

My Church? Or Someone Else`s?

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Mat 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**

Mat 16:14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Mat 16:15 He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?**

Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**

Mat 16:18 **And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

The Lord Jesus Christ left us no doubt as to the fact that He was the creator, organizer, and architect of His church. We as Baptists use this statement of His to remind ourselves and others that His church was by His design and that its author, its originator was the Son of God...not some man. In today`s world where there is a multitude of denominations that call themselves Christian. All of those “Protestant denominations” can be traced to a founding father who was a man.

We sometimes use this statement to remind ourselves and others that as hard as the forces of evil may try, they cannot get a victory over the Lord`s church. It is in times like these that we need to be reminded of that. In these days of peril and falling away concerning the faith of Jesus Christ we need to be assured that as the generations of man come and go, the Lord`s protection of His church will continue. So, we have a lot of things that we can think about and that we can encourage ourselves with when we read these statements made by our Lord.

But, today, I am going to call our attention to two words out of His statement that I want us to think about, maybe in a little different context than we usually do. The words are “my church.”

As I`ve already suggested, we use Jesus` statements here to remind ourselves and others that Jesus Christ`s church was established and ordered by Him, and we use the words “my church” to emphasize that. But, how many times have we thought about the possessive idea that Jesus indicated when He said that. My church! In using that simple way of saying it, He lets mankind know that the church He is referring to is viewed by Him as

having a special and personal relationship with Him. My church! I want us to think a few minutes about this way of personalizing something.

Illustration: If you walked out into the parking lot at Walmart and weren't sure where you parked, you might say, "Now where is MY car." You would never think of saying, "Now where is a car I can drive home in." You would never think nor speak of your car as John's car (like referring to your next door neighbor's car). My car personalizes your relationship with your car which differs from your relationship to every other car in that parking lot.

Illustration: You are at a public event and it's time to go home. You have to find your family. You would never say, "I've got to gather up some people out of this crowd as a family and take them home." You would say, "I've got to gather up MY family to take them home." "My family" personalizes your relationship with your family, making that relationship different from your relationship with any other family on the planet.

Illustration: In an even more personal way, if you had a sore foot, you wouldn't say, "The foot is sore." Obviously, you would say, "My foot is sore." That foot belongs to you and you belong to that foot. It is a very personal relationship. So it is with us about things that are personal.

Now, let's turn to the idea of **the internal workings of the human mind that produces a kind of personalized thinking** about things, and let's turn that toward churches, and human relationships with churches.

- ❖ In my years of attending church and belonging to several churches, I have always met two kinds of church members at those churches. By two kinds, I mean that there were people in those churches who **thought of the church** they were members of and where they attended as "**that church,**" "**the church,**" "**they,**" or "**those people at church.**" and there was **another group** of people who thought of and had a testimony about the church they belonged to which was expressed like this: "**my church**" or "**our church.**" These folks said "**we**" when referring to something the church had done.
- ❖ As you think about the different way my two groups of people thought about and referred to the church they were members of, are you able to see that behind those ways of saying something, related to the church of their membership, lay an **important distinction between the two groups and their thinking**. If you can see that, we are ready to move on to what that distinction is.

I. The first difference I think the two kinds of viewpoints the two groups may have is **a difference in attitude about the church of their membership**

- ❖ The "my church" "our church" and "we in our church" group testify of a kind of **commitment**; Those of "the church" or "that church" or "they at the church" group may **not**
- ❖ The "my church" "our church" and "we in our church" group speak of a kind of ownership sanctioned by the Lord; Those of "the church" or "that church" or "they at

the church” group speak of a kind of detachment that is probably felt by those who use those terms

- ❖ The “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” group represent having a vested interest in something; “the church” or “that church” or “they” expresses an attitude that has made no investment in the church (by investment I mean, giving of something that costs something; giving of something that is worth something to us)
- II. Now, for some observations about the results of these two differences
- ❖ Those who with the heart say “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” will have a capacity and willingness to make personal sacrifices for the church they feel this personal about
 - ❖ The “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” group will too often look for the kind of participation in the church they are members of that doesn’t make demands on their own schedule, or their own objectives, or their own perception of what is enjoyable, or participation that simply makes use of some kind of behavior they already do.
 - ❖ As a member of the group that thinks in terms of the church as “that church” “the church down there” or “they who are down at the church” I can contribute all kinds of hunting time to my church, if they are asking me to hunt as part of what I am supposed to do as a church service
 - I can contribute all kinds of time and even material things to a church which lets me fish as my expression of serving my fellow-members
 - If I’m asked to do something that doesn’t call for sacrifice, doesn’t call for moving me out of my sphere of normal behavior, or doesn’t make any demands that make me feel imposed upon, I can do those things
 - ❖ I want us to think about the real Christian attitude about our ministries to our brothers and sisters: **2Cor. 12:15** And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.
 - We may sometimes make the mistake of thinking this is a statement that a pastor or a missionary might make, but let me be clear that this is a statement for every believer and those who have a clear understanding of the relationship of members of a church, those who from the heart say “my” and “we” when referring to their church will feel this and try to practice it.
 - Do note that there is a hidden danger among the people of God related to this kind of sacrificial willingness. That danger: there is a risk that the less thankful among the people of God will grow cold toward those who sacrifice.
 - ❖ Those who say “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” will have their hearts burdened by the attitudes of those who have a detached view about the church

- ❖ Those who say “that church,” “the church,” or “they” will usually have the kind of personal detachment that makes them care less whether they burden the hearts of fellow church members or not
- ❖ Those who say “my church,” “our church” and “we at our church” will consider the spiritual and fiscal welfare of their church to be their spiritual and fiscal welfare.
- ❖ Those who are of the group who think of the church as just “that church,” “the church,” or “those people at church” will carefully and clearly separate their interests from those of the church. Their spiritual affairs are their own, their financial affairs are their own, and are not to be considered alongside those of the church.
- ❖ Those who say “my church” “our church” and “we of the church” will see the church as a **source point to reach the lost and the down and out**, according to its possession of gifts and means
- ❖ Those who say “that church,” “the church,” or “they” may see the church they are a member of as a **source to tap**, a place to **get** something
- ❖ Those who say “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” will give of themselves that other members may have
- ❖ Those who say “that church,” “the church,” or “they” will begrudge giving and will expect to receive more than they give – this is what causes so many people who have joined a church to not tithe or to stop tithing
 - **2Cor 9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
 - Some folks think this instruction is only about giving money...but it is about more...it is about giving...whatever one has to give in sacrifice and service to the Lord in the church they are members of.
 - Do you know why or how a person gets to be a cheerful giver? It is all about attitude. The attitude that is reflected in the testimony of a person who personalizes his/her church (“my church,” “our church,” “we in our church” etc.).
 - The church at Macedonia got huge praise from Paul for this very thing (read **2Cor. 8:1-5**, especially **v. 5**) – “gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”
- ❖ Those who say “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” will be under-appreciated by those who say “that church,” “the church,” and “they”
 - They will be under-appreciated by the fact that they will be always giving, while that group who are detached from the church they are members of will be almost always taking, or will be neutral about real sacrificial giving
- ❖ Those who say “my church” “our church” and “we in our church” will have joy when one of the number rejoices, will be sad when they know one of the number is sad, will mourn when one of the number mourns, will feel loss when one of the number feels loss
- ❖ Those who say “that church,” “the church,” or “they” will not experience these things unless they have some other kind of tie with those other people...like family ties, or

friendship ties gotten in the world...there is a huge difference in these two kinds of empathies.

III. What can we do to change the attitude of those who may actually be saved people but who have the detached view, and detached response to their church?

- ❖ First, let's say something about what the person who has that attitude can do
 - Realize that he/she has been brought into the assembly of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit
 - Realize that he/she is an integrated part of the Lord's body, the church
 - Realize that he/she has a specific purpose to the Lord as a church members
 - Realize that every true church member is fitly framed together by the Lord to function not as a batch of independent organs, but as a complete whole
 - Open his/her heart to the congregation he/she is a member of...in other words, look around and think and listen
- ❖ Now what can you do if you are a person who has personalized your church relationship?
 - Make all the members feel welcome
 - Make sure you listen to other members tell you about themselves
 - Don't make the mistake of measuring members by your own yardstick
 - Examine your own attitude toward other members
 - Do a self-test on what things you do in giving your life to the Lord through His church
 - Do you do just the things you like to do for church members?
 - Do you put yourself out for church members even in things that are unpleasant for you but necessary or important for them?
 - Do you pray for the improvement of church members attitudes toward the church?
 - Are you open and honest with fellow church members in seeking to help them step up?
 - Think about what things other church members do for other church members and ask yourself how you stack up (the bible says that if we measure ourselves by our own selves we are not wise).