

THE MESSIAH'S DRAMATIC REVELATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS CHURCH: PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION MATHEW 16:13-20

Introduction

Jesus withdrew to be alone with His disciples. He was facing the end very, very soon. There was much to reveal and teach them. It was time for them to learn that He was *building a church* — an assembly of people who would be confessing Him to be the Messiah. The present passage is one of the most dramatic revelations ever made. It is also one of the most demanding questions ever asked. It is demanding because the answer given determines a person's eternal destiny. How a person answers the question determines where he will spend eternity, with God in heaven or apart from God in hell. And note: there is only one answer to the question that can qualify a person for heaven: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The importance of the question and its confession is clearly seen by glancing quickly at the points of the passage.

- I. This confession was made at Caesarea Philippi (v. 13).
- II. This confession is not the confession of the world (vv. 13-14).
- III. This confession declares one's personal trust in Christ (vv. 15-16).
- IV. This confession is revealed by God alone (v. 17).
- V. This confession is the foundation of the church (v.18).
- VI. This confession assigns great responsibility to believers for the church (v. 19).
- VII. This confession must be understood before being shared with others (v. 20).

I. *Mathew 16:13 Caesarea Philippi*

Christ was in the area of Caesarea Philippi. (See *Caesarea Philippi*, Mk. 8:27. This note gives the dramatic background for the Lord's pointed question. Jesus had withdrawn to be alone and to pray before this event and its profound revelation (see Lk. 9:18.)

MARK 08:27 CAESAREA PHILIPPI

The city had a rich religious history. It had once been the centre of Baal worship with at least fourteen temples in and around the city. It was believed to have within its borders the cavern in which the Greek god of nature, Pan was born. In the beginning of its history, the city was so identified with this god that it was named after the god, being called Panias. One of its most beautiful structures was the gleaming white marble temple built for the worship of Caesar. Herod the Great had built the temple in

honour of Caesar when Caesar bestowed on him another country. But it was Herod's son Philip who adorned the temple with the magnificence for which it was known worldwide. It was also Philip who changed the name of the city from Pnias to Caesarea, Caesar's town. He added his own name also, calling the city Caesarea Philippi.

The city proclaimed far and wide the worship of Caesar and of the gods of one's choice, that is, the worship of all except the One true and living God. It was against this dramatic yet terrible background that Jesus asked the pointed question, "But who do you say that I am?" (emphatic Greek translation). It was against this background of religion that Peter made his great discovery and confession: Jesus is the Christ, the real Messiah. □

II. *Mathew 16:13-14 False Profession*

Peter's confession is not the confession of the world. Note two significant points.

1. Jesus had asked a critical question: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" We must know what others say about Jesus, just who He is. What people think of Jesus...
 - determines their destiny
 - determines how we are to reach out to them
 - determines their reaction to us as we witness to them
 - determines to a large degree the morality and justice of a society
2. There were false confessions regarding Christ. The popular opinions show that Christ was highly esteemed and greatly respected. He was considered one of the greatest of men. It should be noted that these opinions were not only untrue, but they were dangerous in that they contained only half truths. The result was tragic: people were deceived and misled by them.
 - a. Some people said Jesus was John the Baptist. These people were professing Jesus to be a great spirit of righteousness, a spirit that was willing to be martyred for its faith. Herod and others thought thus (Mt. 14:1-2). Upon hearing of Jesus' marvelous works, Herod fancied that either John had been revived or else his spirit indwelt the man about whom he was hearing.

The common people saw some similarity between John and Jesus: both were doing a unique and great work for God; both were divinely chosen and gifted by God; and both proclaimed the Kingdom of God and prepared men for it. Therefore, when some people looked at Jesus and His ministry, they did not consider Him to be the Messiah, but rather the promised forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5).

- b. Some people said Jesus was Elijah. Elijah was considered to be the greatest prophet and teacher of all time and was also predicted to be the forerunner of the coming

Messiah (Mal. 4:5). William Barclay points out that even today the Jews expect Elijah to return before the Messiah. In the celebration of the Passover, they always leave a chair vacant for him to occupy (*The Gospel of Mathew*, Vol. 2, p. 150). Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow and her son (1 Kng. 17:14). The people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude.

- c. Some people said Jesus was Jeremiah. They were professing Jesus to be a prophet who was revealing some very important things about God and religion to men. It had always been thought that Jeremiah was going to return to earth right before the Messiah and bring with him the tabernacle, ark, and altar of incense. He was said to have taken these and hid them in Mount Nebo right before he died (2 Mac 2:1-12; 2 Ezz 2:18).
- d. Some people said Jesus was one of the prophets. They were professing Jesus to be a great prophet who had been sent for their day and time. He was thought to be one of the great prophets brought back to life or one in whom the spirit of a great prophet dwelt (see Deu. 18:15, 18).

It should be noted that the same false confessions about Christ exist in every generation.

=> There are some people who think that Jesus was only a great man of righteousness who was martyred for His faith. Therefore, He leaves us a great example of how to live and stand up for what we believe.

=> There are other people who think that Jesus was only one of the great teachers and prophets of history.

=> There are still others who think that Jesus was only a great man who revealed some very important things to us about God and religion. Therefore, He can make a significant contribution to every man in his search for God.

=> There are some others who think that Jesus was just a great man and prophet sent to the people (Jews) of His day. We can learn about Him by studying His life.

Mark 6:3 *“Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

John 1:10-11 *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

John 8:19 *Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”*

1 John 2:22-23 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:3 *But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

Thought 1. Note three things about the world's opinions of Jesus Christ.

- 1) The world is not unanimous in its opinion of Christ. There are many different opinions, yet there is only one *truth*. He either is or is not who He claimed to be: the Son of God. As long as the world does not hold to the truth, it shall wander around in a maze of opinions, following guess after guess and hypothesis after hypothesis.
- 2) Most of the world's opinions of Christ see Him as a good and great man. The opinions are not accurate, but they at least elevate Christ above the average man.
- 3) The world's opinions are false and inaccurate. There are two bases for this statement.
 - a) If Christ should not be the Son of God, then He is not a good and great man. He is the worst deceiver and biggest hoax to ever arrive on the world scene. Why? Because He claimed to be the Son of God and the God of righteousness, and He built His following on the claim. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, then every true follower of His is living in a *dream world* of *false hope* and denying himself many of the world's goods. He is also teaching a deceptive lie to others. If Christ should not be the Son of God, then He is not worth following.
 - b) Scripture emphatically declares: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is who He claimed to be.

III. **Mathew 16:15-16 Peter's Confession**

Peter's confession was a personal trust in Christ.

1. Jesus asked a second critical question, and He asked this question much more emphatically in the Greek: "But you, who do you say that I am?" The answer to this question is critical; it is all-important. It determines a person's eternal destiny.
2. The true confession declares one's personal trust in Christ. Note Peter's words, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" — a simple and yet momentous confession arising from a personal conviction. It is the confession that saves the soul and the confession that lays the foundation for the church. The very life and survival of a man's soul and of the church as a whole rests upon this simple, yet profound conviction.
 - => The *Christ*: the Messiah, the anointed One of God (See *Christ, Messiah*, Mt. 1:18).
 - => The *Son of God*: of the same being, the same substance; One with the Father (Ph. 2:6).
 - => The *Son of the Living God*: the source and being of life; possessing the source, energy and power of life within Himself (Jn. 5:26; 17:2-3; 1 Th. 1:9).

Peter probably did not understand all that was involved in Christ's being the Son of God (the cross and resurrection had not yet taken place). But his confession was made in simple trust arising from a heart that was truly convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is simple trust which God desires and longs for — nothing more and nothing less. Peter was simply confessing step by step, "I believe you are..."

- the true Messiah,
- not a mere man,
- but the Son of God,
- sent by God,
- to fulfill all that the prophets foretold.

Thought 1. The question is personal. It is directed to every man: "Who do you say that I am?" Every man has to answer, and his eternal destiny depends upon his answer. But his answer is critical, for it is not a confession *about* Christ that Christ is after. He is after a belief, a confession in His deity, a trusting of His saving grace.

Mat 10:32-33 *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*

Mark 8:38 *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

Luke 12:8 *"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God."*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

John 1:41 *The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).*

John 1:45 *Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote β Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

John 1:49 *Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."*

John 4:29 *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*

John 6:69 *"We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

John 11:27 *"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Acts 8:36-37 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”

IV. Mathew 16:17 Conviction, the Work of the Holy Spirit

Peter’s confession was revealed by God alone. Only God can convince the soul of a man and lead a man to personally trust Christ as the Son of God. There are two reasons for this.

1. Man is only flesh and blood. A person cannot convince another person to trust Christ, not convince him in regenerating power. Conviction that leads a man to trust Christ — that leads to regeneration — is the work of God’s Spirit (Jn. 16:8-11).
2. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Man is of the earth; he is earthly. Christ is of heaven and of God; He is heavenly. God is Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him *in spirit* and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24). Man cannot come to know Christ in a personal way through natural wisdom or study. Humanly, the fact is as clear as can be, man cannot *recreate* himself. If he is to be reborn, he has to be *recreated* by Someone other than himself. He has to be recreated by God (Jn. 3:3, 5-6).

=> Man cannot *quicken* himself; he cannot give spiritual life to himself — only God can.

=> Man cannot *regenerate* himself — only God can.

=> Man cannot *transform* himself — only God can.

=> Man cannot *redeem* himself — only God can.

=> Man cannot *infuse* himself with eternal life — only God can.

John 1:13 Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Thought 1. Natural man has been led away from the spiritual...

- by pride, power, fame, wealth and glory.
- by the prejudices of education, the philosophy of humanism, the limitations of scientific methodology and the materialistic results of technology.
- by the pull to disbelieve, the lack of courage to buck the crowd and the hesitation to surrender all of self and possessions to Christ.
- by the love of the flesh, the enjoyment of looking, the stimulation of touching, the sensation of experiencing and the consumption of tasting.
- by the deceptions of the evil one, the lusts of the human heart and the sins of personal behaviour.

V. *Mathew 16:18 Foundation of the Church*

Peter's confession is the foundation of the church (See *Church*, Mt. 16:18. Also Notes Eph. 2:20; 4:4-6.) Christ replied to Peter, "You are Peter [petros] and on this rock [petra] I will build my church." No matter how a person interprets this passage, one thing is sure: this was a tremendous compliment to Peter. But what did Jesus mean? Probably this: the rock was *Peter himself and his confession*, not simply Peter and not just his confession. The rock was *both*, but in a very special sense.

1. Peter himself was the rock in two senses.
 - a. Peter was the first person to *fully* grasp who Jesus really was. He was the first to confess with *full* understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Others had made similar confessions before (Jn. 1:41, 45, 49; 6:69), but they had not yet been with Jesus long enough to *fully* grasp what being "the Son of God" really meant. Their confessions had been the earthly confessions of a simple childlike faith. But now Peter understood more fully; he *fully* grasped who Jesus was. Therefore, he became the first man, the first rock, the foundation *upon* which the church and all other "living stones" were to be built.

Great weight is given to this meaning in Eph. 2:20. The apostles and prophets are said to be the foundation of the church upon which all future believers or "living stones" are built (1 Pet. 2:5). Jesus Christ is said to be the chief cornerstone. The picture is unquestionably clear. From the human perspective, the apostles and prophets work and build the church, and upon their work and effort the church depends. From God's perspective, Christ's power and work establishes the church (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-8; Note, Mt. 16:19).

- b. Peter was the one who launched and laid the foundation of the church. He was the early leader of the church who stood forth at Pentecost when three thousand souls

were saved (Acts 2:41) and at Caesarea when the door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles (10:1f). Therefore, he was the rock and the foundation in that he was the first man who ever opened the doors of the church to both Jew and Gentile.

2. Peter's confession (or one might say, Christ Himself) was the rock. Christ said, "You are Peter and on this rock [I, Myself, the great truth of your confession] I will build my church." There is no question that the church is built upon Christ. He is unquestionably the builder of the church and the power behind its structure (1 Cor. 3:11). It is He who takes every believer, every "living stone," and places him into the structure of His church (1 Pet. 2:4-8). The church *depends* upon Christ, not upon Peter nor any other man or combination of men. It was first *built* by Peter after Pentecost; but it is *held up and held together* by Christ, the only foundation.

Note the exact words spoken by Christ.

=> Fact 1: "My church." The church is Christ's not man's.

=> Fact 2: "I will build." Christ builds the church.

=> Fact 3: "The gates of Hades will not overcome it." Christ Himself protects the church.

Mat 7:24 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."*

Mat 21:42 *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Eph 2:20 *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

1 Pet 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. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

Thought 1. The *true* church is universal. It is made up of *all* who genuinely confess Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. But note: He is the Son of the *living* God. If God is living, then Christ is living. He is, therefore, "My Lord, my God." A genuine believer, that is, a true church member, becomes a person who has surrendered himself to be a servant of God's Son, of God's Lord.

Thought 2. We should go to Christ often and confess our trust and faith in Him. We should do so alone, demonstrating strength, devotion, tenderness and warmth. He desires such strong and warm devotion, for we are the “living stones” of His church.

Thought 3. Note a fact often overlooked. Christ not only loved and died for us individually – He also loved and died for the church as a whole (universally). “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).

MATHEW 16:18 CHURCH (EKKLESIA)

*“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” **Mathew 16:18***

The word means to call out a gathering, an assembly. In the Greek, there is no spiritual significance ascribed to the word itself. An example is the town meeting in Ephesus which was *called out* (ekklesia). It was only an official city-wide meeting (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

What is the difference then between such secular gatherings and the church of God?

1. It is God who calls together and gathers His church. His church is the body of people “called out” from the world by Him. They are His body of people, a people sanctified or *set apart* by Him to form the church of the living God.
2. God dwells within the very presence of believers when they gather together (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
3. The gathering of God meets together for two purposes - worship and mission. God is the object of worship, and His mission becomes the objective of the church. Therefore, God’s church, the local assembly, gathers together to worship and to pool its resources in order to carry out the mission of God Himself. It should be noted that this is the first mention of the church in the New Testament. (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; 4:4-6.) □

VI. **Mathew 16:19 Christian Responsibility**

Peter’s confession assigned great responsibility to believers for the church. The steward of the house is given the keys or the responsibility for the house. The steward has the responsibility to close (bind) and to open (loose) the house. The key is the gospel, the message of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is the business of the steward to proclaim and teach the Gospel. By proclaiming and teaching, he opens the door; by not proclaiming and not teaching, he shuts the door.

Note: the keys are not the keys to the church but to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven that is the point. Peter was the first man to preach the gospel and open the door to Israel at Pentecost (Acts 2:38-42) and to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:3-48).

Note another point of critical importance: Peter claimed no power or authority beyond preaching the gospel and opening the door to unbelievers (Acts 15:7-11). His epistles say nothing whatsoever about man's acting in God's behalf and determining who will and who will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only God will determine who lives and who does not live in His presence. There is also this additional evidence: Peter claimed nothing more for himself than what other men claimed — to be gifted by God as an apostle (1 Pet. 1:1) and an elder (1 Pet. 5:1). This fact is clearly seen in his subservience to James. James presided over the Jerusalem church, not Peter (Acts 15:13-19; Gal. 2:11-14).

Thought 1. The servants of God, ministers and laymen alike, have been given the gospel, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is every believer's responsibility to use the keys. The unbeliever who rejects the gospel in hostility and begins to persecute the believer is to be turned away from the kingdom (Mt. 10:11-14, 23). The one who receives the gospel and the believer is to have the door of the kingdom opened to him.

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

VII. Mathew 16:20 Witnessing

Peter's confession must be understood before being shared with others. There were several reasons the disciples were forbidden to share that Jesus was the Son of God.

1. They still needed more preparation. They did not yet know the *full* gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus, the very core of the gospel, had not yet taken place.
2. The disciples needed the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit if the message was to be effective, and the Spirit had not yet come. Pentecost had not yet taken place.
3. The people misunderstood the prophecies of the Messiah. If the disciples began preaching with force, the people might revolt against the Roman conquerors (See *Christ, Messiah*, Mt. 1:18).

Thought 1. Two things are essential before a believer can effectively proclaim the gospel.

- 1) He must understand the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
- 2) He must be indwelt and infilled by the Spirit of God (Acts 1:8). ■

MATHEW 01:18 MEANING OF 'CHRIST' AND 'MESSIAH'

The word for "Christ" and "Messiah" is the same word: *Christos*. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same Person and mean the same thing: *the Anointed One*. The Messiah is *the Anointed One* of God. Mathew says that Jesus "is called Christ" (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the Anointed One of God, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people trusting. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist, Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus' trial, is an example (Mk. 15:6f).

The Messiah was thought to be several things:

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David's line who would free the Jewish state and establish it as an independent nation, leading it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name Jesus shows Him to be man. The name Christ shows Him to be God's anointed, God's very own Son. Christ is Jesus' official title. It identifies Him officially as:

- Prophet (Deu. 18:15-19),
- Priest (Psa. 110:4) and
- King (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

These officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

EPHESIANS 02: 20 CHURCH, GOD'S BUILDING

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20

The church is pictured as God's building. Believers are pictured as being the building stones which are being used to construct a building for God. Note two significant points.

1. Jesus Christ Himself is the *Chief Cornerstone*. The symbolism of the chief cornerstone says three significant things to us.
 - a. The cornerstone is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the preeminent stone in time. So it is with Christ. He is *the first* of God's new movement.
- => Christ is the author of our salvation. All others are crew members who follow Him.

Heb 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

=> Christ is the author and source of eternal salvation and of our faith. All others are the readers of the story.

Heb 5:9 And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

=> Christ is the alpha and the omega — the beginning and the end. All others come after Him.

Rev 1:8 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

=> Christ is the forerunner, the one who went before us into the very presence of God. All others enter God’s presence after Him.

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

b. The cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. The cornerstone is the preeminent stone in position and power. So it is with Christ. He is the support and power, the Foundation of God’s new movement.

=> Christ is *the Head Cornerstone*, the only true foundation upon which man can build. All crumble who are not laid upon Him.

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

=> Christ is *the Chief Cornerstone* upon which all others are fitly formed together. All who wish to be fitly formed together have to be laid upon Him.

Eph 2:20-22 *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

c. The cornerstone is the directional stone. It is used to line up the whole building and all the other stones. It can be called the *instructional stone* — upon it all the lines and instructions of the building are based. So it is with Christ. He is the Person who gave and gives the directions and instructions to God’s people. We — the church — are to build our lives upon His instructions and His instructions only. If we follow any other instructions or directions, we will be out of line; and when we are noticed, we will have to be removed, cast aside and replaced with a stone that can be set in line. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. God used Him to give direction to all the other stones.

1 Pet 2:6-8 *For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” and, “A stone that*

causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. If He is removed, the church will collapse: no Christ, no church. Christ holds everything within the church together. Therefore, it is an absolute necessity’ that He and He alone be preached, taught and lived.

Mat 7:24-27 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

2 Tim 2:19 *Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”*

2. We, the church, are built upon the foundation laid by the testimonies of the apostles and prophets. They surrounded the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Their record and testimony of the Word of God itself is the foundation upon which the church is to be laid.

John 17:17 *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

Rom 10:7-9 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Rom 10:10 *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Eph 4:14-15 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. □*