

“Upon This Rock”

By: Michael R. Hughes

Text: Matthew 16:18

Theme: To stress the confession of Christ as the son of God.

Introduction:

1. A most often referred to passage by members of the churches of Christ.
2. It relates many things to us about the church-
 - a. It tell us of Christ’s promise to build his church.
 - b. It shows the ownership of the church - “my”
 - c. We see that Jesus promised to build his church, not churches (singular, *i.e.* one)
 - d. It helps us as to the time of the establishment of the New Testament church
 - 1) Some say during the days of John the Baptist
 - 2) But John had been beheaded back in Matthew 14
 - 3) Jesus’ promise is future tense
 - e. We see that the kingdom and church are the one and the same institution, v.19 cf. - Colossians□:13;18
 - f. It hints at the resurrection of Christ - “gates of hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it.” refer to Gen.3:15
 - g. And it refers to the foundation of the church -”upon this rock” - This is the subject of the lesson.

Discussion:

- I. Preliminary considerations:
 - A. Understanding figures
 1. The church is a city, a kingdom in this figure - (contrasted with the city of Hades) -

- a. It is spoken of in various figures in the New Testament.
 - b. *E.g.*, vineyard, body, etc.
- 2. Important to recognize that figures do not contradict each other, but rather each stresses its own truth or truths about the subject being considered
- B. The church is spoken of as having various foundations
 - 1. Christ - I Corinthians 3:11
 - 2. Apostles and Prophets - Ephesians 2:20 - [Not contradictory - it emphasizes the important contributions all made] - (compare how we may say today of local congregations [women, elders])
 - 3. But we want to consider the foundation mentioned in Matthew 16:18

II. Upon this rock

- A. Some say it refers to Peter - largest religious group in Christendom (Catholics) says this.
 - 1. In support-
 - a. Peter preached (used the keys of the kingdom) to the Jews - Acts 2
 - b. And to the Gentiles - Acts 10
 - 2. Objections:
 - a. In the figure, Peter is the gatekeeper (v.19) - So, if Peter, the metaphor seems confused somewhat.
 - b. Peter never made any particular claim (cf. Acts 4:11) as did Christ. Peter did claim to be a witness Acts 5:29
 - c. Greek construction (genders)
 - d. Natural expression would have been - "and upon thee.." (see McGarvey)
- B. Some say it refers to Christ himself
 - 1. In support
 - a. Jesus is called a rock in scriptures - I Corinthians 10:4
 - b. He is clearly the actual foundation - I Corinthians 3:11
 - 2. In objection

- a. Confusion of metaphor again: Jesus, in Matthew 16:18, is not the foundation, but the builder
 - b. Different images in 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20
- C. It does refer to the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- 1. It does not confuse the imagery (see McGarvey's Commentary on "Matthew" - Gospel Light Series pp.144-146)
 - 2. It agrees with the immediate context (vs.13-19). This is the information Christ was seeking.
 - 3. Observation: Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21 record the confession but not Christ's statement to Peter thus directing towards Christ and not Peter.
 - 4. The fact of Jesus being the Son of the living God is a central thought of the Bible.
 - a. John wrote his book to convince people of the fact - John 20:30,31
 - b. The confession upon which the church is founded-
 - 1) The good confession - 1 Timothy 3:12
 - 2) We must confess him in our daily living - Matthew 10:32,33 - set in context
 - 3) With the mouth salvation is unto salvation - Romans 10:9,10
 - 4) But some will not confess -
 - a) John 12:42,43
 - b) They seek salvation elsewhere
 - c) Peter confessed again - there is no other way to go - John 6:66-69; 14:6

Invitation:

Acts 8 - the eunuch made the good confession.