

**Matthew 16:13-20** <sup>13</sup> When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" <sup>14</sup> So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

## **Christ is the Rock on Which We Stand**

This is the central theme of Matthew's gospel. Everything up to this point in the Gospel is there to bring you to the same conviction that Peter comes to, that Jesus is the Christ. After this point Matthew's gospel is entirely focused on what that means, namely His death on the cross.

This is therefore an incredibly important pivotal moment in the Gospel of Matthew, and a beautiful passage full of a wealth of meaning and depth.

And yet what do we do with this passage? We get into a turf war with the Roman Catholics. It's really a shame but we really don't have any choice at times. We need to show their error so that we are not deceived by Satan.

I'll try to point out the error of this thinking as we work through the text without getting too bogged down on this secondary point. But let me start by pointing out that even if Christ had given the authority of His church to the Roman bishop, He also once gave it to Aaron and his descendants. Yet Aaron and his descendants were cut off because they did not perform their office as they ought. If Aaron and his descendants were cut off then how much more the Bishops of Rome. Whatever they claim it is beyond doubt that they did and still do not teach the faith as it was spoken of in scripture and confessed by the apostles, therefore they have no right to demand authority over the church of God.

### **ITS ALL ABOUT JESUS**

The text begins with a question, "Who do people say that I am?" Not, "who do people say that Peter is." It's not about Peter, it's about Jesus. When we allow the Catholic's to make it about Peter we've already lost.

It's like those 3D images popular in the 90s, that you have to look at cross eyed. You have to remember to keep Christ as the focus only then do the scriptures become clear.

How many times in the last few weeks I have not told you, in order to understand this correctly you have to remember it's about Christ. Keep Him as the focus and the image becomes sharp.

Notice all the confusion over this question, some say "John", some say "Elijah" etc. The world is still very confused by this question. Many want to relegate Christ to a lower position, just a prophet. But the Father is not confused, the Father is quite clear. "This is my beloved Son."

This is not Peter's confession. This is the declaration of the Father. It is the one and only declaration of the Father.

**Psalm 2:7** <sup>7</sup> "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You.

Jesus is the Word of God. It is Jesus who speaks for God and tells us everything we know about God. It is Jesus who speaks in the Old Testament to tell of the promise, to tell us the law of God. But this one declaration is spoken by the Father.

As Jesus reminds us this confession does not come from Peter, but it was revealed to him by the Father

### **Because it is from God and not man it has the power**

The things of man die and fade away. But this confession is not of man it is from the Father. Because it is of God and not man it will remain forever, and it has the power to break open the gates of death.

Because it is the Word of God it has the power to break open the gates of death. We are trapped inside of death and hell. How can we break out of this prison? There is no strength in man to do this, not even in Peter. But the eternal word of the Father does have power. No wonder Jesus says the gates of death cannot prevail against it.

This is also why it is the foundation of the Church. This is the foundation of the church and of our faith that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. The church is built on this truth not on a man or an office.

It's why the early church fought for three hundred years over a single letter. **Homoousion** meaning "of one substance" versus **Homoiousia** meaning "of like substance." Is Jesus true God equal to the Father in every way. Or something slightly lower, "a god" but not "The God." Or something else, an angel, a prophet, or just an ordinary man. The foundation of our faith is that Jesus is the One True God who came in the flesh to die for our sins. The very Son of God.

Notice that Jesus responds "Simon Son of Jonah." Simon wasn't in any real way different from his father. He was the same being, the same substance of his father. So is Jesus the "Son of God" of one substance with His Father.

This is the one and only declaration of the Father and therefore the one and only foundation for the church. Because it is from God and not man it will remain forever.

## The Declaration of the Son

And now all eyes turn to Jesus. HE is the chosen of the LORD. The Father has declared it. What does the Son declare? His declaration is that He will build the church with the office of the Keys, that is to say through the preaching of the forgiveness of sins, ie the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Keys, the Gospel, are the authority and power of the Church.

To whom does Christ give them? In our text He says, “will” future active tense. He promises to give them to Peter, but later when he actually does give them He does not give them **only** to Peter. In Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23 when He actually does give the Holy Spirit and the keys, he uses the pronoun ὑμῖν the plural 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun. That is to say he is speaking to all his disciples. The Keys were given to all who make the same confession as Peter did. In other words whoever believes that “Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. If we have the keys, then the Roman bishop has no power over us. He cannot shut us out of the kingdom because we ourselves have the keys to open.

This is the heart and soul of this text and of all of scripture. All who believe have the keys to heaven. Those gates are open and no one can keep us out, not death, not Satan, not the Pope. As the Scripture say “whoever believes shall have eternal life.”