

The churches of Jesus Christ have a promise of continuance in human history. The Bible teaches us that the church and churches of Jesus Christ shall continue in the earth without ceasing until His second coming. What is perpetrated as church history in Christendom is very skewed. But know this. Whether we can prove it or not it is true. I want to read this, and I hope to share this with you again in a few days the Lord willing.

‘But we think it sufficient, that we can prove all we teach by the infallible Records of God’s Word, and if all histories and monuments of antiquity had been overlaid, or burnt, as many have been, so that we had never been able to shew from any book but the Bible, that there were ever any of our persuasion in the world, till within a few years, yet we should think that book enough to prove the antiquity of our persuasion, that we are not a new sect, seeing that we can make it appear by that one book, that our persuasion is as old as Christ and the Apostles. And on the contrary, if we could show from approved history, that multitudes of all ages and nations since the Apostle’s days have been of our persuasion, yet if we could not prove by the Word of God, that our persuasion is true, would signify very little.’ *Joseph Hooke, ‘A Necessary Apology for the Baptized Believers (1701), p.32, quoted by J. T. Christian, in ‘A History of the Baptists,’ vol.1, p.259; also ref. the Jan. 2020 issue of the ‘Nothern Landmark Missionary Baptist, editor Thomas Williamson*

With this in mind I’d share just a few remarks beginning with Matthew chapter 16, verses 13-18.

*Mt.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?  
14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.  
15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?  
16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it (that is, the answer to my question) unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock (upon the rock of the truth of Who I Am) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (or, her).*

When a man can give a forthright statement like this it is proof positive that he is a child of God. Peter wasn't quoting some profound statement that he had read of some other man's writing, or quoting what he heard another man say. What he professed was what was in his heart concerning Jesus Christ, and he blurted it out with the innocence of a little child.

*18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock (upon the rock of the truth of Who I Am) I will build my church ... [My body of baptized believers that are covenanted together to carry out My commandments.]*

*will build, οἰκοδομήσω, 1ps. fut. ind. act. of οἰκοδομέω, οἶκος a house + δέμω, though not used in the N.T. or LXX, in Greek lit. (cf. Liddell & Scott) it means to build, construct, make; οἰκοδομέω, is tss. to build, build up, edify, & embolden.*

*... and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (or, her).*

*gates, πύλαι, nom. pl. fem. of πύλη, always tss. gate (10); and in this case the gates of hell (which are wide & broad, and which lead to destruction at which many enter in [Mt.7.13]), or the prevalence of all of those errors that should contradict this foundational truth ... **they shall not prevail** against the church of Jesus Christ.*

*shall prevail against, κατασχύουσιν, 3ppl. fut. ind. of κατασχύω, κατά against + ἰσχύω, to have strength, to be able, prevail, avail [the noun ἰσχύς, tss. strength, might, ability, power]; κατασχύω, is tss. to prevail (Lk.23.23), to prevail against my church.*

Consider first these gates, plural. They are the gates of hell (hades, and it does refer now to the place where the souls of the unbelieving dead go until the time of the last resurrection). N.T. history is filled with so many gates which lead men women, boys and girls, not to Christ, but only to eternal destruction. These gates

do nothing to alter their course from condemnation for sins against God. But gates there are many! And there's a gate suited for everyone. If you don't know Christ you're going through a gate, and it is leading to hell. There's the gate of humanism. Man is improving. If we prefer there's the gate of religionism. We can worship God any way we choose. He accepts it all. There's a moral gate. We're not so bad that God won't overlook our minor faults and failures. There's a 'save the world' gate (climate change). There's a freedom gate. Let's throw off all restraints: mom and dad, right and wrong, religion, politics, whatever. There's a gate suited to everyone without Christ! These gates represent all of the errors to which those without Christ are attracted in an attempt to satisfy a need that only Christ can fill. So the masses of lost souls spend their lives in pursuit of this gate and that gate, but in the end they all lead to a final and eternal destruction.

*Mt 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat ...*

But what is the point of Christ concerning these gates? They shall not prevail against His church. These gates haven't the strength, the might, the power to circumvent the church of Jesus Christ.

*Mt.16.18 ... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

What is the church? It is a house of God. It is a congregation of baptized believers. It is the repository of God's truth.

*1Ti 3:15 ... the house of God, ... is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

In light of Mt.16.18, the emphasis is upon the church being the means by which the singular truth of Christ is preserved in the earth. As there can be no disciple of Christ without acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, so there can be no church. And it is this church that Christ promises that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. She shall continue until Christ's second coming. Though so many errors have come to directly contradict Christ's little flocks, she has continued unchanged in her constitution, in her doctrine, in her government, in her hope, in her mission and in her message to this very day.

*Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (This hasn't changed, and the church preserves this truth in the earth.)*

Though it seems that many churches which we believe are of the Lord are so infected with error, yet there are churches, and there will always be churches which are the same as that first church which Christ called to Himself during His earthly ministry. There are some even today that are faithfully carrying the same message that the Jerusalem church preached so many years ago, but they are few.

One would think that against such a flood of error that the churches of Jesus Christ couldn't stand a chance of succeeding in their mission, much less continue to exist as she has to this day, but she has. And this perpetuity is attributable to the promises made by the Lord to them. He keeps His promises.

*Mt 16:18 ... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (which at that moment was only one church in Israel).*

*Eph.3.20 Now unto him (God, the Father, v.19) that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (by the Holy Spirit),*

*21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Christ would be glorified through His church even into eternity)*

*Mt.28.19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

*20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

*Ac 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (the churches would touch the furthest reaches of the earth)*

We don't know what the Lord has for us in the new year, but it is certain that He shall keep His churches in the earth until He returns again from glory. He works in us to learn the teachings of His word. To believe all that is says. To desire to make personal application of it to our lives.

The word of God tells us of very difficult days ahead for the churches of Christ. It's not going to get better for us. It is going to get worse. We know that. We expect that. Churches in the past have suffered unmentionable and terrible things at the hands of the religious, and that is what is on the horizon again on a scale like has never been before. But that's not the end of the story. Whatever the will of the Lord is we know by His word that the world cannot eradicate the churches of Jesus Christ from the earth. While we do not have a promise that our church will continue for another day, a month, a year, or two, there will be churches that shall continue.

Have you come to Christ through the strait gate? the narrow way which leads to life? Or are you still entering into the popular gate, the widely travelled gate? a gate that leads to destruction?

Jesus is the Son of God come to save His people from the wrath of God. Apart from Christ that wrath abides on you. Flee to Christ. Look & live? See that He died in your place. Repent of sins, turn from your wicked and self-serving ways and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Do you believe on Him? Then, be baptized. Show the truth of your repentance and faith by obeying the very first commandment upon your life. Then join this church and learn all there is to learn of Christ doctrinally and practically. Join with these disciples of Jesus Christ in faithful service to God.

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