

Is Your Church Found In The Bible

In **Matthew 16:13-19 (NKJV)** Matthew records a conversation between Jesus and Peter. In this passage Jesus asked his disciples who people were saying that he was.

¹³ 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."

The disciples told Him that some people were saying that He was John the Baptist and others were saying that He was Elijah or another one of the other prophets. Then He asked them who they thought that He was, Peter answered for the group when he said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". Then Jesus pointed out that Peter did not know that by human knowledge but that it was revealed to him by God. The next statement has been misunderstood and mis-quoted for hundreds of years. Jesus, answered Peter by saying "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church..."

Many people, especially Catholics, believe and teach that Jesus meant that He would build His church on Peter. However, that makes little sense. Why would Jesus build His church on some man? What Jesus was teaching was that the church would be built on the fact that He was the Christ, the Son of God. That is the foundation of the church, Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. Jesus built his church on this fact and not on a human. Jesus makes it clear in this passage that the church is His, it is not Peter's, it is not Luther's, it is not John Calvin's, and neither is it John the Baptist. The church was built by Jesus and it is His and His alone.

Then Jesus tells Peter that He would give him the keys to the kingdom, that what he (Peter) would bind on earth would be bound in heaven and that what he (Peter) loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. Some have taught that this means that Peter was the one making the decisions concerning the church. However, since the church belongs to Jesus it is He that determines what goes on in His church. So a better translation of this verse would be "whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in Heaven" That interpretation makes it clear that Jesus is making the decisions about His church and that Peter is only making those

decisions known on earth. The Holy Ghost guided the apostles in what they said and wrote. This is why Jesus told them:

John 16:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

It is clear that the things that the apostles wrote and said came from the Holy Spirit, and those things came from Jesus.

This is the reason that when Paul wrote to the Romans he said “*Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.*” **Romans 16:16 (NKJV)**. Paul recognized that the church was built by Jesus, it belonged to him, he made the rules, and it should carry His name and His alone. In other places in the New Testament it is referred to simply as “the church” (James 5:14; 3 John 1:6, 3 John 1:9-10 and others); while in 1 Timothy 3:10 Paul refers to it as “the church of God” then a few verses later he referred to it as “the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). That title is perfectly accurate since Jesus is God (John 1:1, Hebrews 1:8).

No where in the Bible is there a mention of any denomination. John records a prayer by Jesus, in chapter 17 where He prays that there be no divisions in His followers. Listen to His earnest plea to God:

John 17:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

John 17:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

John 17:22 (NKJV)

²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

John 17:23 (NKJV)

²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Over and over again Jesus prayed that His disciples be one. Not one in number but one in belief, one in teaching, one in spirit. Denominationalism flies in the face of this desire of Jesus. Paul would write;

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome about the body being one with many members (Romans 12:4-5). Paul was not speaking about many denominations in the one body, but many Christians in the one body. In fact Paul chastised the church in Corinth for beginning to break into groups (1 Corinthians 1:12) and then he asks specifically "Is Christ divided?". The point is that the early church was one, and that is what Jesus intended.

Today there is only one church, the only one mentioned in the Bible, the only one that Jesus died for, the only one that Peter used the keys that Jesus gave him to open. The church that bears His name, the church of Christ.