

Personal/Small Group Sermon Study

Week of October 22, 2023 A.D.

The Church Is Not a Social Club

Jesus was a man on a mission! That mission was (and continues to be) to call unto himself a supernatural family that will forever live in the presence of the Holy God of the universe and in the presence of one another. God's purpose for His supernatural family (which is collectively called "the church") is the primary focus of today's lesson.

(Note: For every question which appears in this study, always give the reasoning and/or the explanation for each of your answers.)

Read Matthew 16:13-28

1. Refer to verses 13-14. John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah were men who were used by God in a powerful way in the history of the Jewish people. Does a person become a Christian (and thereby receive the gift of eternal life) by acknowledging that Jesus was also a man who was used by God not only in the history of Israel, but also in the history of the world?
2. Refer to verses 15-16. The word "Christ" or "Messiah" means the "anointed or chosen one of God". Why did Jesus want to know if his disciples personally believed that Jesus is the Messiah? If Jesus is in fact the Messiah, why should Jesus even care if any person believes (or does not believe) that He is the Messiah?
3. What is your understanding of what Jesus is saying in verse 17? Do you agree that Jesus is the Christ? If so, why?
4. According to verse 18, who claimed responsibility for building the Church? Is this very same Person still building His church today? If Jesus is still building His church today, how did Peter (or how does any other human being for that matter) play any role in the building of the church of Jesus Christ?
5. What is the literal meaning of verse 19? After the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven, how well (and to what extent) has the church maintained and utilized the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"?

6. Would the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have any meaning, purpose, or life-changing power throughout the world today if the disciples did not understand what Jesus was explaining to them in verse 21?
7. Read verses 22-23. Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan? Please explain how and why, within every mortal follower of Christ, there will always exist a tension or struggle between the "things of God" and the "things of men."
8. Please offer an explanation of what Jesus is saying (a) in verse 24, (b) in verse 25, and (c) in verse 26. Is a proper understanding of each of these verses essential and/or required for any person to receive the gift of eternal life?
9. What does it mean for a person "to forfeit his soul"? If a person were to gain the whole world, would that person necessarily forfeit his soul? How much of the world can a person gain without forfeiting his soul?
10. What does Jesus mean when he states in verse 27 that "the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory"? Give your explanation of: (a) who will receive rewards, (b) what those rewards will be, and (c) the purpose for those rewards.
11. Based on your observation of the behavior of American Christians, are American Christians more committed to accumulating (a) earthly treasure or (b) eternal treasure? Will a Christian receive more benefits from earthly treasures or from eternal treasures?
12. What practical steps can be taken by you to devote more time, talent, and treasure to building the church of Christ on earth? Is it true that the sole purpose for our life on earth is to enable us to know, to love, and to serve our Savior Jesus the Christ and to be conformed to the likeness of Christ?

Consider: The most important question in life is: "What am I going to do with Jesus?" There is no higher calling nor any greater purpose in life than for a person to be used by God to build the Church of Christ on earth. If you want your earthly life to have meaning, purpose, and value for both time and eternity, you must follow two simple rules in your relationship with Jesus: always trust Him and always obey Him. "You think about that." Amen.