

THE MARKS OF THE
**TRUE
CHURCH**



The Marks of The True Church

(An Opening Word)

Sunday 21st August 2022

Foundation Passages:

Matthew 16:13-20 (NKJV): “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some [say] John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven. “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”

Matthew 18:15-20 (NKJV): “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. “But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ “And if he refuses to hear them, tell [it] to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Assuredly means: ‘I am saying it twice, so take note.’

Introduction:

Notice that common to both passages are the following:

- The word, “**Church**”. The Church is important to God to Christ. Therefore, the ‘Marks of the True Church’ is a subject that should be important to us. There ought to be power in The Church!
- The fragment, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Let us consider the following questions:

1. What are marks of the true church?
2. What are the characteristics of the genuine church?
3. What differentiates the true church from any other group of people?

The Meaning of Church

The word “church” in ancient times was not reserved alone for “believers in Jesus Christ”. The **Church** that Jesus referred to, in Greek is the word “ekklesia” meaning a calling out, a popular meeting (not a cult), especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members - **an assembly**).

One of the first marks of The Church is that they are ‘called out’ – of their old ways and nature, into the ways of Christ.

According to the first passage we read:

Matthew 16:18 (NKJV): “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock ***I will build My church***, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The fragment: ***I will build My CHURCH***, paints the picture of a building or construction of a building or an edifice and if not that, at the very least the picture of putting together a large, complex system or organisation.

However, the Church that Christ is building is not an organisation, it is an organism; an assembly of called-out people.

The Marks of the True Church

There are 3 distinct marks of the true church and they are as follows:

1. **The preaching of the word:** - Jesus said: ‘I will build my church’, i.e. dispense myself, become the living reality that people will eat, through the word.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV) says: “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are **being** saved it is the power of God.*”

Preaching the word is for:

- a. The building up of the saints; and
- b. Evangelism – it is understandable that we don’t want to offend people’s sensibilities but to not tell someone of pending danger is to not love that person. Evangelising is the loving thing to do.

2. **The administration of sacraments**

Romans 4:11 (NKJV) says: “*And he (Abraham) received the **sign** of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised (**now exhibited**), that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,*”

The sacraments that we take act as a seal and sign to exhibit what we already have in Christ – a visual representation to aid us concerning that which we perceive in our spirit.

An example is baptism: we don't get baptised because there is power in the act of baptism, we get baptised because it represents the faith that we profess.

Another example is a wedding ring; it is a **sign** of the love shared between a married couple. Similarly, when you exchange the rings at the wedding ceremony, it is a sign to **seal** the love that you already have for each other.

3. **The exercise of church discipline:** - **Hebrews 12:6 (NKJV):** "For whom the LORD loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives."

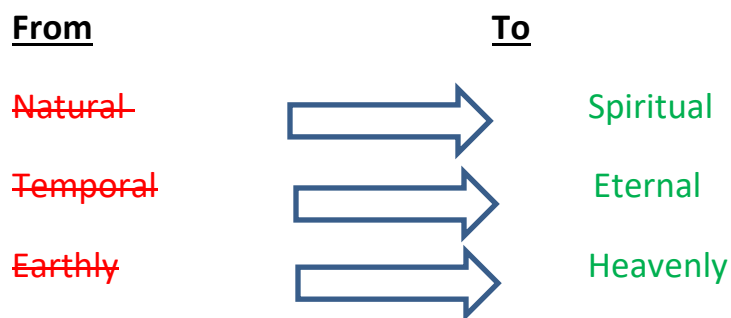
A church that refuses to exercise church discipline is not living according to Scripture. If there are issues in The Church, we ought to call them out.

God cannot stand unholiness because He is holy; He desires truth in the inward parts.

Immorality must be judged among believers in Christ.

Lastly...

When it comes to a called-out people, it is:



Jesus Christ is building His church on the basis of:

- God's plan;
- God's hidden mystery;
- God's love;
- God's beginning; and
- God's establishing.

May we receive the grace to display the marks of the true church, in Jesus' name. Amen.