

**15.** According to 3: 2-5 why are the apostles the foundation stones of the church?

*They are the foundation stones of the church because God revealed, in a unique way, the mystery of the gospel to them. They have been given knowledge about Christ and his church that was hidden in the past. It is their task to make plain to the church what God revealed to them. They are the foundation stones because they alone have been given the authoritative revelation of God about Jesus and his church.*

**16.** What are the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”? First consider what is true of the person who possesses the keys to a building?

*The person who holds the keys to something is the person who is in charge of the door. It is this person who decides who gets to enter the building. The keys do not necessarily imply ownership of the building but imply the authority to control entry to the building. They have been given authority by Jesus to control who is permitted to enter and who is excluded from entering the church. They have been given, by revelation, the conditions and requirements for being a part of Christ’s church.*

**17.** What does, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”, mean? Most importantly, what is the relationship between what the apostles bind/loose on earth and what is bound/loosed in heaven?

*First you must point out that the NIV has an alternative translation in the margin. The NASB uses this alternative translation. The text literally reads, “Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.” The NASB translation makes clear what the Greek actually means. What the apostles bind/loose on earth was first bound/loosed in heaven. Paul says the same thing in 1 Cor. 2: 12-13 and Peter in 2 Peter 1: 20-21. The words of the apostles are the keys of heaven that bind and loose people in relation to God’s kingdom. It is the words of the apostles which define who belongs in God’s kingdom and the words that actually place people in that kingdom (1 Peter 1: 23-25). What this means is that the apostles while they were alive were, by their teaching and lives and ministry, setting down the requirements of who belongs to*

*the church. We can see this authority being expressed in Acts 2 when Peter delivers the first Christian sermon. At the end of his sermon, the people were cut to the heart and cried out, “What must we do to be saved?” Peter, authoritatively answers, “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.” Then a few verses later we are told that 3000 people were added to the CHURCH that day. In verse 42 we are told that these 3000 devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. Then at the end of chapter 2 we are told, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Peter and the other apostles exercise their authority of the keys of heaven, the binding and loosing work by preaching the gospel to people. Jesus, through their ministry builds his church.*

**18.** How do the apostles exercise their authority now, 2000 years after they have died? See 1 Cor. 2: 12-13, 3: 5-9, 11:2, 15:1-11, 1 Peter 1: 23-25, 2 Timothy 1: 13-14, Matthew 18:18.

*They wrote down this “binding” and “loosing” in the NT Scriptures. Now they exercise their authority through these Scriptures. The keys to the kingdom of heaven are the Scriptures and they are right now being exercised everywhere the church is rightly interpreting them, living them and preaching them. Jesus is now building his church upon the apostles through their authority as expressed in these Scriptures. This is clearly stated by Jesus in Matthew 18:18. Jesus says to the entire church, “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will have been bound in heaven.”*

**19.** What does this tell us about what makes a church the church of Jesus?

*The way you can recognize the church that Jesus is building is that it is committed to knowing, trusting and obeying the words of the apostles.*

**20.** How should individual Christians relate to the church and to the Scriptures?

*Every true Christian will desire to be vitally connected to Christ’s church and to know, trust and obey this word of the apostles and prophets.*

**10.** What does it mean that Jesus is building his church? (NOTE: the word translated “church” means “an assembly of people” or “a people who are gathered together for the same purpose”.) See 1 Peter 2: 4-5.

*To say that Jesus is building his church is to say that he is adding people into the assembly of his people. He is making an assembly of people who gather together for the purpose of “offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Or “declaring the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2: 9)*

**11.** What do we know about Hades? See the following: Matthew 11:23, Luke 16:23, Acts 2: 27 & 31, Revelations 1:18, 6:8, 20:14.

*Hades is the place ruled over by Satan. It is the place where all the dead outside of Christ go. It is a place of conscious torment. It’s chief characteristic is death, man’s greatest enemy and the just consequence of our sin. Jesus was kept from Hades when God raised him from the dead. He currently possesses the keys to Hades. In other words he is the one in charge of who ends up there. All who live there will be cast into the lake of fire, the final, eternal, conscious, judgment of God upon human sin.*

**12.** What does it mean to say that the church that Jesus is building will not be overcome by the gates of Hades?

*The word “overcome” means, as the margin in the NIV indicates, that the gates of Hades will not prove stronger than the church that Jesus is building. In other words, Jesus, through his church has the final say on who inhabits Hell, not the other way around. All those who are built into the church escape the judgment of hell and are kept safe from death and Satan. The power of death is the greatest power arrayed against humanity and yet it cannot overcome or harm the people of God, who are part of the church. This is Paul crying out in 1 Cor 15: 54-55, “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” No one and nothing can harm those who belong to Christ’s church. This is why Jesus can say, “...they will put some of you to death... But not a hair of your head will perish.” To belong to the church that Jesus is building is to be in the only place of safety and security. This also means we will not only*

*escape Satan’s power but we will actually reduce his power over the world. We will be the instruments of Jesus in bringing others out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. We will reverse the effects of Satan’s rule over the lives of others.*

Verses 18-19 contain one of the fundamental descriptions of how Jesus is building his church. To understand how Jesus is building his church we must answer the following questions.

**13.** To whom or what does “this rock” in v. 18 refer?

*The name Peter is simply the Greek word, “petros,” which means stone or rock. The word “rock” is the Greek word “petras”, which also means stone or rock. The only difference between these two words is that “petros” has a masculine ending and “petra” has a feminine ending. Jesus is making a pun on Peter’s name. Jesus is saying that he is going to build his church upon Peter.*

*But, what is it about Peter that makes him the foundation of the church? Notice that in verse 15 Jesus asks the entire group of disciples who they say he is. Then Peter answers. In verse 20 he doesn’t tell just Peter to not tell who he is, he commands all the disciples to not tell who he is. Verse 20 shows us that all the disciples agreed with Peter. Therefore, they were given the same revelation. The disciples to whom he is speaking are the twelve that we were told in Matthew 10:2 Jesus appointed as apostles, his special messengers. Peter stands as the first of the apostles to be given the knowledge of who Christ is. As we will see next week in the next passage, this knowledge is not complete in Peter’s life yet. However, he is the representative of the apostles and is first, historically. As you read the rest of the NT you will see Peter operating in the “first” position on several occasions. But he never is seen as having more authority than the other apostles and is in fact rebuked by one of the other apostles in Galatians 2.*

**14.** Turn to Ephesians 2: 17 – 3:5. According to 2: 20, how do Jesus and the apostles function in the building that is the church?

*Jesus is the cornerstone and the apostles are the foundation stones upon which the church is built.*

the wrong answer? Compare this with Matthew 11: 25-27 and 13: 11-17 (especially vv. 11 & 16).

*Peter knows who Jesus is because he is blessed and the Father of Jesus revealed this knowledge to Peter. He did not come up with the right answer because of any human work or ability. Peter's confession is the result of God's blessing on him and God's revealing work to him. Peter's confession is not the result of some natural ability that he possesses.*

**6.** Is it fair (just) that the Father blessed Peter by revealing the identity of Jesus to him and not to the crowds of people or the religious leaders?

*No it is not fair, it is gracious and kind and loving. If God were only just he would not have sent Jesus and he would not reveal who Jesus is to anyone. If God were only just he would destroy Peter and every other human being in hell forever. But God is gracious and just and so he sent Jesus to be the Savior of all those who acknowledge (trust, obey, follow) Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He will destroy all who refuse to believe in Jesus because they disobey the gospel because they are a "wicked and adulterous generation." Those who do not believe do so, not because they are unable to think or love or believe and not because there isn't sufficient evidence. They do not believe because they love evil and love other "gods" and not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See Matthew 16: 1-4)*

*God blessed Peter by revealing to him in a way that he could not resist that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus did not say to Peter, "Way to go! You figured it out. I knew you could do it. That's why I picked you, because I could see that you were a man of spiritual sensitivity with a good heart." Clearly, Peter does not "get it" because he has some latent spirituality or more native faith. What he gets right he gets right by the grace of God. This is the same for everyone who is a Christian.*

**7.** Do you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God? Why do you confess that and others who have been exposed to the same information do not? How should you respond to this reality?

*This knowledge ought to make every true Christian humble, grateful, and trusting. Humble as they realize that they are Christians, not because of anything they ever did but because God chose to be merciful to them. As you have heard me say many times, "proud Christian", is an oxymoron. Pride, self-righteousness and a judgmental spirit are the antithesis of what it means to be a Christian. In addition, Christians of all people are full of gratitude and joy because they are so aware of how surprising it is that they believe. They know that their entire salvation, from beginning to end is a gift and so they give thanks and are happy no matter what happens to them. Finally, true Christians are full of faith as they consider that if God has exerted his power to save them he will certainly exert his power to care for them.*

**8.** How should those who are not yet certain that Christ is their Savior respond to this reality?

*They should fear God and repent of their unbelief and cry out for mercy. They should pray like the tax collector in Luke 18: 10, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner." Or like the father in Mark 9:24, "I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief." They should read the Bible and use God's promises, like Romans 10: 13, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" or Matthew 11: 28-30. They should keep going to Christ seeking Christ and asking Christ to save them. They should hate their sin and flee to Christ. They should "save themselves from this corrupt generation", Acts 2: 40. What they will discover is that Jesus will save everyone who keeps knocking, seeking and asking (Matthew 7: 7-12). What they will discover is that the reason they kept on knocking, seeking and asking is the grace of God (John 3:8, 1 Cor. 15:10).*

**9.** In verse 18 what are the two metaphors that Jesus uses?

*He is building his church and the gates of hell will not overcome his church. He uses the metaphor of construction and the metaphor of a walled city under siege. He is building his church and the church he builds will overcome Satan's kingdom and not be overcome by Satan's kingdom.*

# THE RULE OF GOD BUILDS CHRIST'S CHURCH

## Matthew 16: 13-20

*Please review this weeks catechism question.*

### INTRODUCTION

Brainstorm together the process of building a house. Try to describe the sequence of events that must take place in the building of the house. Who has the ultimate say on the process? How does the person in charge relate to those who assist him or her in the building? How does the person in charge relate to the materials that go into the building?

In the center of this passage Jesus makes the claim that he is building his church. This process is one of the major themes of, not only the New Testament, but also the Old Testament. Jeremiah 24: 6-7, “My eyes will watch over them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.” Then Peter says in 1 Peter 2: 4-6, “As you come to him, the living stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Our goal in this study is to see how it is that Jesus is building his church.

### STUDY

1. The story begins with Jesus and his twelve apostles alone, 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the region of Caesarea Philippi, near Mt. Hermon. He asks his disciples to tell him what they've heard the crowds say about him. What are some of the opinions that people have of Jesus?

*They tell him that some agree with the governor of Galilee, Herod, that he is John the Baptist come back to life (Matthew 14:1-12). Others believe that Jesus is Elijah, who the prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:5) said would come in advance of the Messiah to prepare the way for his*

*arrival. In other words there are people who recognize that Jesus is from God but who don't believe he is the Messiah but rather the forerunner of the Messiah. Then there were many other beliefs ranging from a reincarnation of Jeremiah to one of the other less well-known prophets.*

2. What do all these views share in common?

*They all recognize that there is supernatural power associated with Jesus. They all recognize that God approves of Jesus. They all are associated in some way with people that the Jewish nation recognizes as God's prophets. They all view Jesus as the reincarnation of a prophet in some fashion. They all view Jesus as merely human and not the Messiah, the Savior of the world.*

3. By way of review, what do the religious leaders think about Jesus? See Matthew 12: 14, 24, 15:1-2, 16: 1-4.

*The religious leaders view Jesus as a fraud and most likely an agent of Satan. They view his teaching as highly dangerous and wicked and they are determined to either discredit him or kill him if they cannot discredit him.*

4. Jesus then turns his attention to the twelve apostles and asks them who they think he is. How does Peter, answering for the disciples, respond? How is his answer different from those of the crowds?

*Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and the Savior of the world. He acknowledges that Jesus is the unique Son of the Living God. His answer is radically different from those of the religious leaders and the crowds, who only view Jesus in human terms and reject his divine origin and mission. Peter clearly states that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT while the crowds and leaders only see him as somehow connected to the God's work in the past and not the fulfillment, the pinnacle of all that God has been doing in the world since creation.*

5. The leaders, the crowds and Peter all saw the same things and heard the same things for the most part. According to Jesus, how is it that Peter came up with the right answer while everyone else came up with