

(Matt. 16:13) – When we consider all the useless questions asked by false religionists, questions that lead to nothing, we learn in God’s Word that there are some questions which we need ask and find the answers in God’s Word. These are questions that pertain to salvation and eternal life. One of the main questions was asked twice in the book of Job – *“I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?”* (Job 9:2; cf. 25:4). This goes to the heart of the Gospel. Sinful man can only be right with God by God’s free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness alone (Rom. 1:16-17; 3:24-26; 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21). This being the case, another question is posed here by the Lord Himself – *“WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM?”* (cf. Matt. 22:42). If we are to find salvation in Christ, we must know WHO HE IS and WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED as the Savior of His people.

“SON OF MAN” is a messianic title that applies only to Christ as God manifest in the flesh. The question is – Does He have the ability to save us from our sins? He most certainly does have that ability because of who He is (Matt. 1:21,23; John 1:1-14; Rom. 1:1-4), and what He accomplished for His people when He died on the cross and was raised from the dead (John 10:9-27; Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:14-17; 10:14). The answers are found in God’s Word in what is called “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

(Matt. 16:14-15) – The disciples said what others were saying about Him. Some called Him a devil. Others believed He was *“JOHN THE BAPTIST: SOME, ELIAS; AND OTHERS, JEREMIAS, OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS”* risen from the dead. But He posed the question to His disciples personally – *“BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM?”*

(Matt. 16:16) – Peter, speaking for the other disciples, said correctly, *“THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.”* In this statement, Peter declared both the deity and the sinless humanity of Jesus as the one true Messiah, the Savior of sinners, a truth that the leaders of Judaism rejected as blasphemous (John 5:17; Matt. 26:63-65).

(Matt. 16:17) – Christ declared that the knowledge of this truth, accompanied by faith in Him, was a sovereign, miraculous revelation from God the Father. Man by nature will not receive and believe this truth unless God reveals it to Him (Matt. 11:27; John 6:44-45; 1 Cor. 2:14-16). It is not in sinful people naturally to believe the truth as it is revealed in God’s Word for the salvation of His people (1 Cor. 2:6-16). We know we have received this revelation from God when we know, first, that it is consistent with God’s Word, and, secondly, it is accompanied by God-given faith in Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-4).

(Matt. 16:18) – The false Catholic church uses this verse to claim that Peter is the *“ROCK”* of whom Christ spoke and that the church is built upon Peter himself whom they

claim as their first pope. But this is heresy. The true church of the Lord Jesus Christ is made up of sinners SAVED BY GRACE, chosen before the world began, justified based on Christ's righteousness imputed, redeemed by His blood, born again by the Spirit, and preserved unto glory, all because of what Christ has accomplished as the Savior and Lord of His people. The church, therefore, is not built upon any sinner. Peter, nor any other sinner saved by grace, could be *"THIS ROCK"* upon which the church is built. If this were the case, the church would fall and be destroyed by *"THE GATES OF HELL."* Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work, which is stated in Peter's confession, is the one and only *"ROCK"* upon which His church is built. This is why *"THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT"* (cf. *Matt. 7:24-27; John 6:37-45*).

(Matt. 16:19) – Again, the false Catholic church has perverted these words to claim that their popes and priests have the authority to forgive sins and to open or shut the doors of heaven for sinners. This too is heresy and a denial of the true Gospel. Christ is the only one who could open the door to heaven and salvation itself with all of its blessings freely given to His people based on His merits alone (Rom. 8:31-34; Eph. 1:3). Christ gave *"THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"* to Peter and the other disciples when He committed the Gospel to them and commissioned them to preach it. This Gospel message sets forth the one and only way of salvation for sinners in and by Christ. This in no way implies that Peter is the guardian of the gates of heaven. *"AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN: AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN"* – This refers to the authority of the apostles to bind sinners to this one way of salvation and to the obedience of faith and love revealed in the commandments of the Lord to His people. This is not a legal binding; it brings His people to seek to obey His Word as motivated by the liberty of grace, love, and gratitude. The loosing refers to the liberty of grace whereby God's people are set free from any notion of salvation conditioned on their works, the bondage of legalism, and the traditions of men (Gal. 5:1). This authority was only for the apostles and ended with the death of John as we now have the full revelation of God's Word in the Bible.

(Matt. 16:20) – The disciples were not to tell anyone at this time that Jesus was the Christ lest the multitude try to make Him king (John 6:15) and the Pharisees be stirred up to kill Him. The Lord could not die before His appointed time which was set before the world began (John 7:30; 8:20; Luke 22:22). He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom (John 18:36) but a spiritual kingdom. Today the commandment is *"go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel"* (*Mark 16:15*).