believe or how we should conduct ourselves. This means . . .

Application: We live under the rules of the Builder. Listen to our own church confession concerning the church. *Of a Gospel Church We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ (68); governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word.* We live by the

Word of God. And we cannot deviate from It. This means we live and walk and breathe and speak the Word of God. The Word is our instruction manual.

Application: We live by the power given to us by the builder. We live in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the New Covenant, because of the person and work of Christ, all of those who make up the church are given the Holy Spirit. This is why we often live contrary to those around us. This is why our desires are different. Our ethics are different. And those around us do not understand us. Listen to these words from Paul to the Corinthians: **“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ”** (1 Cor. 2:12–16).

Application: The Building Will be finished. I think of the building in downtown Kannapolis (and others) where the building is started and then, for some reason or another, there is a delay, or even an abandoning of the project. Well, this is not the case with the church. And our text says that even the “gates of hell” will not prevail against the church. I think of the hymn “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” written by Martin Luther, the man who stood against the entire religious system of his time. And my favorite line is: *“One little word will fell him!”* (pull up stanza)

It is a little word because Jesus was a man. But, in this man we find that **“in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily . . .”** (Col. 2:9-10). In his person and in his name, we find ALL the promises of God, ALL the wisdom of God, ALL the treasures of heaven. And all of this because of the Son, particularly the Son of man, who died on the cross, took our punishment, bore our sins, and rose again. “One Little Word” . . . This one little word is the builder of the church. And not only the builder, but the foundation, the life, the help, the sustainer, (you name it). What are you going through? Are you discouraged because you’ve lost someone close to you through death? Are you anxious about tomorrow’s troubles? Are you concerned about what is going on in this world? Are you fearful and insecure about finances? Are you struggling with sin? Do you feel they are too great? Whatever it is . . . you will be kept, your faith will be built. And this is sure.

Application: The church is still being built. This means our lives are more like a marathon than a sprint. So, press on brothers and sisters! Jesus will build his church, of which you are a part.

Jesus is building his church. And, the gates of hell will not prevail. This statement is a summary sentence of the entire Bible, the entire plan of God before the foundations of the world, first realized in the promise of Gen. 3:15. **“I will put enmity between you and**

the woman and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Today, we find this fulfillment. Jesus says, “***I will build my church!***” And “the gates of hell will not prevail.” With his incarnation, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension to the right of the majesty on high, as God’s people, as God’s church, we are victorious! Let me end with the words of John’s Revelation when he saw the Lord Jesus: “**When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades”** (Rev. 1:17–18). Also, in 1 John: “**Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world . . . For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith”** (1 John 4:4; 5:4). What beautiful words! What beautiful truth! “***I will build my church.***”