**Love the Church**

**Jesus on the Church**

**Matthew 16 – The Universal Church**

Matthew 16:13-19

*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.”*

The church of Jesus Christ consists of those people living and dead who have been “called out” from the world (I Pet. 2:9-10), who have separated themselves unto God and have gathered together unto the Lord Jesus Christ for worship and fellowship.

**Matthew 18 – The Local Church (Visible Church)**

Matthew 18:15-20

*“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. 16 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.’ 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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

It involves a specific group of people in given localities which are marked out by confession of faith, discipline of life, obedience in baptism, gathered to the person of Jesus Christ, having gifted ministries and keeping the memorial of the Lord. They are always spoken of as complete units within themselves, which may voluntarily cooperate and fellowship with other local churches.

**The Church under Fire**

**Charges against the Church**

1. **I don’t see any difference between the people in church and the people at work.**
2. **I hear nothing but judgment and condemnation when I am at church.**
3. **I have been in church for six months and no one has connected with me.**
4. **I see no relevance in most of what happens in church including the preaching.**
5. **I have been hurt or wounded by pastors and church leaders.**
6. **I can get the best preaching and Christian entertainment in the world off of my computer without any hassle.**
7. **I am tired of all of the church drama.**
8. **I don’t feel like anyone needs me.**

**I love the local church because….**

1. Because it is God’s instrument in the earth to extend His kingdom and purpose.
2. Because the keys of the kingdom have been given to the church.
3. Because God’s power backs up the actions of the church.
4. Because it is a place where God promises to dwell in a manifested way.
5. Because God Himself is building it and He allows me to be a builder together with Him.
6. Because Jesus promises to love and nurture the church (Eph. 5:29).
7. Because I find expression and ultimate ministry fulfillment when I am connected to the church—the Body of Christ.
8. Because the local church is a place where I can be perfected by my connection to others (Eph. 4:16).
9. Because the local church is a caring community where I can care and be cared for as we bear one another’s burdens.
10. Because the local church forces me out of my comfort zone and forces me to:
* Deal with offenses
* Embrace different people/cultures
* Cross generational lines
* Be accountable to others
* Hear what I need to hear not just what I want to hear
1. Because it allows me to fulfill mission and purpose that I cannot do on my own.
2. Because the church like no other organization has the power to enrich communities by its presence.
3. Because being part of a local church gets more critical as we near the end times (Heb. 10:24-25).
4. Because God has guaranteed victory to the church in the last days.
5. Because Jesus loves it---it is His Bride.

**A Biblical (A2) Vision**

**A biblical (A2) vision includes becoming a local church that is modeled after the Early Church described the Book of Acts especially Acts chapter 2.**

The qualities of such a church include the following:

1. **A Pure Church**
2. **A Servant Church**
3. **A Word-Based Church**
4. **An Evangelistic Church**
5. **An Authentic Community Church**
6. **A Family Church**
7. **A Multi-Ethnic Church**
8. **A Worshipping Church**
9. **A Praying Church**
10. **A Prophetic Church**
11. **A Team Ministry Church**
12. **A Generous Church**
13. **A Church of Excellence**
14. **A Church of Financial Integrity**
15. **A Powerful Church**
16. **A Global Church**