

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

Making the Great Confession

Matthew 16:13-27

INTRODUCTION: Jesus probably encountered the Pharisees and the Sadducees along the northwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee between Migdal and Capernaum. There He rebuked them because although they were leaders of Israel and were students of the Word of God, they could not discern the signs of the time. They did not know they were living in the days of Messiah!

Then Jesus warned His disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod.

Then Jesus and His disciples headed north again to the area of Caesarea Philippi, a mostly uphill walk that would take more than 14 hours. It was here that Jesus asked a critical question to those that followed Him. It was controversial when He asked it. It is still controversial today.

Matthew 16:13–20 NKJV 13 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?” 14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

17 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. 18 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. 19 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.” 20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Jesus began by asking, “What are the people saying about My identity?” Sadly, the answers the disciples were hearing were way off the mark. With all His miracles, the testimonies concerning Him, His own explanations, why were the people not getting it? The same reason many do not get it today. Jesus said, ...

John 5:46–47 NKJV 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

People do not recognize who Jesus really is because either they do not know or they do not believe the Scriptures. So, Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”

THE CONFESSION

Dear ole Simon Peter, often wrong but never in doubt, this time gets it right!

Matthew 16:16 NKJV Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

- **Christ means Messiah, the Anointed One.**
- **Son of the living God is an acknowledgement of Jesus’ deity.**
- **Revealed by the Father**

Matthew 16:17 NKJV 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.

Jesus is saying, “Simon, son of John, you did not just figure this out, nor did you just hear it from others. God My Father revealed this truth to you.”

This mirrors the truth that none of us know anything about God except that which He has revealed. We know Him because He has revealed Himself to us through

- Natural revelation – creation and conscience
- Special revelation – the Scriptures and the Person of Christ

Matthew 16:18 NKJV 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.

THE CHURCH

- **Jesus gave Simon a new name, Peter (Petros). Literally “a stone” like a piece of gravel, or “a little rock.”**
- **Jesus said His church would be built upon this rock (Petra), literally “the bedrock” or “the great big rock.”** Think Rock of Gibraltar.
 - The Catholic Church says that Peter is that rock upon whom the church is founded.
 - Others have said that the rock is faith, characterized by Peter’s faith.
 - How can we know what “this rock” means? By comparing Scripture with Scripture. In this case we can even go to Scripture given through Peter himself. After all, he was present. Jesus was talking to him. Surely Peter knew what Jesus meant. So, what does Peter say the foundation rock of the church is? Is it Peter himself? Is it his faith?

1 Peter 2:4–6 NKJV 4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being

built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

“Behold, I lay in Zion

A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,

And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”

Alas, it is neither. The church is not built on Peter, the man; nor is it built on faith. **Peter says the “bedrock” upon which the church is built, the cornerstone, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!** When Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build my church,” He was pointing to Himself.

This is no trivial matter.

- The doctrine of Petrine succession rises or falls with the identity of “this rock.”
- Other questions of ecclesiology, matters pertaining to the church, also are strongly impacted by this understanding.
- Peter himself clearly says that the rock upon which the church is founded is Jesus Christ. The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.
- The foundation rock of the church guarantees the success of the church. Because the church is founded upon Jesus, He promises that even the gates of hell will not withstand the assault of the church. If the church’s foundation is a man, even one as noble as Peter, or if the church’s foundation is our faith, which at times will fail (see vv. 22-23), then how can success be guaranteed? **But if the foundation of the church is indeed Jesus, no wonder the gates of hell will fall before it!** Today ~ 65 million Americans will attend a Christian worship service, more than all gathered in all football stadiums over the weekend.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Matthew 16:19 NKJV 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.”

- **The Gospel is the Key to the Kingdom.**

- What did Jesus preach?

Mark 1:15 NKJV and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

- What did Peter preach?

Acts 15:7 NKJV And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

- What did Paul preach?

Romans 1:16 NKJV For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

- **What is the gospel?**

- **Jesus died on the cross for our sins.**
- **Jesus rose from the dead.**
- **Those who trust Jesus as their Lord (master) are given forgiveness of sin and eternal life (salvation).**

- Why did Jesus say "keys" (plural) to the Kingdom?

- Because everybody who is saved gets a key!
- If you are already saved, why do you need a key?

So that you can unlock salvation for somebody else!

Now, look how the next passages make sense with this understanding of the keys of the kingdom.

Matthew 16:20 NKJV Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

People are always asking why Jesus commanded His disciples not to tell people that He was the Christ at this point in His ministry. The reason is because there was no gospel yet. Jesus has not yet paid the price for sin. There was the promise of the gospel, but no gospel! This is why Old Testament believers had to wait in Paradise in Sheol. They could not go to heaven until the gospel was a reality. So immediately after the resurrection, Jesus "set the captives free," and they went to heaven.

And if some of you are confused because I said Old Testament believers had to wait in Paradise in Sheol for Christ to die on the cross before they could go to heaven, then you need to stream the session I just taught Wednesday night that explained what the Bible says about Sheol, Hell, and Paradise. Go to our website and stream last Wednesdays Bible study.

Now, back to Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:21 NKJV From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Jesus tells them He will give them the keys to the kingdom, then He explains the key: His death on the cross and resurrection.

The cross was not an accident or a tragic turn of events. It was God's plan! Jesus said He must ... be killed and be raised. Otherwise there is no key to the kingdom. Without the gospel, nobody gets in!

- **What are we to do with the keys?**

Matthew 16:24–26 NKJV 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- Cross bearing means following Christ.
 - Declaring the gospel
 - Making disciples
- The key ingredient of cross bearing is self denial.
 - It means doing what the Father wants instead of what we want.
 - It means living for what is eternally significant rather than momentarily expedient.
- Cross bearing is daily.
 - Not a once in a life time event.
 - Not "a few times makes my testimony" story.
 - How have I taken up my cross today?

Matthew 16:25 NKJV For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

- Cross bearing is the key to making your life count.
 - Every believer shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - What we have done with our lives since our salvation will be judged – not to determine salvation but reward or loss.

- Only those who have borne their cross and followed Him will hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over much."

And now Jesus asks what I call

- The question that divides

Matthew 16:26 NKJV For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

The soul is the essence of a man or a woman: the mind, the will, the emotions.

- This is a question to those who have not yet made the great confession and been saved.
- It is also a question to the saved, not about being lost in hell but about their life being lost, not counting for anything while here on earth.

Christian friend, will you let your life count for Christ? Will you deny yourself, share the gospel and make disciples whenever and wherever He wants, and will you do it daily?

Lost friend, will you make that great confession in Christ today and trust Him as your Lord and Savior? You can by praying this simple sinner's prayer with me right now.