Upon This Rock

Matthew 16:17-18 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. 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 Church

Tonight, there are a lot of gatherings taking place.

- From Times Square in New York to the largest ball rooms in California people will gather tonight and celebrate the coming of a new year.
- Many different gatherings, in a myriad of different places, but I want you to know that there’s no gathering of people quite like this one.
- This is the church! There’s no other group quite like the church.
- Nothing in this world compares to the church.
- We are the redeemed, we’ve been washed in the blood of Jesus.
- Like no other people on the face of this planet, we’ve got a reason to celebrate, tonight.
- We’ve got reason to lift our voices and shout.
- We are the people of the name, One-God, Apostolic, Sanctified, Holiness people.
- We are the CHURCH! There is nothing in this world like the church.

As an old year fades and a new year dawns we tend to reminisce on what has happened in the past year and what we want to happen in the coming year.

- As I look back at 2010, I realize that, in this year, I’ve gained a new respect and appreciation for what it means to be a part of the church.
- In times of tragedy, in moments of heartache, nothing has been as comforting to me as the fellowship of God’s people.
- This isn’t just a social club, this isn’t a political action pact, this isn’t some civic minded organization – this is the church!
- This is a living breathing organism.
- This is the body of Christ in this world.
- We are the church.
- We are brothers and sisters, we are family and all the family in heaven and earth is called by the same name!
- We are the church of the Lord Jesus Christ!
- Your family tree may not be the same as mine, your skin color might not match mine, your heritage may be different than mine, but we are family.
- We’ve been washed in the same blood, have had the same name spoken over us in baptism.
- We are the church! The Hoy ghost binds us together.
• It takes men and women from different backgrounds, with different levels of education, different ethnicities, from completely different worldviews and binds us together into one body.
• We are the church!

The church is a unique thing.
• It is the mystery of the ages.
• It is a concept that is unique to this dispensation of time.
• The prophets of the old testament were never permitted to see this glorious thing called the church.
• The Patriarchs, never were allowed to grasp such an incredible concept.
• The poets, and writer, Kings and scribes, none of the family of God in the Old Testament had a revelation of the church.
• It isn’t introduced in Genesis.
• You won’t find it in the books of the law.
• It isn’t described in the lyrical prose of the poets.
• And the prophets, though they saw glimpses and understood in part, they never fully realized what they were saying when they prophesied that God would take a people that were not a people and make them his people!
• That God would take a bride for himself,
• a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles, both bond and free, both black and white, both rich and poor,
• a group of people who could never be united by any other means would find a common faith and an amazing salvation in the precious blood of the lamb
• and God would take that group of people and mold it and make it into his church!
• His body on this earth, his hands, his feet, his voice calling to a lost generation!
• We are that church! I’m so glad tonight that I belong to the church!

Our text tonight is very important because it is the first time in scripture that the concept of the church is introduced.
• Nowhere, before Matthew 16, does God choose to enlighten men about his great plan that is embodied in the church.
• This is very important.
• If you ever study the principles that govern biblical and doctrinal interpretation you will learn that one of the governing principles is the Law of First Mention.
• Without getting too complex let me define the law of first mention to you.
• It is a rule that says that if you want to understand a doctrine or principle of scripture then you must go to the place in the word of God where it is mentioned for the first time and study that first occurrence because that is where you will find the fundamental, inherent meaning.
• The meaning introduced in that first mention in scripture is the common theme that will resound through all future mentions of the principle or doctrine.
• If you want the heart of the doctrine or principle you will always find it where it is first mentioned in scripture.

This is what we have in Matthew 16, Jesus, in an intimate moment with his closest disciples chooses to mention the church for the very first time.
• Everything else that will ever be revealed about the church will be colored by and influenced by that first mention.
• If we want to understand the significance of the church we must start here.
• It was an almost casual moment where Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, “Who do men say that I am?”
• You will remember the myriad of answers that were given: John Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah.
• But then Jesus asks the more personal and more significant question, “Who do you say that I am?”
• This time Peter speaks up, loud and bold, there’s no doubt here, Peter knows who Jesus is.
• “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
• It was in that moment of revelatory understanding that Jesus turned to Simon Peter and declared, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven.”
• This isn’t a human understanding, this is a divine revelation.
• Then he said it! “Upon this rock” the rock of revelation, the rock of divine understanding.
• “Upon this rock, I will build my CHURCH.”

For the first time in scripture the principle of the church is introduced and we learn a very critical truth about the church.
• The church is founded upon the identity of Jesus Christ.
• This was the prerequisite, this was the question that gave rise to the introduction of the church.
• Who do you say that Jesus is!
• The revelation of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church!
• The identity of Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the church is founded.
• This church isn’t founded on creeds of men, this church isn’t founded on philosophy or human understanding.
• This church is founded upon a revelation of Jesus Christ!
• When Peter said, “Thou art the Christ,” he was saying, you are the Messiah, you are the one that was prophesied from ancient times, you are the promised savior.
• Let me tell you something tonight, Peter was a Hebrew and the Hebrews had a very distinctive concept of God!
• Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God is ONE.
• When a Hebrew spoke of the Christ, He wasn’t speaking of a second person in the Godhead, he was speaking of God who is, according to Isaiah, the only savior!
• When he called Jesus the Christ, the son of the living God, the idea of a second person in the Godhead was the furthest thing from his mind.
• He had a revelation: The fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in you!
• You are the mighty God in Christ.

This is the cornerstone of the church.
• The identity if Jesus Christ is the foundation of everything that we are!
• Let me tell you who Jesus is: He is the Almighty God.
• He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the All Sufficient One.
• He is the Ancient of days. He is The Anointed One.
• This is the foundation of the church!

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith.
• He is the Bright and the morning star.
• He is our Creator, our Counselor, and our Kinsman redeemer.
• He is the Everlasting King and the Eternal Father.
• He is our Rock, our shield, and our strength in times of trouble.
• You’ve gotta this tonight because this is the foundation of the church:
• Jesus is the God who hears our prayers, the one who heals our diseases,
• He is the mighty God that does great and unsearchable things,
• whose ways are above mans ways and whose thoughts are above our thoughts!
• He is the great shepherd, the guardian of the righteous, and the one who never sleeps nor slumbers,
• He is the one that causes us to triumph over all our enemies.

Jesus is the Faithful God.
• He is the creator of all that is and ever will be.
• He is the one who spoke the worlds into existence,
• the one that hung the stars in the sky
• and in Him we live and breath and have our being!
• He is the highest of the high, the mightiest of the mighty, and the champion of all champions.
• He is the one that makes the morning darkness and turns the darkness into light.
• He is the one that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.
• He’s the one that rides upon the wind and walks upon the flood.
• He makes the heavens his throne and the earth his footstool.
• He’s the one that struck down Egypt, divided the red Sea, rained manna from heaven and brought water from a rock.
• He is the one who has eyes like a flaming fire and a voice like many waters with the mighty sound of thunder.
• He is the Holy One that works all things after the counsel of his own will.

This is the incredible truth upon which this church is founded.
• Jesus Christ is the Almighty God.
• He is the refuge for the oppressed, a shelter from every storm, our safe haven in times of trouble.
• He is Our Sword, Our Shield and Our Strong Tower.
• He is strength to the needy, refreshing to the thirsty, and satisfaction to the hungry.
• He is the one that goes before us, the one that follows behind us and the one that commands his angels to encamp round about those who fear him!
• That’s who Jesus is!
• And that revelation is the foundation of the church.
• This church is founded upon the powerful identity of Jesus Christ!
• We find our identity in His identity!
• This is the law of first mention, the identity of the church springs from the identity of Jesus Christ!
• So Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church,” but He didn’t stop there!
• He went on to say, “And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!”
• This is the fundamental understanding that stands beneath the doctrine of the church:
• It is founded upon His identity and because He cannot be defeated, His church cannot be defeated!
• He is the almighty one,
• He is the great and mighty warrior,
• He is the one whose victory is everlasting,
• whose train fills the temple and THIS IS HIS CHURCH.
• The church, by virtue of her identity is undefeatable.
• This church is unconquerable.
• This church will not be stopped,
• because it gets its identity from His identity.
• It is founded on the revelation that Jesus Christ is the mighty God!

Man is an eternal soul because he was made in God’s image.
• Because we were formed in the likeness of God, there is a living soul within us that will exist for all of eternity.
• We got our life from God, he breathed into us and when he did he imparted an eternal existence.
• Can I tell you tonight that the church finds her identity in Jesus Christ.
• We are made in His image.
• We are his body on this earth.
• The church was born when he breathed life into it with his spirit.
• Nothing in this world can stop the church: it has been endowed with an eternal life!
• This church is unstoppable.
• Kingdoms will fall but the church will remain.
• Governments will collapse but the church will remain.
• Economies will crumble, societies will fall apart, human institutions will fail, but the church will remain!

I’m no prophet, I can’t look into 2011 and tell you what all it holds but there are some things that I can tell you tonight with an assurance in my soul.
• In the coming year, the gates of hell will array themselves against the church, but they will not prevail!
• Hell will try to destroy the church but it will not succeed.
• Powers and principalities will arise but they will not overcome the church.
• Storm winds will blow, trying times will come, obstacles will crop up but when New Years Eve arrives next year, the church will still be here!
• Because this church is founded upon the rock of revelation, this church gets its identity from the identity of Jesus Christ
• and He’s never lost a battle, he’s never been vanquished by a foe,
• he’s never known an enemy that he couldn’t overcome.
• His kingdom is eternal, his reign is from everlasting to everlasting and this is His church!

Come what may, in 2011, I’m clinging to the church.
• No matter what life brings me, I’m staying with the church,
• no matter what difficulties I might encounter, I’m gonna cast my lot with the chosen few!
• I’m gonna be a part of the church!
• Because this church is going to be victorious.
• This church is going to have revival.
• This church is going to prevail over every enemy.
• Because this is his church!

Somebody needs to make up your mind tonight, we are the church!
• Somebody needs to settle the issue in your life, I’m a part of the church and I will remain a part of this church!
• this church will triumph in 2011, this church will see revival in 2011.
• **Our victories will outnumber our obstacles, our triumphs will outnumber our tragedies, our blessings will far outweigh our trials – because we are HIS Church!**