

Identifying the Lord's Church
(Matthew 16:18)

Introduction:

1. In Matthew 9:35 a summary statement of the Lord's work is given.
2. According to Matthew 16:13, as Jesus carried out His work, He traveled to Caesarea Philippi.
3. It was there that Jesus asked His disciples a question: "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*"
4. The response of the disciples in vs.14 indicates that people held a variety of opinions concerning the Lord's identity.
 - a. John, Elijah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets were great men of God, but Jesus was not any of them.
 - b. No doubt the people who held these opinions were honest and sincere, but they were wrong.
 - c. They had either gone to the wrong sources to learn about Jesus or they had rejected accurate information that showed who He is.
 - d. With all these opinions, was it possible to identify Jesus correctly?
5. In vs.16, Peter identified Jesus as "*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"
 - a. Why was Peter able to identify Jesus?
 - b. The Lord's statement in vs.17 indicates that Peter had gone to the right source for information -- the Father.
 - c. Not only did Peter go to the right source to learn about Jesus, but he also accepted the information he had learned.
6. How can we properly identify Jesus today?
 - a. We must go the right source for information, and we must accept the information we learn.
 - b. Jesus showed us where to find accurate information in John 5:39.
 - 1) "*Search 'the scriptures' [God's Word].*"
 - 2) Jesus said that the Scriptures "*testify*" of Him.
7. On the basis of these principles, let us turn our attention to a subject that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 16:18 -- His church.
 - a. The division in the religious world shows that people hold a variety of opinions about the Lord's church.
 - b. We might wonder if it is even possible to identify the Lord's church today.
 - c. We can identify the Lord's church if we will go to the right source for information and accept the information we learn.
8. In our lesson we are "searching the Scriptures" so we can identify the church that Jesus promised to build.

Discussion:

- I. THE CHURCH JESUS PROMISED TO BUILD WAS PURCHASED WITH A HIGH PRICE
 - A. The price is revealed in:
 1. Acts 20:28 [Jesus purchased the church "*with his own blood*"]
 2. Ephesians 5:25 [Christ "*gave himself for it*"]
 - B. Since Jesus paid such a high price for His church, what does this say to those who hold the opinion that the church is not important?
 - C. Information that leads to that opinion did not come from the Scriptures.
- II. THE CHURCH JESUS PROMISED TO BUILD IS HIS BODY
 - A. We learn this great truth from Ephesians 1:22-23.
 - B. In connection with this, how many bodies are there? (see Ephesians 4:4)
 - C. Since the Lord's church is His body, and there is only one body, what does this say to those who hold the opinion that the Lord approves of many churches?

- D. Information that leads to that opinion did not come from the Scriptures.
 - E. We understand that every body has a head -- this leads us to our next point.
- III. JESUS IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH HE PROMISED TO BUILD
- A. We have already seen this in Ephesians 1:22-23, but this same point is also made in Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 1:18.
 - B. Since Jesus is the head of His church, what does this say to those who hold the opinion that some man is the head of the church?
 - C. Information that leads to that opinion did not come from the Scriptures.
 - D. In addition to having a head, a body is also composed of other parts.
- IV. THE CHURCH JESUS PROMISED TO BUILD IS COMPOSED OF MEMBERS
- A. This point is clearly stated in Romans 12:4-5.
 - B. Question: How does a person become a member of the Lord's body?
 1. This question is answered in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 [a person is baptized into the one body].
 2. In connection with this, let us read Acts 2:47.
 - a. The Lord adds members to His church.
 - b. Remember that Peter would be given *"the keys of the kingdom."*
 - c. Let us examine what Peter said and the way people responded to it (Acts 2:38, 41).
 3. What do these passages say to those who hold the opinion that a person must "pray the sinner's prayer" and "join the church of his choice?"
 4. Information that leads to that opinion did not come from the Scriptures.
 - C. How are members of the Lord's church to behave?
 1. This question is answered in 1 Timothy 3:14-15 [by examining the things that are written, we can know how to behave properly].
 2. What does this say to those who hold the opinion that a member of the Lord's body can live as he pleases?
 3. Information that leads to that opinion did not come from the Scriptures.

Conclusion:

1. Regardless of the many opinions that existed in Matthew 16:14, Jesus could be properly identified by those who went to the right source for information.
2. Regardless of the many opinions that exist today, by going to the right source for information, we can properly identify the Lord's church.
3. Have you become a member of the church that Jesus purchased with His blood by being baptized into it?
4. If you have, are you behaving as the Scriptures teach?