

The Church: Its Confession and Authority

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Key Truth: Jesus founded His Church on a Confession of his Identity and endowed His Church with Authority to make and train disciples.

Whenever you do academic or biographical research, it's important to go back to the primary source. Likewise, if we want to understand what the Church is all about, our primary source is the Word of God, which include the actual words of Jesus of Nazareth. So, in order to understand the Church, we should study some of the words of its founder, Jesus Christ. In this passages, Jesus teaches his disciples about true Christian Confession—the foundation of the Church, and about the authority he vests in the Church and its leaders.

DISCUSS

Read **Matthew 16:13-20** and discuss with the group a statement or concept that stood out to you or impacted you in the sermon entitled **“The Church: Its Confession and Authority.”**

DIG IN

1. The Church and its Confession.

Why do you think Jesus is interested in what the people think about him? What is he trying to do?

Why do you think the people would say that Jesus is someone who's already gone to heaven (v. 14)?

What is significant about Peter's confession (vv. 16-17)?

Why was it important that Peter's confession be verbal (spoken)? What does tell us about our own Christian confession?

In what ways was Peter's confession (vv. 16-17) spiritual and theological? Who or what is “this rock” (v. 18)?

In what ways does Jesus' statement to Peter give us confidence today (v. 18)?

2. The Church and its Authority.

What did Peter “open the doors” to in the early church (v. 19)?

Did Jesus give Peter and the disciples the right to determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell? Why or why not?

In what ways does Jesus' statement speak to authority within the church today (see Acts 14:21-23; 15:1-2; Titus 1:5, etc.)?

Why is it important that we be reminded that leadership in the church is fallible (see Matthew 16:21-23)?

DO

What lessons do you learn from these verses that you will take with you throughout the coming week?