

### **INTRO: The church is Jesus' idea**

On the eve of our two year anniversary, the beginning of another, we're going to talk about the church Jesus is building. Throughout the gospel of Matthew, we've read that Jesus came to do many things. Jesus came to teach. Jesus came to refute false teaching. Jesus came to heal the hurting. Jesus came to serve the needy. Jesus came to feed the hungry. Jesus came to save sinners. And in Matthew 16, Jesus states that **He came to build HIS church**. The word *church* is used only twice in all of the gospels, and only by Jesus. The word for church is 'ekklesia', and means a gathering of ones called out of the world to God.

Interestingly, the setting for this conversation is 25 miles north of Galilee on the northern most boundary of Israel in what would be the tribe of Dan. Steeped in paganism, during the Old Testament, the city was known as Baal, only to be renamed Pan by the Greeks—both false gods. Later, the name was changed to Caesarea Philippi, then Neronias to honor two Roman emperors. Jesus could not be any further from the Jewish community and leaders he warned his disciples about. Literally on the boundary between the religious world of Israel and the irreligious world of Rome, **Jesus reveals His intention to build an entirely new kind of community that was neither religious nor irreligious**.

Contrary to popular myth, the church was not created by men. The church was, and still, is Jesus' idea. The church is not a religious institution or an irreligious club—it is a people that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to gather for His own possession to represent Him to the world. The church is the fellowship of believers, the family of God where the presence of God's Spirit chiefly (not exclusively) dwells, and where the wisdom of God is uniquely made manifest. **According to Scripture, the church is both universal and local, both invisible and visible, both spiritual and physical.**

You cannot separate Jesus from His Church. A relationship with Jesus demands a relationship with the Church. The church is not an optional plan B; **Jesus intends for it to be central to our identity**. Much of the confusion about the nature of our relationship with the church is rooted in misunderstanding the nature of Jesus' relationship to the Church. **The Church is built ON Jesus, BY Jesus, and FOR Jesus. We are, therefore, devoted to PROFESSING, PLANTING, and PREACHING.**

### **THE CHURCH IS BUILT ON JESUS | WE PROFESS**

Every kind of community is built on some sort of foundation. Most of these foundations are either a shared CAUSE (eradication of mistreatment of sloths), a common CREED (the most important thing is happiness), or some other kind of CONNECTION (we all like to dress up in my little pony outfits). Unlike every other kind of community, the Church is not founded upon a cause for men, a creed of men, or connection to men but a CONFESSION about a man—Jesus. Everyone has a different idea of who Jesus is. **Jesus asks his disciples who the world says that He is**. They tell Him that they say he is either a *resurrected* prophet, a *returned* prophet, or a *reincarnated* prophet. Even the world recognizes Jesus as special. And most of the world will honor Jesus as some sort of magical guru, wise teacher, or radical movement leader sent to rescue men from whatever they have declared is the greatest evil. Jesus becomes whoever they need Him to be to fight their cause, affirm their creed, or make their connection.

Many “successful” faith communities are in fact founded on confessions about the wrong Jesus. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns of “another Jesus...**a different spirit...a different gospel (2Corinthians 11.3)**. **The Jesus we confess shapes our church. A church is not shaped by its pastors, programs, and partnerships. A church is shaped by its foundation, namely, who it confesses Jesus to be**. *Is Jesus a good teacher? Is Jesus a tragic hero? Is Jesus a good man? Is Jesus a wise guru? Is Jesus a hippie? Is Jesus a*

yuppie? Is Jesus a Republican? Is Jesus a Democrat? Is Jesus a good example? Is Jesus a helpful therapist? Is Jesus a political radical? Is Jesus a moralist? Is Jesus a free-thinker? Is Jesus a rebel? Is Jesus an all-affirming friend of sinner? All of these are different ways of declaring the same lies about Jesus: **He is a man sent to ensure my greatness, my success, and my happiness.**

When Jesus asks Peter, WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM, he could have just easily asked, WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? Peter answers: **You are the Christ; Son of the Living God**

- **JESUS IS KING. Jesus owns. Jesus commands. Jesus rules**
- **JESUS IS THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. Jesus was, is, and is to come.**

**Jesus is not another teacher, another prophet, or another man.** Jesus is not just the best of religious leaders. Jesus is not merely a good example, a political freedom fighter, or a tragic hero. Jesus is THE Son of the Father, THE Creator come to earth to gather a people for His own possession. Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the author of salvation, the builder of a new creation. Jesus is the the eternal savior, the sinless substitute for sins, God in human flesh came first to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners, and proclaim good news to the poor, and to conquer sin, Satan and Death AND who will come again to eradicate it forever.

We PROFESS that Jesus is our foundation. A foundation defines the shape. A foundation gives strength. A foundation supports our growth. A foundation directs our development. **The foundation never changes.** We may lose our music, our people, our building, our groups, our coffee, everything, BUT if we rest on the profession of Jesus as our Lord and our God—it is the one thing that can never be lost.

### **THE CHURCH IS BUILT BY JESUS | WE PLANT**

If we ever step off of that foundation, Jesus will stop building OUR church. If ever begin to build upon our teachings, our traditions, or our ways, the crowd may continue grow, but the church will die. **BUT WHEN we continue to PROFESS, Jesus will continue to build because the church is not a community built on tradition or innovation, but on REVELATION—something only God can do.** <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. 1 Cor 3.5-9

**Jesus builds HIS church through planting.** We believe that Jesus builds his church by making disciples and planting churches. The book of Acts is part two of a two volume set. He begins by writing: **In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach** The book of Acts evidences how the disciples understood the Great Commission. All the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are basically calls to plant churches, not simply to share the faith. The 'Great Commission' (Matt.28: 18-20) is not just a call to 'make disciples' but to 'baptize'. In Acts and elsewhere, it is clear that baptism means incorporation into a worshipping community with accountability and boundaries (cf. Acts 2:41-47). Jesus is continuing a work that has been carried on since the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost (Acts 2). Namely, the gospel is preached. People are converted. Believers are baptized. Congregations are gathered. Disciples are established. Leaders are raised up. Missionaries are sent to preach. All churches in the New Testament are gone...this one will be too.

**Jesus builds HIS church through disciples.** God uses men like Peter—with heads like ROCKS—to build his church. The job of men is not to build the church; it is our job to accurately, courageously, and unapologetically proclaim the greatness of the one who does. The Bible says that the church was <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, (Eph. 2.20). God used a motley crew of nobodies that, by His power, he made into somebodies. It is almost as if God picks all of the people that everyone else skips over when picking their teams—he likes the slow kid, the unathletic kid, the one-legged kid, the SMALL KID. What began with confessing fugitives, boat-builders, shepherds, religious-zealots, teenage moms, politicians, prostitutes, adulterers, invalids, criminals, fishermen, and even ancient IRS agents **continues with you and me.**

**Jesus builds HIS church through sin.** Even though God uses men, the “success” of Jesus’ mission to build the church is not dependent upon a man, a program, a building, or a system. This should bring us great comfort. The fruitfulness of the mission is not dependent upon the faithfulness of men, but on the faithfulness of Christ. This not MY, YOUR CHURCH, or OUR church. Jesus says it is HIS CHURCH. Therefore, Jesus builds using who he wants, when he wants, where he wants, and how he wants. Sometimes that means birthing new churches, sometimes that is revitalizing old churches sometimes it means killing sick churches, other times its resurrecting dead ones. No matter what happens, Jesus continuing mission to build his church **will not fail** even when pastors fall, members leave, and churches die.

### **THE CHURCH IS BUILT FOR JESUS | WE PREACH**

Finally, the Church is built ON Jesus, BY Jesus, and FOR Jesus. The church does not exist to serve men **but to represent Jesus.** Jesus tells Peter that is he is giving the KEYS of the KINGDOM of heaven. These keys represent a badge of authority given to the chief steward of the house. Church leaders were expected to uphold the rule of God, especially in the early church, through knowing, living, and preaching. .

**The church is to know its authority.** Our own keys don’t open anything. Only Christ’s keys tell us what is good and bad. Christ gave His Word to the Church. We not only have the answer key, we have the principles to make any question that is asked. The church does not have the authority to speak whatever it wants, but it has the authority to speak what Jesus wants. The church is responsible to decree what God has already decreed in His Word and that without compromise as *“the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1Tim. 3.15).*

**The church is to live under authority.** The reality of the rule of Jesus is not to be spoken as much as it is to be lived as the church. If Jesus is the head of the church, then His body knows how to live it listens to Him. We have no excuse. As that truth goes deeper into our hearts, the fullness of Christ Lordship should fill every aspect of our lives. And as we live, our convictions, decisions, and actions reveal the rule of Christ in our hearts. *Ephesians 3.10 “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”*

**The church is to preach with authority.** He implies that the church is expected to exercise Jesus rule through preaching the “rules” to enter the Kingdom of heaven. *Luther: “Whoever hears the gospel from the apostles or the church and doesn’t want to believe it should be told the judgment that he will be damned. And when he becomes a believer and falls away and does not want to be converted to faith again he should be told the judgment that his sin is kept and he will be damned. On the other hand, whoever hears the gospel and believes or turns from his sins to faith should be told the judgment that his sins are given and he will be blessed. And he will look on this judgments as if HE had spoken it Himself.”* In so far as it does this accurately, the

church possesses the authority to declare what is a Christian and what is not. When church speaks in Christ's name it opens the gates of heaven to those who believe and closes them on those who do not.

### **CONCLUSION | THE CHURCH JESUS HAS GIVEN US**

There is only one gospel. There is only one foundation laid by Jesus Christ alone. We are given the authority to proclaim the one message declaring the TERMS for ENTERING the Kingdom of God AND for living for God's glory on this earth. We have the authority to speak but not to change the terms of it. And not only do we have the authority, we have the responsibility. We don't preach in church because we want to—we have to. And though we don't think preaching should be boring, our aim is not to entertain, but to be faithful to the truth. Jesus preached and he commanded his disciples to preach. Preaching is a priority because the Word of God is a priority. We preach God's Word because there is power in it. We preach God's Word because God's Word is central to every aspect of our lives. We preach God's Word because, if we don't, we are not doing what Jesus told us to as the church. We preach because God's Word has always been His chosen instrument to create, convict, convert, and conform His people—it is the power of salvation and the way God works. (Romans 1.16; Isaiah 55.10-11)

*<sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Romans 10.13-15*

WE PROFESS. WE PLANT. WE PREACH.