

BUILDING THE LORD'S CHURCH

Rev. Thomas L. Kline

Lessons: Matthew 16:13-20, Psalm 84

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

What would you do if some one told you to build a church? How would you begin? What would you make the church out of and where would you build it? These are important questions, because the Word tells us that right now the Lord is building a church on earth, and He wants each one of us to help Him. Imagine what it would be like to make the most beautiful church building on earth. You could make the walls out of beautiful stones and the roof out of the finest woods. You could even put gold and all sorts of precious gems inside. But when you finished making this beautiful building, do you think you would have a church that the Lord would be happy with? Is there anything more to a church than just a beautiful building?

Of course, we know that a church is far more than just a building. Your church would also need people to come to it. Without people, your church would just be a big empty building; it would really be no church at all.

Now suppose you went out and got hundreds of people to come to your church. Suppose you had many songs the people could sing, choirs that could make beautiful music and priests who could say wise things. Do you think you would then have a church that the Lord would be happy with? Can you think of one more thing that you would need before the church could be called a *true church*? What is the one thing that really makes the Lord's church on earth? Of course, it is the Lord's Word. Without the Word, we would have no church at all.

It is not a big building that makes a church, nor is it many people, great choirs, or wise ministers. Only the Lord's Word makes a true church—and especially our love and understanding of His Word. Nothing else is more important than this. Unless we love the Lord when we come to church, all the most beautiful things inside that church are useless. Our love of the Lord Jesus Christ is the true church on earth.

This is what the Lord was teaching His disciples when He said to Peter, "On this rock I will build My church." What rock or what "truth" do you think the Lord was talking about? Where was the Lord going to build His church? The Lord was speaking about the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one

God of heaven and earth. He was teaching His disciples that His church grows on the one truth that the Lord Jesus Christ reigns. Wherever this truth is present, the Lord's church will grow. This is the "cornerstone" for the Lord's church on earth.

Do you know what a cornerstone is? Sometimes, when workmen are building a church, they take a special stone and place it in the foundation. If you have ever visited the General Church's Cathedral in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, you might have seen the cornerstone for that building. There, the cornerstone is different from any other stone in the building. All the other stones have been carved into square blocks, or beautiful designs have been made on them. But the cornerstone is just the way the workmen found it: it has not been carved. It is the one stone that has not been changed at all. In a sense, the cornerstone is just the way the Lord made it. And the same is true with the cornerstone for the Lord's church on earth. The truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is God is a truth so beautiful that we cannot change it in anyway; we cannot make it more beautiful than it already is. It is the true foundation for the Lord's church on earth.

Sometimes a family may live far away from a church building. Sometimes this means that people have to worship in their home instead of going to a big church. Maybe you worship in your home each week. From what we have been talking about, we can see that this really does not make much difference in the eyes of the Lord. As we saw, it is not a big building that makes a church, nor is it the presence of many people. What was the one thing that we said really makes the Lord's church on earth? It is our love and understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Word. As long as this is present, then we have the most beautiful church of all, even when we hold church in our homes. Your friends may sometimes ask you where your church is. And you can tell them the great truth that the Lord's church is where His Word is and where He is loved above all. This is the most beautiful church.

Amen.