

I. Jesus Christ founded the church. Read Matthew 16:18

*¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. ¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹And 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.***

- A. This is the record of Christ establishing the first church. This church was actively existing during the life of Christ.
- B. The promise, "... **the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**" guarantees the continual existence of His church in every age.
 - 1. "Unto him be the glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end." Read Ephesians 3:21 *²⁰Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*
 - 2. "...and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Read Matthew 28:20 *¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*
- C. When the Lord organized His church out of the material prepared by John the Baptist, He set His church in the world and this church has never gone out of existence – the church lives today.

II. Three ways of identifying a New Testament church today.

- A. **Historical Perpetuity:** This means tracing the history of a church back through 2,000 years to the church Christ established.
- B. **Doctrinal Conformity:** This means comparing the doctrines of a church today with the ones of the New Testament.
- C. **Spiritual Affinity:** Churches after the order of the New Testament church are bound together by spiritual ties, through fellowship in a common faith and doctrinal unity.

III. Identifying marks of the church we will be tracing down through 2,000 years:

- A. Jesus Christ organized His disciples or followers into a church. The disciples or followers of Christ were to organize other churches as Christianity spread.
- B. Jesus Christ was to be the head of the churches, their only Lord and lawgiver. The churches were only to be executive in carrying out their Lord's will.
- C. The churches in their government and discipline were to be entirely separate and independent of each other. Each church's government was congregational and democratic.
- D. These churches were only given two kinds of officers: pastors and deacons. Both pastors and deacons will be selected by the church.
- E. Only the "saved" were to be received as members of the church. These saved ones and they only, were to be immersed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Only those thus received and baptized were to partake of the Lord's Supper.
- F. To the church was given two ordinances and only two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These were to be perpetual and memorial.
- G. The inspired Scriptures are to be the only rule and guide of faith and memorial.
- H. These churches are to believe and encourage complete separation of church and state. All were to have complete "religious liberty."
- I. The religion of Christ is to be individual, personal, and voluntary. There should be no physical or governmental compulsion.
- J. The work of the church is to be evangelism, administering the ordinances, and teaching.

IV. In our time, there are many different churches – all claiming to be the true church. The purpose of our study for the next twenty-five lessons will be to trace the churches, bearing the identifying marks of the church of the New Testament, down through twenty centuries and identify with Baptist today.