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**THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

**The Founding of the Church:** We have defined what a New Testament church is, what a New Testament church does, and who is a New Testament church. Let’s consider where the New Testament churches came from.

**Introduction:** We are introduced to the concept of the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ with the entrance of His personal ministry. Several statements our Lord makes confirm what He instituted, but one set of verses in particular seems to create the most confusion as it is misunderstood, misinterpreted and maligned.

(Mt. 16:18-19) “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The Roman religion proposes these verses declare the church – singular is built upon a single individual, Peter, the Apostle who is then declared “POPE” or singular head of this new entity. That as Pope he is the vicar of heaven (he can declare who goes into heaven and who does not). Is the New Testament church built upon a man? Is it a single or sole authority as a base of operations or a body of believers? Let’s consider…

1. **The Context:** Jesus is dealing with the unbelieving Pharisees and the Sadducees who came seeking “a sign” (v:1-4) which Jesus reminded them they already had signs they couldn’t see, because they were willfully blind.

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In (v:6-12) Jesus shows the Apostles the danger of the Pharisees and Sadducees who deceitfully deny the scriptures and disregard the signs that point to and prove that Jesus is the Christ. Literally they refuse to receive because they refuse to believe.

In (v:13-16) our Lord presses His disciples; do you know who I am? They have heard what others say, some have formed opinions, and others have considered the signs, the wonders, and the Word of God.

It is our Lord’s questioning that draws Peter’s answer, and our Lord’s confirmation in (v:17) that Peter could not truly comprehend his correct answer if it were not made known to him by the Spirit of God from the Father. This truth concerning Christ is not yet fully known even among the disciples, but this is the message our Lord will declare through His ministry – His life – His death – His resurrection and ascension.

In (v:18-19) we have compound conjunctions that add these two statements Jesus made to the context. The conclusion of the context is (v:20) “then” Jesus “charged his disciples to tell no man he was the Christ.” The truth Peter is declaring is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Greek word “Petra”, used 16 times in the New Testament, 11 times the edge or rock ledge, 5 times as a metaphor referring to Jesus the Christ (Mal. 16:18; Rom. 9:33; I Cor. 10, 4; I Pt. 4:8).

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I Cor. 10:4 the “Rock” (Petra) is said to be Christ, note Peter uses the same term for Christ in (I Pt. 2:8, comp. 4-8) also in Jesus’ parable of the two foundations it teaches the “ten petran” solid rock stood the test of time and trial (Mt. 7:24-27) as a “sure” or “secure” solid rock as (I Cor. 3:11) confirms regarding Christ and (Eph. 2:20) portray Christ “the chief cornerstone” “sizeable-solid-sure-secure”, Petra “ledge”; whereas Petros is singular, small and without significance. The distinction is in the description and declaration Peter discloses concerning who is the Christ, He is The Son of the Living God, the sent one, the anointed to fulfilment of promise.

Two arguments – 1) some “scholars” claim Jesus spoke this in Aramaic so we can’t confirm such a claim. 2) some “scholars” claim this makes Jesus appear to speak to Himself in the “third person” (Mt. 16:18) kai epi taute tepetra seen (Jn. 2:19) where He speaks of Himself as the Temple. Those who heard Him didn’t understand Him or just misquoted Him before Caiaphas (Mt. 26:6). The granting of the keys (authority) – “keys of the kingdom of Heaven” not the Church (Mt. 16:19).

Accordingly, Christ gave the keys to Christendom, but Peter didn’t open the door to the Jews or Proselytes at Pentecost or the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). The two times in which Peter took the initiative would seem to fulfill the conditions of the promise. As for the authority to bind and loose (Mt. 16:19) we should note, Jesus later gave the same authority to declare people saved and forgiven, on the basis of the fulfilled conditions to these blessings, that is whenever an individual has fulfilled them.

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The Churches of the New Testament: As we consider the examples of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:11) so we now consider the examples of the New, the structure, the strength, the weaknesses, joys, sorrows, sins, the victories and the sufferings of these early churches. These examples will be presented in a variety of illustrations ending in the reality of history.

The church in Jerusalem: The first church location, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, over 3120 initial members (Acts 2:41, 47). Pastored by James/Jesus’ brother (Acts 15:13). Saw many signs and wonders (Acts 2:43, 5:12-16). Common union-brotherhood (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35). In one accord-unity-order (Acts 2:46). Majored on prayer (Acts 2:42, 3:1, 4:24). Evangelistic efforts (Acts 3:12, 4:33, 5:42). Proclaimed Christ (Acts 4:13, 6:15). Purity (Acts 5:1-11; 8:18-24). Grew greatly-continually (Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14). Persecuted but faithful (Acts 4:1-3, 21, 5:17-41). Appointed deacons (Acts 6:1-7). Baptism and Lords Supper (Acts 2:41-46). Great commission/missions (Acts 8:5, 14, 11:22). Counsels-conferences on circumcision (Acts 15). Spirit led (Acts. 2:1-18). Preached the Word (Acts 2:16-36, 3:13-26, 5:42). Contended for the faith (Acts 15:1-21). In the end compromise came with Judaizers (Acts 21:18-25).

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The church in Antioch of Syria: founded during the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 11:19). Grew dramatically (Acts 11:21). Sent out missionaries (Acts 11:22). Received brethren, pastored by Barnabus (Acts 11:23). Planted many more churches (Acts 11:24). Saul associate Pastor, evangelist/missionary (Acts 11:26). Christians first in Antioch (Acts. 11:26). Giving church, missions-ministry (Acts. 11:29-30). Sent out Paul and Barnabus (Acts 13:1-3, 14:26). Silas’ home church (Acts 15:34). Strong doctrine, example church, emphasis on scripture, salvation, spirit-filled, soul winning and stewardship.

The church in Antioch of Pisidia: Begun by Paul on his first missionary trip (Acts 13:14). First sermon recorded of Paul preaching (Acts 13:16). Started with the first converts (Acts 13:43). Paul turned from Jews (Acts 13:46) toward the Gentiles (Acts 13:47). Growing example of outreach…

The church in Lystra: Organized on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 14:6). Impotent man healed (Acts 14:10). People tried to worship Paul (Acts 14:11). Paul stoned-rejected (Acts 14:19). This is where Paul would find Timothy on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3).

The church in Derbe: Another assembly established by Paul’s converts (Acts 14:20-22).

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The church in Iconium: Paul led many to Christ here on his first missionary trip (Acts 14:2). Paul did many miracles, marvelous signs and multitudes believed (Acts 14:3) but Paul was driven out by the unbelieving religious Jews (Acts 14:5).

The church in Philippi: Born out of the Macedonian call, first convert Lydia, her home (Acts 16:15, 40). So many conversions, demon possessed girl (Acts 16:18). Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33). Recipients of Paul’s letter (Phil. 1:1). Timothy was their pastor (Phil. 2:19). This church sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul while in prison (Phil. 2:25). The dangerous practice of legalism was encountered (Phil. 3:1-3). Paul addresses a schism among them (Phil. 4:1-3). This church supplied Paul’s needs, special offering (Phil. 4:15, 18).

The church in Thessalonica: Founded on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 17:1). Huge harvest of souls (Acts 17:4) where Paul was accused of turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Paul wrote them 2 letters (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). They were known for evangelism (I Thess. 1:8). Persecuted (I Thess. 2:14). Timothy would minister here (I Thess. 3:1-2). He had to be corrected for compromising members (II Thess. 3:10‑11, 14, 15).

The church in Berea: This church was commended for their love of the word of God and desire to learn the scriptures and live them (Acts 17:11).

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The church at Athens: After Paul’s fiery message on Mars Hill, converts assembled to establish a church, most notable was the convert Dionysius who most likely led them (Acts 17:34).

The church in Corinth: Founded on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:1). Aquilla and Priscilla were instrumental (Acts 18:2). One of Paul’s first converts here, Crispus (Acts 18:8). Paul stayed here 18 months (Acts 18:11). Paul wrote at least two letters from here (I Cor. 1:2, 5:9; II Cor. 1:1, 10:9-10). Many doctrinal deviations were dealt with, Baptism (I Cor. 1:12-16). Earthly wisdom (I Cor. 1:26-31). Carnality and strife (I Cor. 3:1‑3). Unfairly judging others (I Cor. 4:6-7). Immorality (I Cor. 5:1). Taking brothers to court (I Cor. 6:1-4). Marriage (I Cor. 7:1-4). Christian liberty (I Cor. 8-9). Lord’s Supper table (I Cor. 11:17-34). Spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12, 13, 14). Resurrection (I Cor. 15). Tithing (I Cor. 16). This church would be pastored by Apollos (I Cor. 3:6).

The church at Ephesus: Founded on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). Many men were influential as interim pastors – Apollos, Timothy, and John. Paul wrought many miracles and saw much fruit here (Acts 19:11, 41). Here they burned wicked books, opposed false goddess Diana, and actively went door-to-door and house-to-house witnessing and winning many converts (Acts 20:17-21). Paul wrote a letter to this church (Eph. 1:1) as did John (Rev. 2:1-7). John declared this church worked hard, had patience, high standards, suffered for Christ, but they left their first love, exhorted them to repent, return restored and renew their first works or be replaced, they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

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The church at Troas: Here Paul raised up Eutychus from the dead after falling asleep and falling from the window when Paul was long time preaching (Acts 20:7-12).

The church in Rome: Original founder is not declared, Priscilla and Aquilla labored here and the church met in their home (Rom. 16:3-5). Had a glowing testimony (Rom. 1:8). Paul mentions 26 different personal friends and fellow laborers among the multitudes (Rom. 16).

The church in Galatia: Several churches were raised up as Paul traveled this region, great conflicts with legalist Jews, who opposed the doctrine of God’s grace (Gal. 1:6-9) plagued Paul. Paul addresses them in the book of Galatians (Gal. 3:1).

The church of Colosse: Founded by Epaphras during Paul’s third missionary journey (Col. 1:7, 12, 13, 2:1). Home to Philemon and Onesimus (Col. 4:9; Phil. 1:1-2). Paul commanded the Epistle written to Colosse be read to the Laodicean church, and the one he wrote the Laodicean church be read to the Christian church in Colosse (Col. 4:16).

The church in Babylon: (I Pt. 5:13) A suffering church (I Pt. 1:6) from persecution, but also from sin (I Pt. 4:15, 17) little is known historically.

The church in Smyrna: (Rev. 2:8-11) Suffered for serving Christ, they were slandered by those of the synagogue of Satan and several were imprisoned by Satan who sought to destroy them.

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The church in Pergamos: (Rev 2:12-17) The seat/center of Satan’s power-wicked worship. They were loyal, faithful, fervent and fruitful even facing death. There was sin within they did not confront, perhaps because of the fight they were already in. A faction allowed immorality to influence and impure doctrine such as the Nicolaitans, which thing God hated.

The church in Thyatira: (Rev. 2:18-29) Known for its many good works, serving, soul winning, stewardship, yet in separation they had fallen, allowing the doctrine of sexual sin without serious repercussions to spread, known as the Jezebel’s doctrine.

The church of Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) Had a reputation, but the only thing said is it was dead. When it’s all said and done, more was said than done. They were challenged in a letter to go and strengthen what remained.

The church in Philadelphia: (Rev. 3:7-13) Was not strong, obedient yes! But during persecution they did not steadfastly resist, they had love, and commitment, and carried forth for a season.

The church in Laodicea: (Rev. 3:14-20) The worst church mentioned in scripture. Its members were compromisers, convenient, casual, contemporary and complacent Christians. Neither hot nor cold, bragged about their possessions, positions and performance. The biggest, best, most successful but they were naked, poor, blind and absolutely without commendation. This is the last church of the last age, admonished to repent and be restored, they would not, and they would be removed!