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BUILD MY CHURCH!

JESUS said, "That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and **the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**" (Matthew 16:18). I have heard of THREE different ways of looking at this one passage. The first and probably the most popular view is that Peter, the rock, built the Roman Catholic Church as a result of this prophecy and commission. The second, with multiplied millions of people in agreement, is that the confession of faith, "Thou are the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD" is what builds the church. The third, which is growing rapidly in popularity, is that, "Flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven.... and upon this rock will I build my church." In other words, the rock of continuous REVELATION from GOD is the cornerstone of the true church.

WHO BUILDS THE CHURCH?

Personally, after having participated in the study of all three, I have decided that there is more truth in the third idea, the rock of continuous REVELATION, than in the other two, but I do not minimize the confession of faith either.

But the central subject that I want to look at today is slightly different than any of those three - but it is connected. I want to see - WHO BUILDS THE CHURCH?

I think that it should be fairly obvious-from the scripture that JESUS CHRIST BUILDS THE CHURCH.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Most people think of the "church" as a building on the corner of the street. A few use the word "church" to describe their denomination. But, technically the word "church" means the "called out ones." Technically the word "church" refers to people - not buildings - and not theological ideas or denominations.

It is a tragedy that when people talk about the church - no one can be sure what they are talking about,

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible says: CHURCH, **15779** EKKLESIA Greek, a calling out.

WHO HELPS WHOM?

But it seems that the majority of people do believe that a minister or preacher builds a church. Most ministers show us by their actions that they do believe that GOD called or appointed them to build the church. I heard one pray, "Lord help me build this church!" Now, I'm not trying to throw stones at that person, and it is possible to see how the pastor got that idea that I think is a mistaken idea. After all, most people think that JESUS told Peter to build the church, so it is not

hard to see how the idea transferred from Peter to the other members of the ministry who thought that they were to build the church when Peter died. After Peter died all the other ministers took up the idea - now we are his successors so we must build the church. I think that idea has produced a sick Roman Catholic Church.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The second idea was provided by the Protestant church. In a reaction against Peter the cornerstone of the Roman Catholics, the early Protestants taught that the cornerstone was, "Thou art the CHRIST." This kind of thinking led to theological arguments and hairsplitting. The result of that mind set produced hundreds and hundreds of denominations based on the theological concept of their own leaders, with each denomination claiming that they alone had all the word on all revealed truth. I think that idea has produced a sick Protestant church.

WHAT WE NEED

Presently I enjoy the opportunity to fellowship with Christians who have the mind set to embrace all the truth that has been given to us by GOD through past revivals. And I also enjoy the presence of friends who look toward the future for more revelation from GOD. But I mostly appreciate folks who embrace both concepts, people who have a good balance between past and future, Naturally it is hard to find a group of folks like that.

There are two main reasons that make it a small group. First, most Christians really do believe that their own denomination has a corner on truth - that their leaders "know it all." For instance, most denominational Christians will not attend a healing meeting (or a Holy Spirit tongues meeting, etc.) because their leaders did not include those items in their own statement of faith. The second reason is that most denominational Christians have been taught that there is something wrong with the former denomination from which their leaders came forth. In other words, they are taught to fear the PAST and they are also taught to fear the FUTURE. They are taught to be satisfied with the present status of things. The motto is, "Don't rock the boat."

WRONG FOUNDATION

I said all that to show why I think that the present church (as we popularly know it) has been built on the wrong foundation. Also, it shows that the present church (as we popularly know it) has been built by ministers and pastors and not by JESUS CHRIST.

It appears to me that the true church is being built by JESUS CHRIST as GOD continues to reveal truth to those who will accept it. Thus it is impossible to point to any particular denomination or move and say that they alone are the true church.

But the main idea to emerge from all of this history is that it is necessary to keep abreast of what is happening in the present so as to keep in step with the continued REVELATION from GOD - without neglecting the past one.

The definition of church as "the called out ones" now makes more sense. In order to be a member of the true church it is necessary to be a "called OUT one." But a person cannot be called OUT of one thing without being called IN to another. So, **Christians in the true church are moving from truth to truth, group to group, denomination to denomination.**

TAKE AWAY OUR PLACE

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our PLACE and NATION they took counsel together for to put him to death." (John 11:47-53)

We see from this section of scripture that the religious leaders of the "church" did truly recognize the MIRACLES of JESUS CHRIST but their decision to kill JESUS Was based on the fact that they were afraid that they might LOSE their "PLACE" and "NATION." They thought they would be fired from their job, or perhaps that there would be no job in the future. They killed Jesus to protect their jobs. Job security has been a powerful factor in the evil motives of men.

JOB SECURITY

And I submit for your analysis the fact that job security is the main factor presently that keeps Christian ministers from embracing any newly and continuously revealed truth from GOD. Most ministers imply and some directly teach that they only have all the truth and that if GOD wants to reveal or restore anything, then it will come from them only. That's a form of job security.

A letter in my file is a case in point. The writer of the letter made fun of me for teaching a new revelation about the meaning of the seven seals, trumpets, angels and vials in the book of Revelation. His contention was that the "church" already knew everything that GOD wanted them to know. I think that idea is as wrong as wrong can be, and I point to the wars caused by the "church" to demonstrate my point. The "church" is ignorant of what GOD is doing because they specialize in what He did not what He is doing.

Church history proves that Catholics did not know the truth as revealed to Luther. Lutherans did not know the truth as later revealed to Menno Simons. Mennonites did not know the truth as later revealed to Knox. The story repeats over and over again.

BUILD CHURCH OR PEOPLE?

As I travel this great country of ours from the Atlantic to the Pacific, I do meet hundreds of pastors and Christian workers every year. I hope that you will forgive me but the shortness of time in my schedule makes it necessary for me to "size them up" very quickly. And so I ask them questions directed to find out if they are motivated to build a church or if their desire is to build people. Naturally some are confused and don't really know what their goals are, but most are really building a church. Only a precious few seem to be motivated to build people.

A minister who spends a lot of time studying and teaching the rules of his church is really mostly interested in building his church. People who use church rules to mold people are building church. People who use the facilities of the present "church" to meet the needs of people are building people.

I have come to the point where I mostly enjoy being around people who really do NOT care what denomination you came from. They ask questions like, "What is GOD saying to you?" or "What's new?"

When I meet people who only read material from one source, then I meet denominational Christians. And when I meet people who have developed lists of material that can NOT and must NOT be read - then I know I am with people who are building a church. Their motive is to keep people in their own framework of thought. -They claim that their motive is to protect people from WRONG thoughts - but the real reason is to keep them from NEW thoughts. This idea should be tempered with the fact that truly there are immoral, unethical and impure magazines that only serve to bring demon thoughts to serve the lust of the flesh. Obviously we are not talking about those. They should be rejected. We are talking about material that contains new mind stretching theological issues.

We teach our students to "eat the grapes and spit out the seeds." In other words, when you are mature enough to know the difference between the meat of the grape and the seed of the grapes, then you are mature enough to read this or that magazine or book, If your pastor is NOT threatened by the book you are reading, then your pastor is building people. But if your pastor

exercises the spirit of censorship and acts threatened or protective by a new book or a new idea, then your pastor is probably building a church.

I suspect that I would rather build people than a church. JESUS CHRIST can do a better job at church building than I can.