

GOD'S MAGNIFICENT IDEA

Part III

Matthew 16:13-19

Introduction: There is a vital interconnection and camaraderie between the Old Testament church, the "called out ones" (*Acts 7:38*), and the New Testament church, the "called out ones." The church of the Old Testament as a precursor is foundational and preparatory to the church of the New Testament. The churches of the Old Testament and the New Testament are pictured by Paul as an olive tree whose roots comprise the fathers of faith in the Old Testament. *Romans 11:1-36*. God only has one tree. It is a supernatural tree rooted in men of faith. Israel had one destination, and that was to bring us to Christ. *Galatians 3:24-25*. The church has one destination, and that is the New Jerusalem, the City of God. The gates of that city are the twelve tribes of Israel, but the foundations are the twelve apostles of the Lamb. *Ephesians 2:20-22*. Here are a few terms used both of Israel and the church. A chosen people – *Deuteronomy 10:15*, *1st Peter 2:9*; God's inheritance – *Isaiah 19:25*, *1st Peter 5:3*; God's treasure – *Exodus 19:5*, *Matthew 13:44*; and many other similarities between both groups.

I. God's magnificent idea

A. We are called out from the world for a purpose. *1st Peter 2:9-10*.

1. The first reference to the church is universal. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (*Matthew 16:18*), He was talking about the church on the entire planet. *Ephesians 1:17-23*. These not only include the living, but also those saints now in Heaven. It even includes those yet unborn who in their lifetime will submit to Christ as Lord. *Hebrews 12:22-24*.
2. In *Matthew 18:17*, we have the only other time Christ uses the term "church." Here He is dealing with disciplinary procedures in a local fellowship. The local church is the present, visible earthly expression in time of the body of Christ. The local church is marked out by a confession of faith, discipline of life, obedience in baptism, having gifted ministries, observing communion, and gathering in the Name of Christ. The local church is a small part of the universal church at large.

B. The nature of this magnificent idea.

1. God Himself is the architect of the church. *Matthew 16:18*. Being the architect, it must be remembered that it was God's idea. *Ephesians 1:9, 3:10-11*. Man is always seeking credit for what God produces. It is a better idea because it has its origin in the mind of God.
2. Being the architect, He has the plan and pattern for the operation of His church. It is a plan that will insure that His idea and dream will be reached. *Hebrews 8:4-6*. There is one blueprint, and all laborers must build according to that blueprint.
 - a. The world. Israel had a basic weakness, and at times in its history it looked to the world for a pattern. Israel rejected God's pattern of a theocracy for the world's plan for a monarchy. We face a similar situation where some want us to surrender our sovereignty to the United Nations. Some judges want us to change our laws to conform to other nations.
 - b. Religious traditions of the past. Any tradition that keeps us from obeying the Word is wrong and must be rejected.
 - c. The mind of a regenerate man. Just because we are born again does not mean that every thought or idea we get is from God. We can be sincerely wrong. Sincerity is no substitute to the God-ordained plan. *Proverbs 19:21*.

Conclusion: God may not be a respecter of persons, but He is a respecter of principles. God had a pattern for the ark of Noah (*Genesis 6:14-15*), a pattern for the tabernacle of Moses (*Exodus 25:9, 40*), the temple of Solomon (*1st Chronicles 28:11-19*), Ezekiel's temple (*Ezekiel 43:10-11*), and He certainly has a pattern for the New Testament temple of God, the church. Our destiny is to fulfill God's dream for His church. We must not, and we cannot allow ourselves, to become slack in our commitment to Him.