

## **The Prevailing Church (Matthew 16:13-19)**

### **A. The Kingdom and the Church**

1. Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15).
  - a. It was a message directed toward the Jews and was also the message of the early Apostles, namely Peter (Acts 2:38-39).
  - b. The Apostle Paul preached the Gospel of Grace, which is the message of the Church. This message is directed primarily at the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:8-10).
2. The Church Age will end at the Rapture of the Church and usher in the Great Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).
3. The Church will be in heaven during the Tribulation.
  - Four Means of Evangelism During the Tribulation
    - 1) 144,000 Jews during the first half (Revelation 7)
    - 2) Tribulation saints (first half) (Revelation 14:12, 13)
    - 3) Two Witnesses (second half) (Revelation 11:1-14)
    - 4) Angels (second half) (Revelation 14:6-7)
4. The Kingdom of God will come in full measure during the Millennial Reign of Christ (Revelation 20:4-7).

### **B. Perilous Times**

1. The Last Days is a term that is synonymous with the Church Age (Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:1-5).
  - a. The days are identified by God speaking to us through His Son rather than the prophets of old.
  - b. These days are filled with godlessness that will increase as the return of Christ draws near (2 Timothy 3:12-13).
2. It is in this environment that God has raised up the Church to display His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:8-10).

### **C. What Is the Church?**

1. The Church is a belief system (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
2. The Church is a Body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
  - a. Family (Ephesians 3:14-16)
  - b. Fellowship (1 John 1:7)
  - c. Federation (Ephesians 4:4-6)

3. The Church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27, 2 Corinthians 11:1-2).

#### **D. A Mighty Fortress or an Invading Army?**

1. There are two complementary images of what the Church represents in these last days.

- a. The first of these is a sanctuary providing safety and security from the forces of evil.
- b. The second is a battle tested battalion of well-equipped soldiers whose mission is to plunder hell to populate heaven.

2. Both images are illustrated in Jesus' words to His disciples (Matthew 16:18)

“And I tell you, you are Peter (Gr. *petras*, a piece of rock), and on this rock (Gr. *petra*, massive rock - not Peter as a man, but upon his confession of Christ) I will build my church (a sanctuary), and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (an invading army).”

**Epilogue:** Caesarea Philippi was the setting for this dialogue with the disciples. It was far off the beaten path near the base of Mt. Herman. Many scholars and commentators have noted that at Caesarea Philippi, there was a prominent cave near the pagan sanctuary, believed by some in that era to be a door to the underworld (Hades). The symbolism of Jesus' pronouncement in this very setting resonates with His authority over all spiritual powers and realms (biblehub.com).

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