

The Church on the Rock
Matthew 16:18

Both Messiah and Christ mean Anointed One and refer to the second person of the Trinity. Messiah comes from the Hebrew while Christ is derived from the Greek. Both words are titles and not names. Jesus is often referred to by His title only. This is not uncommon. Pharaoh is a title used for Egyptian Kings. We sometimes address people by their title such as pastor or doctor. Jesus is called Christ because He is the Anointed One of the Father. To be anointed is to be set apart for service. The priests serving Israel were anointed in order to serve as priests (Exodus 29:29). Saul was anointed as King over Israel (1 Samuel 15:17) as was David (2 Samuel 5:3). Jesus is called the Father's Anointed One in Psalm 2:2 and Revelation 11:15. John 1:41 gives the account of Andrew bringing his brother Simon Peter to Jesus saying that he has found the Messiah (Christ) meaning he has found the Anointed One.

Since prophecy speaks much of the Messiah He is often understood to be exclusively related to Israel. It sometimes causes consternation for believers today (especially mid-Acts believers) to have Paul referring to Christ (Messiah) in relation to us. Why did Paul call us the Body of Christ (Messiah). Since the Messiah is seen to be Israel's how can He also be meant for today's body of believers? We always try to keep Israel and the Body separate but now it seems there may be a common element between the two.

The key to understanding this seeming inconsistency is to understand and apply the meaning of the word Messiah (Christ). When Christ was anointed He was set apart to bring salvation to Israel and serve as her prophetic Prophet, Priest and King. However, the second person of the Trinity was also made the Anointed One over the Church, the Body of Christ. In that position He serves as Head. Israel is looking for Christ to come and set up their kingdom and we are looking for Christ to come and rapture us home. One person, two anointings related to two groups with separate futures.

I will build my church (verse 18)

I believe the main reason that people don't make a separation between Israel and the Body (or between prophecy and grace) is that most do not understand the definition of the word church. The English word church is derived from the Greek word ekklesia. According to Strong's it is a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly. From this definition it is easy to see why it can refer to the people who come together to worship or more specifically to the entire body of believers. Ekklesia never refers to a building but to a group of people therefore it can be in reference to Israel called out of Egypt and wandering in the desert (Acts 7:38) or even to an angry mob called out to protest against Paul's preaching (Acts 19:32). So when the word church or assembly is read in Scripture it is imperative to ask yourself, "Which church?"

In most cases, ekklesia will mean either the Kingdom church (Israel under prophecy) or the Body church (today's church under Grace). Since Paul was raised up by Jesus Christ and given a message never revealed before him, the Mystery (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:1—9), I believe the Church, the Body of Christ began when he was saved. Prior to that any mention of church would refer to the Kingdom church. When Matthew discusses discipline in the church in Matthew 18:15—17 he is talking to the Kingdom church. Those who were added to the church daily in Acts 2 were added to a Kingdom church that believed the Kingdom Gospel. Great fear came upon this Kingdom church when Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead because they had lied to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5. This does not happen in today's Grace church! Saul (Paul) was persecuting this church in Acts 8. I believe we also see a Kingdom church in operation in Acts 21:20. They were still zealous for the Mosaic Law, and properly so since the Kingdom church was not told to put the Law aside until the book of Hebrews.

With that background information it would seem clear that the church Jesus was going to build was going to be the Kingdom church, a continuation of the church that was already in existence at that time. This church will be in operation in the Millennial Kingdom and will be composed of Old Testament Kingdom saints as well as those who have died or gone through the Tribulation as believers. We know this because the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the Tribulation, which will happen after the Grace believers are raptured (Matthew 24:14). This is the same Gospel that was preached by Jesus and His Disciples (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:5).

The church on the rock (verse 18)

Jesus said He would build His church on this rock. What rock is that? There seems to be two main views as to what this rock is. The first view says the rock is related to Peter's statement that Jesus was the Christ and based on this statement Jesus was going to build His church with Him as the foundation. The second viewpoint says the reference is to Peter. Jesus first uses Simon Barjona to address Peter then uses the name Peter. Since Peter means stone in Greek and Jesus said He would build His church on a rock the implication is that Jesus was doing a play on words when He announced that Peter would become the foundation of the church.

It's well known that the Roman Catholic Church has used this last interpretation to make Peter the founder and first pope of their church. They also use verse 19 as their authority to forgive or not to forgive sins. This is done in total disregard to the context and ignores principles of right-division. Today's church is not in view here, the future, Millennial church is.

I believe a proper interpretation does give Peter the authority over the Millennial Church but this Church must be built on Christ. This ties in with Paul who has been given authority over the Body Church but like Peter's church, Christ is the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10—15). Peter's ruling authority is presented in Matthew 19:28 when Jesus says he will be sitting on a throne along with his fellow Disciples. Remember, Peter isn't being given charge over a church like we think of a church today. He will be ruling over Israel, an assembly (ekklesia) of saints in the Millennial Kingdom.

The gates of hades (verse 18)

A common explanation of this verse is that God will draw His people together and nothing, not even Satan, will be able to stop Him from accomplishing what He has set out to do. Some confusion is created because the KJV uses the word Hell instead of Hades. If Scripture were specifically referring to Hell in this verse then it would be illogical to think that Satan could continue his work since Hell is a prison for him. He would be locked up and unable to cause any problems. Hades is merely the place of the dead. This is where Old Testament saints are residing until the Millennial Kingdom is set up at which time they will be ushered into the Kingdom. The gate is merely an entrance or exit, a doorway leading into the temporary holding compartment for those who have died. This gate (doorway) will not be able to hold these saints when they are called into the Kingdom. Death does not prohibit entrance into the promised Kingdom.

Distortion of truth

How far away from truth today's church wanders when they do not allow Scripture to divide truth from truth. Every time God's program for Israel is intermixed with God's Mystery program for the Church, confusion and bad doctrine arise. This one verse is a perfect example of how a basic understanding of the two programs will help clarify understanding of what is actually going on. Unfortunately, the traditions of men, sometimes handed down for generations, distort and muddle God's intended meaning with the result that many are lead away from the truth. When Grace and Law are mixed people give up seeking for the truth because it becomes too confusing. Isn't this exactly what Satan desires?

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com