Jesus,

what do you mean?

***“Upon this rock I will build my church. . .”***

Or, What do you think Jesus is doing right now?

Matthew 16:18

The Words:

Jesus says these words after asking His disciples who they think He is. Peter answers for the group, “You are the Christ, Son of the liv-ing God,” and Jesus says that this “son of Jonah” has been given divine insight into the identity and authority of the Son of God. But what has this Messiah come to do? “Jesus, what do you mean?”

The Challenge:

Questions about the “rock” and the “gates of hell,” while important, sidetrack Jesus’ point. He is not making Peter a pope, nor telling the disciples to attack hell, and the traditional Protestant protests over these verses are as fruitless as Roman Catholicism’s reading its tenth century traditions and institution back into them. He is giving the apostles a first hand look into His mission, followed by His methods (verses 21-23), namely his death and resurrection.

The Principle: Jesus came to call a people for His name.

Christian theology begins with two questions, both highlighted in this passage: Who is Jesus? and What is the Church? If we get these right, all else will follow. If we get them wrong, little else matters. God has no alternative plans for God’s Kingdom. He has no “Plan B” and neither do we.

Jesus is explaining to his Jewish-ethnocentric, politically-minded followers that He came, not to establish another kingdom-state, only better than the others. He came to do a wholly different thing, that is, call and lead the true, holy people of God: the “church” is a called-out assembly.

His encouragement for shining lights to wash dusty feet serves His larger purpose, which gathers God-glorifying worshipers from every nation. So the entire “New Testament” mission merely continues what God began in the Garden, and continued through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

The Application: Be part of what Jesus is doing.

God’s Son *authoritatively* calls us to be part of His mission, to build a people for His name. And while each of us will do that differently (Ephesians 4:11-16), we must see that we are part of something bigger than spinning our own comfort cocoon.

1. Jesus’ mission is a call to succeed, not waste your life.

Each day is a gift which you trade for something. We only get so many, and they are gone forever, leaving only what we “bought.” What are you buying with your days? The goal is not fame, but to serve Christ/others as we go about daily life. Colossians 3:22-4:1

2. Jesus’ mission is a call to community, not isolation.

While each believer is born individually, he is born into a Kingdom and a Family. Those who follow Jesus are part of His people, or they are not following Him at all. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

3. Jesus’ mission is a call to reach others, not fruitless Bible study.

While the power is in God’s Word, our study should be transformational, not merely informational. Jesus emphasized that only those who hear AND obey are truly His. Matthew 7:24-27