

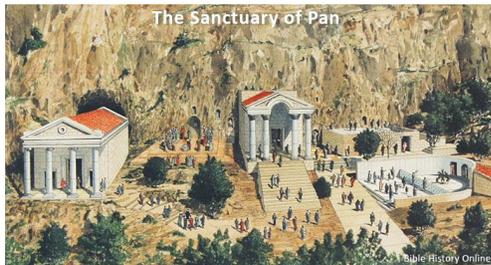
SPOKEN.

WHEN WORDS CHANGE THE WORLD.

PART 3



In the winter before His death Jesus Christ brought His disciples to Caesarea Philippi. The city of Caesarea Philippi was situated 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee on a terrace at the foot of Mount Hermon on its southern slope, about 1150 feet above sea level.



The ancient Canaanites built a sanctuary to Baal; the Greeks and Romans both built sanctuaries there to the god Pan. The god Pan was the giver of revelations. There is a cave that was a seemingly bottomless pit with an unlimited quantity of water. This cave in this rock was the pagan Gate of Hades.

Matt 16:13-20

13 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?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 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. 18 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. 19 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."

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

NKJV

This is the first time that is recorded that Jesus clearly revealed to His disciples His plan for their mission after His death, resurrection, and ascension.

He called His plan, My church! This is the first time in scripture that the word is used.

His disciples did not know what the church was. When Jesus said this to them they were looking at buildings. Perhaps they thought, "this is going to be the physical location where Jesus is going to build His new temple. That temple will be called the church."

What is the church?

The word church literally means called out ones.

In the New Testament Jesus and the apostles used the word church as a descriptive term for any local body of baptized believers joined together under biblical leadership.

Matt. 18:17

17 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.

NKJV

Acts 2:47

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

NKJV

NKJV Rom 16:5

5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

1 Cor. 1:2

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

NKJV

The church was not a building. The church was local body of baptized believers joined together under biblical leadership.

- **The church is local body**

Every baptized believer's is a member of the universal church with Christ as the head. But Jesus and the apostles used the word church primarily to describe a local body of baptized believers.

- **The church is a local body of baptized believers**

To be a member of the local church you must be a baptized believer. Believer means follower of Jesus.

No one member is Christ's body. No member if Christ's church. Each one of us is a member of Christ's body. An individual member is not the church.

- **The church is a local body of baptized believers joined together**

What joins a local church together is an agreement to work together to complete the mission giving to us by Jesus.

- **The church is a local body of baptize believers joined together under biblical leadership**

No team joins together and works together without leadership.

Jesus appointed His apostles to be the first elders to lead the local church to fulfill the great commission. They led the church to appoint the first deacons. As the apostles planted churches in other cities, the apostles either appointed elders or they sent elders to help the churches appoint elders to lead the local churches.

The apostle Paul said elders should possess certain qualifications. (1 Timothy 3:1-7: Titus 1:5-9) They should have certain abilities and character traits.

But leaders are not perfect. Leading is a difficult task. The members of a local church never join together to fulfill their mission unless they honor their elders and submit to their leadership.

Heb. 13:17

17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

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There is nothing on earth more important to Jesus than His church!

How important is the church to Jesus?

- **He laid down His life for the church. (Ephesians 5:25).**
- **He considers the church to be His bride. (Ephesians 5:22-31).**
- **He calls the members of His church His children. (John 1:12).**
- **He appointed and inspired men to write specific letters to the church.(1 Cor. 1:2)**
- **He calls the church His body on earth. (Ephesians 1:22-23).**
- **He disciplines His church when His church is disobedient. (I Cor. 11:27-32).**
- **He empowers His church to advance His kingdom. (Matthew 16:18).**

Because the church is so important to Jesus plus the fact that the church has made such a radical difference in my life, the church is very important to me.

I am very passionate about it. I am very emotional about it. I have spent countless hours studying what the bible says about the church. I have spent countless hours praying for the church. I have spent countless hours talking with others about the church. I ask God every day, are we doing this right? It is His church, not mine.

Like raising 8 children who are all adults, there have been times when the church has been my greatest joy and there has been times when the church has caused some of my greatest sorrows.

I do not lie to people about the condition of my children and I do not lie to people about the condition of the church.

I do not measure the condition of the church just by the soundness of our doctrine.

I do not measure the condition of the church just by nickels and noses. I do not measure the condition of the church by just what occurs on Sunday mornings.

I do not measure the condition of the church by just the experiences of the people who attend our meetings.

I do not measure the condition of the church by just the moral success or moral failure of people in our church.

I measure the condition of the church by whether or not we are fulfilling our mission. (Matthew 4:19; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)

Are we making disciples who are making disciples? Are we making disciples who are prevailing over the gates of hell and being fishers of men?

Just a few years ago, I would tell you that as a church, we were not very effective at fulfilling our mission as a church. Testimonies of people coming to know Jesus because of the witness of the members of our church were few and they were far apart. Testimonies of people

coming to know Jesus and then becoming disciple makers were very rare.

We have changed and we are changing. Many of you have changed and accepted the call to be missionaries and make disciples. You have been discipled and you are now making disciples. I hear testimonies nearly every week about our folks sharing the gospel with others. Our church has more disciple makers right now than at any time during the 31 years I have been here.

How has this change happened?

- **We have learned what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. (Matthew 4:19).**

Disciple=Follow Jesus, be changed into the likeness of Jesus, and fish for men.

- **We have learned what it means to be His church. (Matthew 16:18).**

The church is a local body of baptized believers joined together under biblical leadership.

To be effective as Christ's body in fulfilling our mission...

- **Our leadership has asked you to join a small group that has an intentional leader, a relational environment, and a reproducible process.**

We believe this is the best environment to grow into the likeness of Jesus, to fulfill the commands to love one another, and to make disciples that make disciples.

- **Our leadership has asked you to follow specific guidelines when you meet together as a group.**
- **Our leadership has asked you to reproduce these small groups.**

One of my greatest concerns for our church is that the church is not as important to its members as it is to Jesus Christ.

Pastors report that 40-60% of their members on their rolls are inactive. To be considered active means you attend your churches week end worship service at least 3 out of 12 times. 40% of Americans claim they attend church. Of this 40%, 23–25% fit the 3 out of 12 category.

I don't think that the Apostle Paul would consider attending a weekend worship service 3 out of 12 times as being an active part of the community of a local church. I don't think that the apostle Paul would consider just attending a weekend worship service as being an active part of the community of the Lord's church.

Our church is not as important to some as it is to Jesus Christ.

One of my other great concerns for our church is that there are some members who are not joined together under our leadership. You create discord for those who are.

Will you repent and make the church as important to you as it is to Jesus Christ?

Will you repent and join with us by submitting to our leadership?