

**Message #58****Matthew 16:13-20**

In these verses we come to the first mention in the New Testament of an organism called the “Church.” Matthew is the only Gospel which brings up the subject of the Church in regard to Peter’s testimony and there is good reason. Matthew is a dispensational Gospel which is focused on Israel and it is fitting that Jesus reveal a future program known as the Church in this Gospel.

**THE KEY TO BEING HONORED IN THE FUTURE BY GOD IS ONE’S FAITH IN AND RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS CHRIST.**

**FACT #1** – Jesus goes to a Gentile region. **16:13a**

Caesarea Philippi was 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, near the south end of Mount Hermon. This was the northern extreme of Jewish land and was considered to be “Gentile ground.” It was fitting that Jesus go here because it was a physical indication that He had been rejected by Israel.

**FACT #2** – Jesus asks His disciples who people think He is. **16:13b-14**

Now of course Jesus already knows what people think of Him, that is why He is in Caesarea Philippi; but He uses this question to bring His disciples to a point of decision. Now the disciples give four responses, which were the consensus of the people: 1) Some said He was John the Baptist; 2) Others (of the same kind) said He was Elijah; 3) Others (of a different kind) said He was Jeremiah; 4) Or one of the prophets. Now frankly all of these answers sound good. All of these answers are positive. All of these answers are religious and even somewhat Biblical; **but all of these answers are wrong.**

**FACT #3** – Jesus asks His disciples to state what they believe. **16:15-16**

This is a critical moment in the life of the disciples. This is a moment when Jesus Christ specifically asks them about their personal faith in Him. Peter said in Greek, in a very emphatic way: 1) You are the Christ; 2) You are the Son of the Living God. By identifying Jesus as the Christ, he was saying you are the O.T. Messiah we have been looking for and longing for. You are the anointed King of Israel. By identifying Jesus as the Son of the Living God, he was saying you are deity and in You is life.

**FACT #4** – Jesus responds to Peter’s statement of faith. **16:17-19**

**Response #1** - Peter is blessed. **16:17**

Now this idea of being “blessed” means to be in a happy and fortunate state because one is in a favorable relationship with God. When Jesus identifies Peter as “Simon Barjona,” He is alluding to the fact that he is an earthly human being who has come to understand something very heavenly and very eternal. The reason Peter is blessed is because of what God has done for Peter—He revealed the truth about Jesus Christ to Peter, which saves his soul.

**Response #2 - Jesus will build His Church. 16:18**

Now I want you to carefully notice what Christ does not say—He does not say, “You are Peter and upon YOU, I will build my church.” What He says is “You are Peter (petros) and upon “this rock” (petra) I will build My Church. The real controversy in this verse is what is meant by “this rock.” There have been three main views: 1) Upon Peter I will build my church (Catholics make Peter the first Pope); 2) Upon Jesus I will build My Church; 3) Upon Peter’s belief and testimony in who Christ is, Jesus will build His Church.

The first view that Christ will build a church on Peter is easily eliminated because Christ would have said “upon you,” not upon “this rock.” Furthermore, the instrument God used to actually build the Church was the Apostle Paul, not Peter. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. There is a word play in Greek. The name Peter is “petros,” meaning a stone, but the noun “this rock” is “petra” a massive rock. The difference is “petros” is one stone, whereas “petra” is the mass from which the stone came (Smith, p. 359). **What Christ is actually saying to Peter, is I am going to build My church on something you have become part of, namely, one who has understood and believed truth about Me.**

Now I want you to notice that the tense of the verb “will build” is future. This is the first reference to the church and obviously at the time of this prediction, the Church was not in existence yet, but it would be in the future. Christ still needed to die as King of the Jews and the Church Age would not start until Acts chapter 2. Christ further added that no hellish forces would be able to stop the building of the Church. The Church Age will continue until the Rapture and then the gates of hell will dominate the world.

**Response #3 - Jesus will give Peter keys. 16:19**

It does not say Peter gets the keys to heaven and hell. It does not say Peter gets the keys to life and death and it does not say Peter gets the keys to forgiveness of sins. What it says is he gets kingdom keys of binding and loosing.

To bind something is to forbid or hinder something. To loosen something is to permit or free something. Peter would have an important role to play in the program of God; specifically, he would have the responsibility to make judgments in accordance with the Word of God and either forbid or permit things and this will be fully manifested during the Millennium.

**FACT #5 – Jesus tells His disciples not to tell others. 16:20**

He was the Messiah who could and would give Israel the kingdom. The disciples knew it and would reign in the kingdom with Him. But He did not want them broadcasting that now. He would go to the cross, He would build a church and He would establish a kingdom in due time, but not now.

We can certainly see that the key to eternity is one’s faith in and one’s relationship to Jesus Christ. It is no more and no less than that.