The Ecclesiology of Jesus

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The term ἐκκλησία occurs 114 times in the Greek New Testament, mostly in the book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul, but only three times in the gospels at Matt 16:18 and 18:17. Of course, there is more in the Gospel of Matthew about the church than just these two statements \(^1\) and Jesus’ view of the church cannot be reduced to His use of a particular word, but an examination of these two passages sheds important light on the ecclesiology of Jesus and what His disciples could have understood about the church during His earthly ministry.

The Critical Perspective

First of all, many have suggested that these sayings are not dominical but a retrojection of later Matthaean theology back into the mouth of Jesus. Not only are these the only two places in the gospels where the word ἐκκλησία occurs, but there are no parallels to Matt 16:17-19 or Matt 18:17-18 in either Mark or Luke, so both of these passages are unique to the Matthaean account. In 1921, Burton Scott Easton declared, “The specifically Matthaean additions to Christ’s words in Mt. 16:17-19 belong to a secondary tradition and do not represent an actual saying of our Lord. Recent investigators are practically unanimous in this conclusion, which is generally taken for granted in discussing this

passage.”² Easton states that Matt 16:17-19 “stands in the New Testament as an almost isolated fragment, not merely out of touch with the main current of tradition but in conflict with it,”³ since in the gospels, Jesus steadfastly refuses to name one of His disciples as greater and the book of Acts and the epistles do not show Peter in such a position of authority. Seitz argues that according to the rest of the New Testament, “it is man who builds on Christ as the foundation of the Christian building, not vice versa.”⁴ Schweizer argues that Matt 18:17 “is in a context that reflects the experiences of the later Church, and the verse cannot, from its content, have originated with Jesus.”⁵ Dan Via lays out the four main objections have been raised against the authenticity of both these passages.

(1) **Statistics.** The word ecclesia occurs only twice in the Gospels (Mt. 16:18; 18:17), so it is suspect in those two cases.
(2) **Eschatology.** Jesus preached the imminent advent of the kingdom, so he could not have intended the church.
(3) **Church History.** Peter did not have in the early church the authoritative position which such a designation by Jesus would have given him.
(4) **Psychology.** The designation “rock” does not fit Peter’s unstable character.⁶

But even from a critical perspective, this conclusion is dubious. Davies and Allison have argued at least for the possible authenticity of Matt 16:17-19.⁷ The passage has a high number of Semiticisms which suggests an Aramaic original.⁸ There are parallels to Matt 16:17-19 scattered throughout the Gospel of John which suggest that John was aware of an account similar to what Matthew records. All

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³ Seitz, “Upon This Rock,” 330.
of this argues for the priority of Matt 16:13-20 to Mark 8:27-30.  

Several features of this account are consistent with the teaching of Jesus elsewhere, including the fact that he gave His followers new names, He pronounces blessings on them, He spoke of building on a rock, and He spoke of the eschatological people of God as a building.  

Likewise, Hagner argues that Jesus’ interest in building a future community is evidenced by His selection of twelve disciples and His efforts to train and then commission them. He argues that “the authority of Peter here is not out of keeping with the picture of him in the rest of the NT.... Although Peter’s authority as witnessed in Acts or Galatians is not absolute (nor is that part of the promise here), his central position in the early chapters of Acts is quite consonant with the importance granted him here as the rock upon which the church is to be built.” Hagner concludes that “although the authenticity of the passage cannot be demonstrated, there is no convincing reason to doubt that Jesus the Messiah could have contemplated and founded a messianic community (a ‘church’), spoken of its security, and given Peter the role of leadership in that community.”  

Continuity with the Old Testament People of Israel  

Among those who accept Matt 16:18 and 18:17 as genuine words of Jesus, one frequent approach is to emphasize the continuity which exists between the people of Israel, sometimes referred to as the “church” in the Old Testament and the new community that Jesus is forming from His disciples, sometimes referred to as the “New Israel.” This is argued largely from the fact that the word ἐκκλησία occurs 97 in the LXX almost always as a translation of the Hebrew קהל which is usually a designation for the people of Israel.

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Berkhof is an example of this approach. In his *Systematic Theology*, he speaks of the church in the patriarchal period, the church in the Mosaic period, and the church in the New Testament. “In the patriarchal period the families of believers constituted the religious congregations: the Church was best represented in the pious households, where the fathers served as priests.”\(^{14}\) Then, in the Mosaic period, “After the exodus the people of Israel were not only organized into a nation, but were also constituted the Church of God.”\(^{15}\) Finally, Berkhof states that, “The New Testament Church is essentially one with the Church in the old dispensation.”\(^{16}\) Berkhof argues further that, “The Church is essentially ... the community of believers, and this community existed from the beginning of the old dispensation right down to the present time and will continue to exist on earth until the end of the world.”\(^{17}\) Therefore, he concludes, “In essence Israel constituted the Church of God in the Old Testament, though its external institution differed vastly from that of the Church in the New Testament.”\(^{18}\)

Martin Woudstra, arguing for this position, states that, “Not only is the Israel of the OT in every way a suitable precursor of the NT church, but the people of God in OT times are frequently designated with terms that point to a later fulfillment in the church age.”\(^{19}\) Woudstra acknowledges that “along with continuity there is discontinuity between OT Israel and the Church today.”\(^{20}\) And yet, he argues that “Jesus’ choice of twelve disciples shows the concern to be continuous with what preceded.”\(^{21}\)

Another who holds this position is G. E. Ladd. Ladd argues that, “It follows that if Jesus proclaimed the messianic salvation, if he offered to Israel the fulfillment of her true destiny, then this destiny was actually accomplished in those who received his message. The recipients of the messianic salvation became the true Israel, representatives of the nation as a whole. While it is true that the word

\(^{15}\) Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 570.
\(^{16}\) Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 571.
\(^{17}\) Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 571.
\(^{20}\) Woudstra, “Israel and the Church,” 237.
\(^{21}\) Woudstra, “Israel and the Church,” 238.
‘Israel’ is never applied to Jesus’ disciples, the idea is present, if not the term.” Again, “Jesus’ call of twelve disciples to share his mission has widely been recognized as a symbolic act setting forth the continuity between his disciples and Israel.” Another concern for Ladd is the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God. He states that there is an “inseparable relationship between the church and the Kingdom, but not their identity.” Ladd argues that,

- The Church is not the Kingdom
- The Kingdom creates the Church
- The Church witnesses to the Kingdom
- The Church is the Instrument of the Kingdom
- The Church is the custodian of the Kingdom

In the Old Testament, Israel was the custodian of the Kingdom, but in Matt 16:19 the church replaces Israel as the custodian of the Kingdom.

The Church Begins on the Day of Pentecost

In contrast to the above view, there are those who emphasize the discontinuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. These generally regard Jesus’ statements in Matthew to be predictive of a distinct entity which did not yet exist but would come into being on the day of Pentecost.

Representative of this view is Charles Ryrie. He argues that “although the Lord is the Founder of the church and the one who laid the groundwork during His earthly life, the church did not come into functional and operational existence until the Day of Pentecost. It is distinctive to this time.” For that reason, the church should not be equated with the Old Testament people of Israel. Ryrie states, “Certainly one cannot say that the New Testament church is national Israel fulfilling the promises given

27 Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 147.
to that nation. Therefore, one must conclude that the church is not the continuation of Israel and her purpose in being called out from among the nations.”

Radmacher argues against the idea that the church began with Adam, or Abraham, or during the earthly ministry of Christ, or post-Pentecost by the apostle Paul, and insists that the church began on the day of Pentecost. He insists that the church is a mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament but only in the New.

Saucy, on the other hand, acknowledges that “the scriptural concept of the people of God supports both a certain continuity and discontinuity.” And yet, he insists that “the extension of the concept of ‘God’s people’ to the Gentile nations in the OT is done without their becoming a part of Israel.” Likewise, in the New Testament, “although much concerning Israel is applied to the church ... the use of the name ‘Israel’ is carefully avoided.” At the same time, there are “certain spiritual realities characteristic of the church which were not true of historical Israel.” Among these are baptism with the Spirit into the body of Christ and the indwelling Christ. So the two remain distinct.

**Landmark Baptists**

In the middle of the 19th century a movement known as Baptist Landmarkism appeared in parts of the American South. They are of interest to this study because of certain distinctive views on ecclesiology which they hold. One of the principle architects of this movement was James Robinson Graves. According to Garrett, Graves identified seven marks of an apostolically modeled church.

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28 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 152.
29 See the Landmark Baptist view below.
30 The Ultradispensational view which distinguishes between a Jewish church in Matthew and Acts and a Gentile church in Paul’s epistles.
34 Saucy, “Israel and the Church,” 240.
35 Saucy, “Israel and the Church,” 249.
36 Saucy, “Israel and the Church,” 249.
1. “The Church and Kingdom of Christ is a Divine Institution.”
2. “It is a Visible Church.”
3. “Its Locality is upon this Earth.”
4. “It was a Local Organization, a Single Congregation.”
5. “The membership [is] all professedly regenerate in heart before baptized into it.”
6. “Its baptism is the profession, on the part of the subject, of the faith of the Gospel by which he is saved.”
7. “The Lord’s Supper was observed as a local church ordinance, commemorative only of the sacrificial chastisement of Christ for his people, never expressive of personal fellowship, or of courtesy for others, or used as a sacrament.”

One of the distinctive tenets of Landmark ecclesiology is the idea that Jesus founded the church during His earthly ministry. This sets them apart from the previous two views which argue that the church was started either in the Old Testament or on the day of Pentecost. Thus, for instance, Graves argued that “the ministry of John the Baptist and hence the baptism administered by him belong … to the Christian dispensation.” Royce Smith argued that the church is founded when Jesus calls His first disciples in Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20. Davis Huckabee places this at Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16 when Jesus selects the twelve. J. M. Carroll, in his famous tract, The Trail of Blood, averred that, “Christ, the author of this religion, organized His followers or disciples in a Church.” Roy Mason argued that the apostles had all of the essential ingredients of a church prior to Pentecost. They were baptized believers and had the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They had been given the Great

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http://www.landmarkbaptist.org/documents/Old_Landmarkism_What_is_it.pdf

https://ia600700.us.archive.org/34/items/baptistsuccessio00rayd/baptistsuccessio00rayd.pdf


http://www.pbministries.org/Theology/Davis%20Huckabee/Studies%20on%20Church%20Truth/chapter01.htm

Commission. Jesus was their head and they met together for prayer and conducted business all before Pentecost.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Antecedent Theology of ἐκκλησία}

It is likely, although not certain, that Jesus’ conversations with His disciples about the church took place in a Semitic language rather than in Greek.\textsuperscript{44} Be that as it may, the Gospel of Matthew records these conversations in Greek and the evangelical interpreter has a right to assume that Matthew has transmitted the words of Jesus, possibly in translation, and possibly in summary form, but accurately and faithfully. As Yarnell correctly states,

for the one who presupposes the divine inspiration of the Greek text, an appeal to an Aramaic source – largely about which only educated conjectures may be made – is simply not germane. Since the Holy Spirit inspires the biblical author and the resultant text, the extant biblical text – whether written in Greek or Hebrew, or rarely Aramaic – must be deemed sufficient for the task of theological exegesis.\textsuperscript{45}

Likewise, Silva states that it is the text of Scripture recorded in the Gospel and “not the historian’s reconstruction of what Jesus ‘really’ said – that is divinely inspired.”\textsuperscript{46}

What did Jesus’ disciples understand when He spoke to them about the ἐκκλησία (or what did Matthew understand that led him under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to render what Jesus said as ἐκκλησία)? This word did not occur in a vacuum. It had a history.


\textsuperscript{44} Luz, \textit{Matthew} 8-20, 355 states that “Most interpreters today do not assume the existence of genuine translation Semiticism but of an originally Greek text with biblical coloring.” Stanley E. Porter, \textit{The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 201-203 suggests that at least part of the conversation at Caesarea Philippi took place in Greek. K. L. Schmidt, “ἐκκλησία,” in \textit{Theological Dictionary of the New Testament}, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 5:518-526 suggests that the original Aramaic may have been כְּנִישְׁתָא.


In classical Greek, ἐκκλησία is a technical term which almost always referred to a political assembly of the polis.⁴⁷ The ἐκκλησία was not the people who made up the assembly but the meeting itself. When the assembly was in session there was an ἐκκλησία. When the assembly was out of session there was not an ἐκκλησία.⁴⁸ According to Coenen, in the classical literature the word was “never used for guilds or religious fellowships.”⁴⁹

However, the word ἐκκλησία passed from the classical literature into the LXX where it occurs 97 times, almost exclusively as a translation for some form of the Hebrew קָהָל. The word קָהָל occurs 120 times in the Old Testament and is translated by ἐκκλησία 77 times. The majority of the rest are συναγωγή. Radmacher analyzed the differences between these two translations of קָהָל and concluded that those that were translated by ἐκκλησία always refer to an actual assembly. Sometimes it is an assembly of evil doers (Ps 26:5) or an assembly of the Assyrian army (Ezek 32:22-23). “The assembly may be religious, political, military, judicial, national, or racial.”⁵⁰ But it is always an assembly and one must be physically present to be part of the assembly. Radmacher concludes that “the Hebrew concept of qahal was of an untechnical noun that only gained particularity by the context. After noting this nontechnical usage of the word, one is able to see the fallacy of those definitions that explain it as the technical term for the redeemed community or the church in the Old Testament.”⁵¹

Clowney agrees that ἐκκλησία and קָהָל refer to an actual assembly. “When Jesus speaks of ‘church’, however, he uses a term rich with Old Testament meaning. Israel was God’s assembly in the great day when God assembled them before him at Mount Sinai to make his covenant with them....The

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⁴⁸ Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, 116-119.
⁴⁹ Coenen, “Church,” 292.
⁵⁰ Radmacher, 130.
⁵¹ Radmacher, 125.
later assemblies of Israel recalled that great assembly.”

Coenen claims that where Heb. קָהָל is translated by ἐκκλησία in the LXX, it can indicate the assembly of the people for judicial, political, or worship purposes. It is used “especially where the historic greatness of Israel is implied,” and avoided where it might imply a lesser political claim.

James Barr denies that קָהָל in the Old Testament is a word specifically meaning “the-OT-church-actively-engaged-in-God’s-purpose-of-revelation-and-salvation” or “the-community-expecting-eschatalogical-redemption.” He concludes that “One cannot escape the impression that the emphasis on qahal as the community itself rather than its assembly has been overstressed in order to bring out a similarity to the Christian ἐκκλησία.”

Schmidt agrees that, “In the LXX ἐκκλησία is a wholly secular term; it means ‘assembly,’ whether in the sense of assembling or of those assembled.” Only context or the addition of some modifier such as κυρίος or τοῦ θεοῦ can make the meaning specific. However, “In many cases there is no addition, since the context makes it plain that the ἐκκλησία is the community of God. These instances are so common in 1 and 2 Ch., Ps. and some apocryphal books that we might almost speak of a technical term.”

How does all of this affect the way ἐκκλησία should be understood in Matt 16:18 and 18:17? It seems reasonable to conclude that while ἐκκλησία was not automatically a technical term the first century reader of the LXX would have naturally made associations with the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

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53 Coenen, “Church,” 296.
54 James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Glasgow: Oxford University, 1962), 123.
55 Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 125.
Matthew 16:18

κάγω δε σοι λέγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ πύλαι ἄδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς.

Matt 16:13-20 is a major turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus has been ministering amidst increasing opposition and has made His way along with His disciples to Caesarea Philippi away from the crowds. There Jesus asks His disciples who the people think the “Son of Man” is. Son of Man is Jesus favorite way of referring to Himself and has distinct messianic overtones, but here was readily understood by the disciples as a reference to Himself.58 The disciples give various answers and then Jesus turns the question on them, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responds for the group, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” a clear messianic identification. Morris notes that,

It is unlikely that this is the first occasion on which the apostles thought of Jesus as Messiah; some such idea was surely in their minds from the beginning, and it was because they saw Jesus in this capacity that they left their homes and followed him. But as they lived and worked with him, their understanding of “Messiah” enlarged. 59

But this is “the first and only confession of Jesus as ‘the Christ’ in the Gospel.”60 In verses 17-19, Jesus responds to Peter’s confession first by pronouncing a blessing on him (17), then by promising to build His church (18), and promising to Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (19).

Nearly every word in v 18 is worthy of comment. “Peter” is not a new name given to him by Jesus at this point but one he had had since the beginning of his time with Jesus.61 But Jesus picks up on the name and draws out its significance here. The identification of the “rock” has generated a considerable discussion. Peter, Peter’s confession, and Jesus have all been suggested. Blomberg states, “The play on words in the Greek between Peter’s name (Petros) and the word ‘rock’ (petra) makes sense only if Peter is the rock and if Jesus is about to explain the significance of this identification.”62 This is

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58 The parallel accounts in Mark 8:27; Luke 9:18 simply used the personal pronoun “I.”
60 Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 661; cf. Grant Osborne, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 626.
61 Mark 3:16; John 1:42.
the most natural understanding of the text and as Broadus has remarked, “No other explanation would probably at the present day be attempted, but for the fact that the obvious meaning has been abused by Papists to the support of their theory.”63 But Peter is representing the group and it is based on his confession that Jesus grants him this honor. Clowney states, “Peter and his confession stand together. But if Peter cannot be separated from his confession, neither can he be separated from the eleven.”64 So probably it is best to understand the rock to be Peter, who represents the twelve as confessors of Christ.65 Regardless of how the rock is understood, the important thing to note for present purposes is that Jesus has identified a new foundation for a new building enterprise that He is undertaking. He is not building on Abraham, or Moses. This in itself ought to distinguish the ἐκκλησία that Jesus is building from any existing Old Testament institution.

Next, Jesus says “I will build” (οἰκοδομήω), using a future tense verb. A. T. Robertson identifies this as a “volitive durative future”66 which means that it expresses Jesus’ intent to engage in continued action in the future. Radmacher remarks, “It was not to be any ekklēsia that existed before or during Christ’s previous ministry, but an ekklēsia that was to be built in the future. This fact alone deals the death blow to any teaching that sees Jesus’ ekklēsia as simply the continuation of the Old Testament ekklēsia.”67 Landmark teachers often argue that the durative future could be rendered “I will continue to build by (already existing) church.” But this flies in the face of the context where Jesus has identified the foundation of a new project.

Jesus also says the this will be “my” (μου) ἐκκλησία. This needs to be understood in terms of the conversation that has just transpired. It is the ἐκκλησία the belongs to the one who has just been

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64 Clowney, The Church, 40.
65 Cf. Morris, Matthew, 423; David Turner, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 406-407; Osborne, Matthew, 627.
67 Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, 147.
identified as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus’ followers must have understood from this that they were becoming a part of the eschatological messianic community. This is a new entity set apart from anything that came before it. Undoubtedly, it was understood by the disciples in very rudimentary and Jewish terms. It is all but certain that they could not yet envision all that the church would become post Pentecost.

The word ἐκκλησία here is not automatically a technical term. It must be understood in terms of its context and modifiers. What kind of “assembly” is Jesus talking about here? It is an assembly which Jesus the Messiah will build on a foundation of Peter and the other apostles based on their confession of Jesus as the Christ. It is not devoid of all connections to previous expressions of the people of God, but it is clearly distinct from them.

The Landmark position is exercised to claim that this church in Matt 16 is a local church consisting at this time of the disciples that Jesus had already gathered. That is really difficult to maintain in light of the last phrase in v 18, “the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” This can be understood either to mean that death (Hades) will attack the church but will not be able to defeat it, or that the church will go on the offensive and successfully storm the gates of death. In either case, Jesus is taking the long view here. He is looking at the big picture. The church, meaning the movement that starts with His disciples and expands, will ultimately be victorious. It is hard to take this passage in any other way than as an expression of all believers in Christ for all time.

Verse 19 describes the relationship between the church and the kingdom. Morris writes, “The kingdom, of course, is not to be identified with the church. The kingdom has reference to the divine rule; the church to the people of God. They are closely related, but not identical.” Specifically, Peter is told that he will be given the keys of the kingdom and that “whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The paraphrastic

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68 Morris, Matthew, 425.
future perfect verbs “shall have been bound” (ἔσται δεδεμένον) and “shall have been loosed” (ἔὰν λύσης) are as uncommon in Greek as they are in English and probably deliberate. The idea is not that Peter gets to determine what happens in heaven, but that he has been given the authority to announce what has already happened in heaven based on how people respond to Christ.

Matthew 18:17

ἔὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτὸν, εἶπε τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. ἔὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὃσπερ ὁ ἔθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελωνής.

All of Matthew 18 is part of the fourth of five major discourses in Matthew. The entire chapter is related to relationships in the community of the Messiah. It begins with a question from the disciples about who is the greatest in the kingdom, to which Jesus responds by pointing out to them a small child (1–4). He proceeds from there to warn them about bringing temptation and causing such a child to stumble (5–6). This leads to a warning against temptation in one’s own life (7–9). Verses 10–14 contain a parable about seeking a lost sheep where the lost sheep represents one of the little ones, presumably a member of the community, who has gone astray. Then Verse 15–20 contain instructions on how to treat a sinning brother, followed by a parable on forgiveness that Jesus tells in response to Peter’s question about how often he should forgive someone who sins against him.

The paragraph on how to treat a sinning brother contains three steps. First, there is instruction to go privately and confront him with his sin. If he responds favorably, “you have won your brother.” But if not, the instruction is to take one or to others and try again. If he does not respond to the second attempt, then the third step is to “tell it to the church.”

“Brother” here is not a biological brother, but a member of the community, and the ἐκκλησία envisioned here is clearly a smaller entity than what is described in Matt 16. It is not likely that this is merely a Jewish synagogue, for it would have been called that if it was. Besides, the synagogues were

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69 Osborne, Matthew, 685.
70 Morris, Matthew, 468; Osborne, Matthew, 686.
already turning against Jesus. Why would He direct His followers to them?

Mason argues that Jesus is referring to a church that was already in existence.

It remains unreasonable to believe that Jesus referred to something that the disciples did not understand, or that He indicated a rule of discipline relating to a church that did not exist. To the one that accepts this passage at its face value it appears conclusive that the church was in existence at the time that Jesus spoke these words.

But Radmacher counters that there was no community during Jesus’ earthly ministry that had such disciplinary authority. As long as Jesus was present as arbitrator of their disputes they did not rule. He is giving them instructions for when He is gone. The terminology “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer” still places this church within the Jewish sphere. Verse 18 is “virtually verbatim repetition of 16:19…. The plurals here make it evident that the church as a whole has this authority, while the singular in 16:19 centers on Peter as the representative of the disciples.”

Conclusion

Bruner offers the following summary of Matt 16 and 16:

In chap. 16 the keys are evangelistic and open and close the kingdom to people in the world; in chap. 18 the keys are ecclesiastical and open and close the kingdom to people in the church. On the whole, chap. 16 gives us the big picture, chap. 18 the close-up; chap. 16 the whole church, chap. 18 the local congregation; 16, Peter, 18, disciples; 16, preaching, 18, discipline. But ultimately the keys as preaching and disciplining are not two different things; they are simply the ministry of the gospel to groups and the ministry of the gospel to individuals.

During His earthly ministry Jesus anticipated the formation of a community of His followers and instructed His disciples concerning this. Indeed, they were the nucleus of the church-to-be and were in the process of being formed into that community. This church was not created in a vacuum. It had clear connections with the people of God in the Old Testament. Its first members were Israelites. But it was nevertheless something quite new and distinct from everything that had gone before.

71 Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, 140.
72 Mason, The Church That Jesus Built, 18.
73 Radmacher, The Nature of the Church, 141.
74 Osborne, Matthew, 687.
75 Osborne, Matthew, 687.
76 Bruner, Matthew, 2:230. Emphasis in the original.
Bibliography


