

**Matthew 16:13-19     *"Built on the Rock"*     September 6, 2020**  
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**Matthew 16:13-19**

<sup>13</sup>When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

**INTRODUCTION**

Is Satan winning? When we look at what's happening in our country with violence and destruction in our cities ... When we see the animosity and instability festering in the political realm .... When we hear of the hundreds of murders happening throughout our country. When we see people calling right wrong and wrong right... When sense growing opposition to Christianity ... When we hear of the persecution of millions of Christians through the world ...does it seem like Satan is winning? While it may seem that way, our gospel reading reminds us that the Church is **"...BUILT ON THE ROCK."** That "rock" is Jesus and the truth that he, the Son of Man, is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

**UP NORTH**

Many of you like to go up north. In our account today Jesus went up north, to the farthest reaches of Palestine, to a town called Caesarea Philippi. There Jesus asked the disciples, *"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"* "Son of Man" was a name that Jesus often used to refer to himself. The disciples responded, *"Some say John the Baptist; others say, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."* This reflected much of the misunderstanding that was so prevalent in Jesus' day. Jesus' question, however, was not a part of an opinion poll gauging his identity factor or popularity among people. He already knew what people thought. What he really wanted to know is what his disciples thought.

**"WHO AM I?"**

*"But what about you?"* He (Jesus) asked. *"Who do you say I am?"* What about you? Who do you say that Jesus is? ..... This is the most important question that you and I consider in our lives. Our answer to Jesus' question dictates the difference between going to heaven or going to hell.

Let's be honest. All of us deserve the latter. We can all say with the psalm-writer, *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me (Ps51:5)."* King David expresses another confession we all can make, *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...(v.4).* Sin is wickedness. And God says in 1 Corinthians 6:9, *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?"* As John wrote in Revelation, *"Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur."* This is real. The only way that you and I can escape this is through Jesus.

**A CONCERN**

*"Who do you say I am?"* I know people who were baptized and believed once upon a time but no longer believe because they have stiffed their Savior and starved their faith. They have failed to make worship and working with God's word a part of your life. What they believed once upon a time doesn't benefit them now. I am concerned because there are some who call themselves Christians but then live a godless life - consistently putting money and things before God, having sex outside of marriage, hating and holding grudges, cheating and stealing, being lifeless toward God's word and loveless toward people.

Are you one of them? Under such circumstances, if there is faith in your heart it probably will not live there long. The Bible indicates that persistent sin grieves the Holy Spirit and results in his leaving a person. When that happens, faith dies. Without faith in Jesus a person is damned.

But through faith in Jesus you are saved. As John wrote, *"For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (Jn3:16,17)."*

### **PETER'S CONFESSION**

*"Who do you say I am?"* Jesus' disciple named Peter replied, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* These words together with the title, *"Son of Man,"* we have a simple but deep lesson on Jesus. He is true man. He's the seed of the woman promised in the Garden of Eden who will crush Satan's head. He's the Son promised of the virgin in Isaiah 7:14. He's human who has come to live in the place of humans. He's human in order to die the human death - a consequence of sin. But Jesus is also *"the Son of the living God."* He is true God who always has been and who shared his divine characteristics with his human nature. Jesus is *"the Messiah."* Messiah is the Hebrews equivalent of the Greek Christ. Both mean "anointed." To anoint in ancient times was to appoint and empower for service. Jesus is the one whom God appointed and empowered to be the Savior of the world.

Jesus took the responsibility of keeping God's law upon himself. He did that. Jesus took humankind's curse for sin upon himself. He suffered separation from his Father in heaven and died on the cross. Jesus did what he was anointed to do. He rose on the third day to assure the world that his work was complete and so was the forgiveness of sins.

### **JESUS BLESSING**

Believing this brings blessings. Jesus said, *"Blessed are you, Simon, Son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man but by my Father in heaven."* What Peter said was truth revealed to him by God. What Peter confessed was faith which he had received from God as a gift. God has blessed you with faith. Through faith comes many other blessings - peace with God, eternal life, the assurance that God is with us every day. *"Who do you say I am?"* Believe and confess as did Peter and you too are truly blessed!

### **THE ROCK**

Jesus continued, *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades (better, hell) will not overcome it."* It almost sounds, doesn't it, that Jesus was telling Peter that he would build God's church on Peter? For centuries many have mistakenly held to this belief.

In the common Greek that Jesus used, Jesus said to Peter you are *Petros* a masculine, singular noun that means a rock or a stone. Spiritually Peter had become a rock through faith in Jesus. When Jesus said, *"... and on this rock I will build my church..."* he changed nouns to a *petra*, a feminine, singular noun which means bedrock or a rocky ridge. The *petra* on which Jesus would build his church was on the truth that Peter confessed - Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

In Ephesians 2:19,20, St. Paul wrote, *"You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."* Jesus and the truth that he is the Son of the Living God, is the Rock upon whom we stand in faith for time and for eternity.

### **NOTHING CAN OVERCOME GOD'S CHURCH**

Jesus said that nothing can overcome his Church - not even the devil and his army of bad angels. With his death on the cross, according to Colossians 2:15, Jesus disarmed the devil and his angels, triumphing over them by the cross. This means, that you Christians, as part of the church, are victors in Christ. Satan cannot overcome you

so long as you stand on the Rock. And if not even the devil and his angels can overcome you, then God will see to it that his Church lives on!

### **THE TASK**

Jesus talked about the task that the Church has. *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* Jesus talked about keys.

The keys for binding of which Jesus spoke is the key of God's law. God's law tells people how to be - pure and holy; what to do and not to do; and what God threatens to do to sinners. The binding key is the pronouncement of God's law to unbelievers and other impenitent people that because they have sin in their lives and have not turned from it and turned to the Savior, they are not in fellowship with God and they are going to hell.

The loosing key the Gospel of Jesus Christ which proclaims that Jesus is the Savior who provided holiness and payment for sin which in turn moved God to forgive the world. The gospel declares that forgives is one's own through faith in Jesus. We are to proclaim the news, "Your sins are forgiven in Christ," to those who sorrow over their sin as a result of the Holy Spirit's working in them through God's law. They need to hear of the full and free salvation in Jesus. This Good News opens heaven to people.

### **THE CHURCH'S TASK**

From the account we consider it sounds like Jesus gave this task to Peter. But we know from John 20 that when Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, He said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven (20:22,23)."* In the letters of Paul, the apostle urges Christians to reach out to one another and others who do not believe in Jesus. Using the keys is not just for Peter, or even for the apostles it's for all the church. Therefore, to all of us God gives the task of sharing law and gospel with people.

You may know someone who reject Jesus or are Christians straying from Jesus. Gently, lovingly, humbly share with them your concern about their unbelief or impenitence. Make it plain that you care that if they don't have a change of heart, they will be eternally lost

But when hearts are softened and people seek comfort and peace, be sure to tell them of the Savior, who lived, died, and rose again for them. Assure these people that in Jesus there is the forgiveness of sins; there is peace with God; there is eternal life.

As a congregation continue to proclaim the law and the gospel from your pulpit and in your classrooms, at bedsides, in homes, in counseling, and wherever you have opportunity. Support this work with your prayers, your time, your talents, and your offerings.

As we do, even though sometimes it may seem like God's Church is losing, remember, trust the Church is built on the Rock; the Rock and his Church stand forever. Amen.

*DRS*