

Ekklesia Rising

1. Introduction

- a. In the process of our journey this morning we are going to encounter the critical need for revelation, a very specific Greek word, some political intrigue and intervention, and a new dimension to prayer.
- b. As usual we are going to start with a bit of context that will help set the scene for our study this morning.

2. Context

- a. Matthew 16. We know from the parallel passage in Mark 8 that Jesus and the disciples have been in Tyre and Sidon, on the coast of what is now Lebanon. From there they travelled south-east to the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples thought they must be making their way back home to Nazareth.
- b. At the beginning of this chapter Jesus and the disciples are by the Sea of Galilee at a place called Magadan, which is on the North-west side near to Capernaum. The disciples thought they'd be heading south for home – but Jesus had other ideas.
- c. Verse 13 simply says that they came to the district of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi is not by the Sea of Galilee, it was about 30 miles to the north, at the foot of Mount Hermon.
- d. Caesarea Philippi was a place that Jews in the first century simply did not go to. Because it was a centre for the worship of pagan Roman and Greek deities.
- e. Caesarea Philippi consisted of a sheer rock face that was called “The Rock of the Gods” at the foot of the mountain. In the rock face were many caves where votive offerings and shrines to false gods were placed, including a shrine to Caesar.
- f. Dominating the cliff face was a temple dedicated to the Greek god Pan. Pan was one of the many Greek deities, and one of the gods of fertility.
- g. Out of this cliff face the headwaters of the Jordan River rise. The water exits through a vast cavernous opening in the cliff. The whole area was known locally as “The gates of hades”.
- h. And it was here at Caesarea Philippi that a momentous exchange took place between Jesus and the disciples that was both a pivotal point in Jesus’ ministry and the foundation on which the House of Prayer is built.

3. Who is the Son of Man?

Matthew 16:13-19 *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

- a. Matthew 16 verses 13-19. Jesus begins by asking the disciples a question – “Who do people say I am?” Jesus has a very specific reason for engaging the disciples in this particular conversation.
 - i. What he is doing is preparing the ground for the disciples to reveal what is in their own hearts. Have they grasped the truth yet?

- b. They reply with the stock answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.
 - i But here comes the crunch point – “Who do YOU say that I am?”
 - ii Then Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”.
 - iii Jesus replies “Blessed are you Simon bar Jonah – that was revelation from my Father in heaven.”
 - iv And we’ve probably read the next sentence that Jesus spoke a hundred times and we have not understood what he said. What did he say? **“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”**
- c. Except that is not what he said. For centuries in our bibles we’ve been sold short on what Jesus was really saying here. Because there are two words translated incorrectly here, one of which was deliberately mistranslated from the Greek by the translators of the King James Bible under the instruction of the King.
 - i And knowing what Jesus actually said, and what he meant by it, is what makes all the difference to our participation and functioning in the Kingdom of God.

4. Ekklesia

- a. The problem is that the word “church” in your bible is completely the wrong word, and does not come from the word that Jesus used in the original Greek. What Jesus actually said was, “...on this rock I will build my **ekklesia** and the gates of **Hades** will not prevail against it.”
 - i Why is this so important and what does it mean for us?
- b. We need to be clear about what Jesus is really saying here because it impacts greatly upon our understanding of who we are both as Living Word and New Forest House of Prayer, and as some of the people of God in New Milton.
- c. Jesus did not use the Greek word from which our English word “church” is derived anywhere in the gospels. The word “church” comes from an entirely different Greek word, or actually a pair of words “**kuriake oikia**”. They literally mean “the house of a lord”.
- d. Let’s look at the word Jesus did use and discover why he used that particular word to describe what he was going to build.
 - i The Greek word **ekklesia**, is a compound word made up of two parts: **ek** = from, and **klesia** = called, and it literally means “Those who are called out”.
 - ii However we do not have a direct equivalent of this word in the English language. The nearest English words that carry the same idea would be **assembly**, or **congregation**, or **gathering**. But that does not tell the whole story.
 - iii **Ekklesia** was a word that was in common use in Jesus’ day. Anyone living at the time of Jesus would understand what it meant. Every town and city in the Greco-Roman world had its own **ekklesia**. This word is used 115 times in the New Testament, and it always has the same meaning. Wherever you see the word “church” in your bible, it is mistranslating the word **ekklesia**. So what does it really mean and why did Jesus use this word?
- e. **Ekklesia** originated in the Greek city states centred on Athens around 500BC. It was the name given to a company of men who were *called together* to make decisions concerning the government of the city and the people. In effect it was a ruling council that had real power to determine how the city was governed.
- f. It’s a political word, not a religious word. Jesus was very deliberate in his choice of words to describe what he was going to build.

LIVING WORD CHURCH

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- i It was the actual assembly that constituted the **ekklesia**, rather than the body of people – i.e. it was a gathering for the purpose of governing or ruling.
- ii The primary function of the **ekklesia** was to actively participate in legislation, to elect officials – military leaders and magistrates and to make judicial decisions. So this assembly had expansive authority in determining the affairs of their cities and territories.
- g. What was Jesus' ekklesia going to look like? And how was it to function. To answer that we need to look back to the original mandate that God gave to Adam:

Genesis 1:26-28 *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

- h. God's purpose for Adam was to rule, to have dominion over all of the earth. In partnership with God he was to take authority over all of the affairs of the earth.
 - i But Adam yielded to temptation and rebelled against God in his desire to be like God, and in so doing gave Satan his right to rule the earth.
 - ii Satan's strategy was to steal, kill and destroy, and to spread his regime of corruption and futility borne out of pride and rebellion against God. He literally became the "God of this world" establishing his ways in the hearts of men by the seductive glamour of sin
 - iii But at the cross Jesus took back from Satan everything that he had stolen from Adam.

Colossians 2:13-15 *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

- iv Paul tells us that Jesus did 2 things on the cross. He cancelled the record of debt that stood against us, and he disarmed the rulers and authorities – ie. Satan and his demonic host.
- v However, that is not yet the end of the story, because although the judgment has been passed, the fullness of the sentence has yet to be carried out. That is why Jesus is coming back to this earth, to completely eradicate Satan from this earth and throw him into the lake of fire.
- i. In the meantime, between the cross and his second coming, Jesus' rule on the earth has been put into the hands of his **ekklesia**. What did Jesus mean by "I will build my **ekklesia**"?
- j. Jesus's **ekklesia** is a people summoned together for a purpose, rather than merely assembling because they have chosen to come together.
- k. Jesus' call for an **ekklesia** was for a people to stand against a corrupt, oppressive governmental system by offering them a legitimate government that operated differently and on different principles and values.
 - i It was a powerful and non-violent movement of the people, to change the course of history by changing the hearts and minds of men, by opposing the status quo of the worldly systems masterminded by Satan.
 - ii The ultimate fulfilment of this promise is found in **Revelation 11:15** "...the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our lord and Christ....".

5. Ekklesia – the call to contend

- a. It was a call to contend for justice and righteousness, to advance the kingdom of God in the midst of a world filled with hostility to God, fuelled by greed and corruption, slavery and oppression.
 - i Implicit in Jesus' words "I will build MY **ekklesia**" is a threat to every corrupt human government and demonic principality. It is Jesus declaring war on the enemy.
- b. So his mandate to us is this: "**occupy until I come, proclaim and prayerfully enforce My rulership**". So we are
 - i Ambassadors in a foreign land representing the will and character of our king
 - ii The high command of an invasion force plotting strategies to take command of our region
 - iii Spiritual governors, legislating in prayer God's higher law, to which all criminal demonic activities and false ideologies must yield.
- c. That is why Jesus chose this location, the centre of demonic activity and witchcraft, to bring this revelation to his disciples. Jesus was establishing his government on the earth.
 - i And the way the earth was to be governed, was – by prayer. I believe that the raising up of the House of Prayer across the nations is Jesus' wake-up call to us that he didn't come to build church, but to establish his **ekklesia**, his ruling council here on the earth.
 - ii **Ekklesia** has to do with many things, but most of all it is about authority in prayer.

6. The rock

- a. Jesus goes on to say, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my **ekklesia**." Jesus is using some very clever word-play here, but it doesn't come across in our English language.
- b. Jesus uses two words that are similar – **petros** and **petra**. **Petros** is a small, detached stone, anything from a small pebble to a boulder, whereas **petra** means an immovable rock, similar to the very rock-face at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was standing in front of.
- c. As he said these words, "...on **this** rock..." he may have tapped his chest, or pointed at himself. Because Jesus is the **petra**, the immovable rock on which his **ekklesia** was to be built.
- d. "On **this** rock," says Jesus. "Upon my own life, death and resurrection, upon my own self I will build."
- e. It is when we come to an understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the sin-bearer, we become part of Jesus' **ekklesia**.
- f. Jesus was using this word-play to connect two realities. Jesus is **the** rock, but Peter is demonstrating how the **ekklesia** would operate, through prophetic revelation.
 - i The revelation that God had shown Peter and that he had confessed to Jesus – was that Jesus is the Christ, the Divine Human, the true Messiah.
 - ii That was how Jesus' **ekklesia** was to operate – by prophetic revelation.
- g. This revelation is not static, it is progressive and it is ongoing. There is always more to see. Jesus says to us, "Keep your eyes on me because I am limitless, which means you can always see more. I am always speaking, so you must continue to listen. This interaction and the revelation which comes from it – this is what I will build upon."
 - i How do we receive this kind of revelation? Through our conversations with God. That's called prayer. As we pray, we engage with the heart of God, and he begins to bring us

revelation of his heart and will. And when we come into agreement with what God shows us, he begins to move with power and authority.

7. The gates of Hades

- a. Jesus then went on to say that the gates of **Hades** will not prevail against his **ekklesia**.
- b. In the bible **hell** and **Hades** are two completely different entities. **Hell** is Satan's ultimate destination – the lake of fire. We have no jurisdiction over hell, and neither is it the domain of Satan, nor the seat of his kingdom.
 - i He doesn't rule earth from **hell**, but he will one day be sentenced to **hell**.
- c. **Hades** on the other hand is the Greek word equivalent to the Hebrew word **Sheol**, and it refers to the underworld, or the place of the spirits of the dead. This is the place that Jesus went to when he died.
- d. **Hades** was also the name of a false God. Hades is the embodiment of death.
 - i It represents the kingdom of darkness, with death as the ultimate wage for every sin, with a claim over every one of us from our birth, until the curse of death is broken by entering into the glorious kingdom of light through faith in Jesus.
- e. So Jesus tells us that the gates of **Hades** will not prevail against his **ekklesia**.
 - i Gates are defensive – they enclose and protect. They are access points both for entry and exit; and it was at the gates of the city where legal transactions took place. Gates are also strongholds that symbolise imprisonment.
- f. In telling us that the gates of **Hades** will not prevail against his **ekklesia**, Jesus is giving us a mandate to be gate-busters.
 - i There are two ways to get through a gate. You can unlock it with a key, or you can shatter it and break it down.

Matthew 16:19 *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be [have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be [have been] loosed in heaven."*

- g. Jesus promises to give his **ekklesia** the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What does that mean?
 - i **Binding** and **loosing** was a common phrase in Jesus' time, and the way the rabbis used it was to determine what was **allowed** and what was **forbidden**.
 - ii **Binding** and **loosing** is about agreement with what God wants to do. The way these are translated in our Bibles can be misleading
 - iii The words for bound and loosed are in the future-perfect tense, one that we don't use very often. Future-perfect means something that we encounter at a point of time in the future has already been completed in the past.
 - iv The way we should understand these statements is "whatever you bind or loose on earth **will have been** bound or loosed in heaven." In other words we are coming into agreement with what has **already been decreed** in heaven and enforcing that judgment on the earth.
- h. That means we have to know what has been permitted or forbidden in heaven so that we can bring about the same conditions here on earth.
 - i Things like death, sickness, poverty, child abuse, sex trafficking, drug addiction or pornography have no legitimate voice or influence in heaven. They are forbidden/bound.
 - ii Similarly things like love, peace, joy, generosity, faithfulness, holiness and authority are permitted/loosed in heaven, so these are the things we can loose on the earth.

- i. Using these keys of the kingdom of heaven we can shift the destiny of an entire nation just as Daniel and his three companions did in Babylon.

8. Where did “church” come from?

- a. How did we end up using the word church instead of ekklesia? The Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of Rome, having apparently been converted. However, he merely added Christianity to his well-established worship of the sun-god Mithras.
 - i. At the time of Constantine the place where people worshiped was commonly called the **kuriake oikia**, literally “the house of a lord”; it was not confined to places of Christian worship.
- b. In post-Roman times with the development of the Germanic languages from which English is derived, **kuriake** transitioned into **circe (chirche)** and eventually became our word **church**.
- c. Up until the 17th Century, the Bible was generally only available in Greek or Latin, and was inaccessible to the common people, other than through the interpretation of the clergy.
 - i. King James was a devout king, but he had a problem. The greatest power-base at that time lay with the **church**, so he had a vested interest in a strong, state-sanctioned **church** with a well-defined hierarchy of bishops and clergy giving clear allegiance to the king.
 - ii. But Tyndale, in his translation of the Bible into English, refused to use the word **church** to translate **ekklesia** – he used **congregation**. James needed the common people to be locked into the religious system of the **church**, its buildings and its hierarchy. He didn’t want the people to gain an understanding of the **ekklesia** as an assembly convened and governed directly by Jesus, existing outside of state control.
 - iii. So James directed those who were working on his new translation of the Bible to manipulate the translation to use certain religious words instead of their accurate translations – hence instead of congregation or assembly, **ekklesia** was translated as **church**. He also changed the name of the Epistle of Jacob to the Epistle of James.
- d. Jesus used a specific word with specific connotations, but our forefathers wilfully changed it. The result is that the understanding of what we call “**church**” today is far removed from what Jesus originally intended.

9. Conclusion

- a. There are not two different expressions – **ekklesia** and **church** – Jesus only came to build one thing, and that was the **ekklesia**.
- b. Everything starts in the **ekklesia** and is worked out through the functioning of the body. So this is not about how to build **church**!
 - i. As **church** we have focused on the processes and administration rather than on our job-description. We have lost sight of the reason why it is necessary.
- c. Pastors have become the leaders of the church, rather than the Apostles and the Prophets, prioritising personal needs and the needs of the community, focusing on keeping the whole thing going, rather than establishing the Kingdom.
- d. That is why God is raising up houses of prayer in every nation of the world. In these few short verses of scripture we have both the mandate and the purpose of the House of Prayer.
 - i. It’s a wake-up call to the **church** that it must become the **ekklesia** or it will not survive and be victorious through the rigours of tribulation in the days ahead as the world rushes headlong into a collision course with the Son of Man at the end of the age.
- e. You are the **ekklesia** – remember who you are!