

# The Confession, the Church, the Keys, and the Kingdom

📖 Matthew 16:13-20

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In Matthew 16:1 the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus for the purpose of trapping Him. Their test was to produce a sign from heaven. This was a specific type of sign classified by rabbinic Judaism as expansive, as with Joshua's commanding the sun and moon to stand still in the heavens or Elijah's calling down fire from heaven or a rainbow spanning the heavens, things that could not, by their superstition, be accomplished by the devil on earth. In 16:2, Jesus, knowing that they were not open to accepting any miracle as a sign of His messianic credentials replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' 3And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky but cannot discern the signs of the fixed times?" The "signs of the times" was a definite expression that included at least three things they should have discerned; first, the forerunner of the King, John the Baptizer, had come to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40; second, the Daniel 9 prophecy of 483 years had almost elapsed signifying the Messiah's nearness; and third, Jesus had fulfilled Messianic prophecy evidencing that He was the Messiah. However, their request for a further sign indicated they had rejected all these signs. Therefore, in 16:4 Jesus referred to that generation as "evil" and "adulterous." The corollary to physical adultery is spiritual adultery or idolatry. They worshipped a false god. Their intent then in seeking a sign was "evil." Jesus tells them that no sign would be given them except the sign of Jonah. This was the sign of resurrection from the dead. The resurrection is the ultimate sign and the emphasis in the Book of Acts is on Jesus' resurrection. At the end of 16:4 He turned His back on the leadership of Israel because they had willfully rejected clear messianic evidence. They were now beyond the pale of hope and Jesus would waste no more time on them. He and his disciples set sail. In 16:5 they were sailing to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee. The note is made that they had forgotten to bring any bread. In 16:6 Jesus used this as an opportunity to warn them against false doctrine, saying to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." In 16:7 they began to have a discussion among themselves as to what He meant and concluded that "He said that because we did not bring any bread." This was a spiritually shallow conclusion. In 16:8 Jesus was aware of their misunderstanding and rebuked them for not understanding saying, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?" Not only were they completely off track of His real meaning but their misinterpretation evidenced failure to remember the lesson about the multiplication of bread accomplished on two prior occasions. In 16:9 Jesus

said, "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? How is it that you do not understand?" They had made a significant blunder. This signified to Jesus that they were lagging behind in their ability to believe and the reason in context is that they were being influenced by the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. These false doctrines led them to reject and be unable to believe and they were doing the same thing to His disciples. False doctrine will always have this effect on us. In the middle of 16:11 Jesus simply says "I did not speak to you concerning bread." Bread was not the issue. They had forgotten bread but He was not worried about bread. They were. He was concerned about the leavening influence of the Pharisees and Sadducees on His disciples. And instead of explaining what He meant He simply repeats so that they will be challenged to think about what He said more deeply. Finally, in 16:12 Matthew reports that "they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Their teaching was like leaven in that it had a negative, corrupting influence. It was that influence that had led them to their attitude of rejection and unbelief. The disciples could also develop that same attitude if they were not aware of its corrupting influence.

What are the main points of this pericope? First, that Jesus abandoned the Pharisees and Sadducees because of their unbelief. They had seen clear evidence of His messiahship but they would not view the evidence through the lens of OT Scripture and so could not believe. Jesus knew that even if He did a miracle according to their superstitious classification as from heaven, they would not believe. Second, that Jesus' disciples needed to beware of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees because they would corrupt Jesus' disciples by fostering unbelief and rejection in them. The warning against the dangers of false doctrine is an ever-present reminder to beware.

In the light of this abandonment and warning Jesus now reveals two new things in 16:13-23. First, His Church. The predictions of Christ's Church in this passage will provide the frame inside of which all later revelations about the Church should be understood. Second, His death and resurrection. The key players in both sections are Jesus and Peter and in the first one Peter scores 100, in the second one he fails dismally. But what begins to come into focus is that now that Israel has rejected the kingdom offer the kingdom is postponed and during the postponement Christ is going to build something called the Church. Then after the Church has run its course the Kingdom will come. This is a very important passage. It is riddled with exegetical difficulties so hang on tight and don't hesitate to ask questions.

In 16:13 we read, **Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi.** If you look at a map of Israel there are two **Caesarea's**. One is Caesarea by the Sea. It is located on the coast and overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. This is where Pilate spent most of his time. This is where the Gentile centurion Cornelius lived. This is where Philip and his four daughters made their home. Then the other one is **Caesarea Philippi.** It's located at the foot

of Mt Hermon about 25-30 miles north of the Galilee. This is the one Jesus took His disciples to. It was built by Herod Philip II in honor of Caesar Augustus and so he named it after Caesar and himself.

There are certain characteristics of this place that make it very interesting for our passage and I'll show you some pictures. I've been there several times. First, from the natural point of view there is a massive bedrock in the background and down below the Banias Spring flows out of a cave known as the gates of Hades. These natural features of the landscape shed important light on what Jesus teaches in the pericope. Second, from the religious point of view there were a series of pagan religions that established shrines at this location. An archaeology report in *Bible and Spade* says, "A cave from which the spring issues housed a shrine which may have been dedicated to Baal-Gad or Baal-Hermon in OT times (Jos 11:17; Jgs 3:3; 1 Chr 5:23). In the Hellenistic period, Greek settlers carved shrines into the rock face of the mountain and dedicated them to the nature god Pan... In 20 BC, the area was given to Herod the Great by the Roman emperor Augustus. Herod built a magnificent temple near the cave in honor of Augustus."<sup>1</sup> The point is that this place had a long history of pagan practices and this too is a point of contact for teaching His disciples something.<sup>2</sup> If you go there today most people see remnants of the Temple of Pan. You have to walk a few hundred yards to see the Temple in honor of Caesar Augustus. Jesus took His disciples here because the natural landscape and the religious landscape were related to His teaching points. So again there continues to be a strong emphasis on Jesus training His disciples for the period of postponement and the new revelation is given that the Church will fill this period of postponement. The Church was a new thing. This had never been revealed before. It's what we know as a mystery, something unrevealed and therefore unknown. This is the first word God ever uttered about the Church. And, of course, we'll have to deal with the identification of the 'rock.' What's the rock upon which Christ would build His Church?

Now when they came into that district it says Jesus was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The verb asking is in the imperfect tense and means that He was asking them over and over Who do people say that the Son of Man is? The title the Son of Man is the most common title Jesus used to refer to Himself. He used it in Matt 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, 11:19, 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41 and now here in 16:13. It is a title that originates in Dan 7:13 and pictures the Messiah coming in His kingdom. Jesus had been offering Himself to the people of Israel as the King of that kingdom and as Pentecost says, "Now He questioned the Twelve as to the responses that His presentation had elicited."<sup>3</sup>

In 16:14 you see that since He kept asking this question over and over He got several answers. They said, "**Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.**" There were four different answers given. The first was **John the Baptist**. Why John? This was the conclusion of Herod Antipas, also known as "Herod the Fox." Antipas was the one in Matt 14 who had been accused by John the Baptizer as committing adultery for his antics with Herodias. Because of this Antipas had John arrested and imprisoned. Over time, however, he visited John and developed an attachment to him. But his wife Herodias continued to hate John and wanted him killed. So on Antipas 50<sup>th</sup> birthday when he got drunk she sent out her daughter

Salome to perform a provocative dance. Antipas was so pleased that he offered the girl whatever she asked. Her mother promptly commanded her to request the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Antipas was grieved but in order to save face he fulfilled the request. The problem was that his conscience wouldn't quit bothering him and so when it was reported that Jesus was doing miracles he concluded that John the Baptist had risen from the dead and had returned to revisit him for his sins. That was the first interpretation that spread among the Jews and it was probably held by the Herodians. The second interpretation was **Elijah**. **Elijah** had been a great miracle worker and had called the nation to repent or else face judgment. He was also predicted by Malachi 4:5 to return before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Because of the similarities of Jesus's ministry some thought that he was the **Elijah** who had returned to fulfill OT prophecy. The third interpretation was **Jeremiah**. **Jeremiah** had also called the nation Israel to repent and warned of coming judgment. He was unsuccessful and went into exile becoming known as the weeping prophet. Because Jesus' ministry was similar to Jeremiah's in that he suffered and wept over the nation some identified Him as **Jeremiah**. The fourth interpretation was **one of the prophets**. This was probably the general populace. All the prophets called the nation to repent and warned of coming judgment and so people who didn't have a good recollection of the details of the OT just said He's **one of the prophets**. Pentecost observed, "All of the aforementioned were recognized as prophets from God; and so these interpretations inferred that the people likewise reckoned that Jesus was a prophet from God...although for most persons it would be an honor to be classed with God's prophets..."<sup>4</sup> none of these were the right answer. They had failed to interpret Jesus through the lens of the OT Scriptures. As Toussaint said, "The conclusions which Israel had reached proved their rejection...they failed to identify Him as the Messiah."<sup>5</sup> Of course, people still fail to identify Him rightly today because they do not look at Him through the lens of Scripture.

So who is He? Note that Jesus now turned to His disciples and asked them this very personal question, "**But who do you say that I am?**" Constable says, "The 'you' in verse 15 is in the emphatic first position in the Greek text, and it is plural."<sup>6</sup> He wants to know what they have concluded? He wants to know if they have gained a better perception of Him than the multitude of Israel? And who answers? Peter. As Matthew indicated earlier Peter will take the lead for the group. This will continue through the gospels and into the Book of Acts. He is already a first among equals at this point. How does Peter answer? **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" Now this is the strongest affirmation of Jesus' person so far. In it there are two aspects of His person. First, He is **the Christ**. The title **the Christ** is *ο Χριστος*. It's the equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah."<sup>7</sup> Peter is saying Jesus is the Messiah. Second, He is **the Son of the living God**. He had been referred to as "a son of God" and "the Son of God" but this is the first time He is referred to as **the Son of the living God**. To be **the Son of God** is to be the equivalent of God since by the principle of generation a son shares the same essence as his father. So Jesus is God. But Matthew adds something that neither Mark nor Luke in the parallel mention, He is the Son of the **living God**.<sup>8</sup> This was a Jewish way of contrasting the one true God of Israel with the dead gods of pagan nations and so we can see that Matthew wrote with a Jewish audience in mind.<sup>9</sup> So Peter's identification of Jesus as **the Christ, the**

**Son of the living God** leaves no doubt in our mind as to who he perceives Him to be and this was exactly who He was. Toussaint says, "Before (Matthew 14:33) they had acknowledged that He was *a* Son of God, now Peter identifies Him as *the* Son of the only genuine God. The fact that Christ was the Son of God was proof that He was the Messiah of Israel and the King of the future kingdom."<sup>10</sup>

In 16:17 Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." The pronouncement of blessed means that Peter had been favorably singled out as having this correct understanding of who He truly was. How had Peter come to this proper understanding? When someone claimed to be the Messiah the Jews were supposed to compare His words and works with the Messianic profile in the OT. Jesus had come claiming to be the Messiah. What Peter had done was compare what Jesus said and did with the Messianic profile in the OT. Through this he came to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. Consequently, Jesus said, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. The Father in heaven had revealed this to Peter by way of the OT Messianic profile. The fact was, flesh and blood, a Jewish idiom for man as a mortal being, had not revealed this to Peter. The way that God reveals Himself to us is always through the word of God and Peter had been studying the Messianic profile of the OT. He concluded that Jesus met that profile.

Observe the name Jesus uses of Peter is **Simon Barjona**. The word **Barjona** means "son of Jonah." Peter was the son of a man named Jonah or perhaps John. The bottom line is he was a mere human and yet he had received revelation from the Father through the Scriptures. His personal name was **Simon** and when his brother Andrew first brought him to the Lord it says Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)." We may gather from the intensive form of the verb "looked" that when Jesus first looked at Simon He looked beyond the surface, saw his character and re-named him accordingly. The name Cephas is the Aramaic word *Κηφας*. The corresponding Greek translation is *Πετρος* from which we get Peter. This name means "rock" or "stone." Barbieri says, "Peter was living up to his name (it means "rock") for he was demonstrating himself to be a rock."<sup>11</sup>

Then in 16:18 Jesus uses a play on words with the name He gave him, Peter. The play on words is missed in the English so I will try to make it clear. Jesus says, **I also say to you that you are 'a rock' (Πετρος Peter – masculine, a rock), and upon this rock (πετρα petra – feminine, a massive bedrock) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.** The words **I also say to you** could mean that Jesus is giving additional revelation to that which Peter had received from the Father. This is entirely new revelation. This is not something that could be drawn from the OT through study. This is something being revealed for the very first time. To reveal it He draws attention to Peter's name by saying **you are a stone or rock, and upon this rock I will build My Church.**<sup>12</sup> The first word for rock is the masculine word *Πετρος* and refers to a loose rock or stone, some rock not connected to earth. The second word for **rock** is the feminine word *πετρα* and refers to a massive bedrock or

rock attached to the earth that is immovable. The main difference to be seen is that one type of rock is moveable and the other is immovable.

There are three major interpretations of this passage; some think the rock that Christ will build His church on is Peter, others believe on Peter's confession and still others on Himself. The first view is that Peter is the rock upon which Christ will build His church. This is the view of most Roman Catholic and some Protestant interpreters. There are several arguments. First, Peter's name means "rock" and so this is the most natural interpretation. Second, in the previous verses Jesus is commending Peter for his confession and so naturally points to him. Third, in the book of Acts Peter takes the lead in the early church. However, all these arguments have good objections. The first objection is that while Peter's name does mean "rock," Jesus used two different words for "rock." If Jesus wanted to identify Peter as the rock the clearest way He could do that would be to use the same word for "rock." Further, he could have just said, "And upon you I will build My church." The second objection is that it's true that Jesus is commending Peter for his confession but Jesus never treated Peter as if he held a privileged position above the other apostles. The third objection is that the NT writers never connect Peter's early leadership in the Book of Acts with his confession. His leadership is only a continuation of the leadership he has already exercised even prior to this confession. Peter was already the spokesman for the group. A fourth objection is that Peter is a very flimsy basis upon which to build Christ's Church. His name means "rock" but it is a moveable rock. Peter is obviously fallen and Paul corrects him in Galatians so he is not a good foundation stone.

The second view is that Peter's confession is the rock upon which Christ will build His church. This is the view of many Protestant interpreters including Charles Ryrie and Stanley Toussaint.<sup>13</sup> The main argument for this view is that Jesus uses the pronoun **this** to refer to something in the near context to refer to Peter's confession. So upon the truth of the person and work of Christ Christ will build His church. This view is better than the first but still has objections. The first objection is that the truth of Peter's confession does not include any mention of the work of Christ, only His person. In fact, in the following verses Peter rejects the work Jesus plans to do. The second objection is that the pronoun "this" must refer to Peter's confession. It may refer to something else in the near context like Jesus himself or the massive bedrock that was part of the natural landscape. A third objection is that the NT authors refer to the foundation of the church as something different than the truth of Peter's confession about Jesus. This really is not the best view. As J. Vernon McGee said, "I don't agree with that at all."<sup>14</sup>

The third view is that Christ Himself is the rock upon which He will build His Church. Most Protestant interpreters, including John Walvoord, J. Vernon McGee and Tom Constable hold this view. The OT taught that God was the Rock. Deut 32:4, "The Rock! His work is perfect." Ps 18:2, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge." Ps 18:31, "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God." Peter himself in 1 Pet 2 quoted Isa 8:14 as saying that Messiah would be "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" using the exact word *πετρα* that Jesus used in Matt 16:18. Surely Peter did not now think that he or his confession was the rock.<sup>15</sup> Further, the NT states in 1 Cor 3:11, "For no man can lay a foundation other than

the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Never once in the Bible is Peter or his confession said to be a rock or foundation. Instead, Peter and all those who believe become stones that are built upon the foundation stone of Christ. Wiersbe said, “Jesus Christ is the foundation rock on which the church is built. The Old Testament prophets said so (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16). Jesus Himself said this (Matt. 21:42), and so did Peter and the other Apostles (Acts 4:10–12). Paul also stated that the foundation for the church is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). This foundation was laid by the Apostles and prophets as they preached Christ to the lost (1 Cor. 2:1–2; 3:11; Eph. 2:20).

In other words, when the evidence is examined, the total teaching of Scripture is that the church, God’s temple (Eph. 2:19–22), is built on Jesus Christ—not on Peter. How could God build His church on a fallible man like Peter? Later, the same Peter who confessed Christ became an adversary and entertained Satan’s thoughts (Matt. 16:22ff). “But that was before Peter was filled with the Spirit,” some argue. Then consider Peter’s doctrinal blunders recorded in Galatians 2, blunders that had to be dealt with by Paul. This event occurred *after* Peter was filled with the Spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore Jesus is the rock. He was saying the church would be built on Himself. He was saying that Peter was a loose stone, one not attached to earth, one that was moveable. From that He moved to saying that He was a massive bedrock, one attached to the earth, one that was immovable, and the natural landscape with the massive bedrock in the background was a fitting setting for this teaching.

Next observe that this Church belonged to Him. He says it is **My church**. He is its foundation; He is its architect. He is its builder. It belongs to Him.

Next observe that the building of it was yet **future**. He says **I will build My church**. He does not say that He is building it. He was not building it at that time. It was a completely future project. It could not be built until His death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit to baptize believers into the body of the Messiah. J. Vernon McGee says, “And please don’t tell me there was a church in the Old Testament because the church did not come into existence until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There could not have been a church until all of these things had taken place. “I will build my church”—this was future.”<sup>17</sup>

Note that this word, **church**, which is *ἐκκλησία*, was not unknown to the disciples. This was a common word for an “assembly or gathering.” It was used in the LXX version of the OT. For example, it was used in Lev 8:3 of the congregation assembling at the doorway of the tent of meeting. It was used in Deut 4:10 of the assembly at the base of Mt Sinai. So the word was known and used to translate Hebrew words in the OT. Further, in Acts 7:38 Stephen uses it to refer to the congregation of Israel in the wilderness. So this usage persisted into the NT times. And then in Acts 19:32 Luke used it of a pagan assembly that rioted against Paul at Ephesus. So there it is used of unbelievers. So the word *ἐκκλησία* is not a technical term. It has a general usage for any assembly and it also has a more specific usage of a specific assembly. Jesus is obviously using it of something specific that He is going to build in the future. It would therefore be a mistake of vast proportions to assume that Israel was the Church in

the OT. The term Church as it is being used here by Christ is defined in 1 Cor 12:13 as all Jews and Greeks, slave and free, male and female who believe in Christ and are baptized by the Holy Spirit. This baptizing work of the Spirit could not begin until Christ died, rose and ascended to heaven so that the Father could send the Spirit in His name. Since His ascension did not occur until Acts 1:9-11 and He told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem for not many days from now he would send the Spirit to baptize them then obviously this occurred on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. That is when the Church began. It could not have begun before because Christ had not ascended and it could not have begun after because Jesus said not many days from now. At this time the disciples did not understand the full import of what Jesus meant by build My *ἐκκλησία* but further revelation was given to the apostles and prophets during the period of the Book of Acts so that they did eventually understand. As Paul says later in Eph 3:3-6, "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," This is the church. This is not the kingdom. The kingdom was not a mystery. The church was a mystery.

Next Jesus says **and the gates of Hades will not overpower it**. If you recall the natural landscape once again, there was a river that flowed out of a cave at the bottom of this massive bedrock. The cave itself was known among the Jews as **the gates of Hades**. Toussaint says, "It is generally conceded that the phrase "gates of Hades"...to the Jew designated death."<sup>18</sup> What Jesus is saying is that death will not overpower the Church. The reason is because the Church will be resurrected. Further, the fact that this was taught at a place with a long history of pagan religion seems to infer that pagan Gentiles will also enter this church and be built on the same foundation as Jewish believers. This is part of the mystery of the Church, Jews and Gentiles in one body.

So then the basic truths that we can decipher about the Church from its first mention in the NT are as follows. First, its foundation is Christ Himself. He is an immovable foundation like the rock in the background of the setting. Second, the Church was still future at this time. It was not in the OT. Its building had not yet begun. It would be built in the future. Third, the Church belongs to Christ. It is His and nobody else's. We may possibly say this early that it is His in the sense that it is His body. Fourth, the Church would be built by Christ. Humans preach the gospel by which men believe in Christ but Christ is the one who adds them stone by stone to the Church. Fifth, death will not prevail over it because the Church will be resurrected. If Christ is resurrected and we are the body of Christ then we will be resurrected. All these truths were already revealed the very first time the Church was revealed. Every other truth about the Church that comes later needs to be seen within that frame.

Now in 16:19 Jesus promises a reward to Peter and this is likely a reward for His confession in verse 16. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. This is another difficult verse. However, most of

the difficulty is removed if we understand what the kingdom of heaven refers to? What is the kingdom of heaven? Toussaint says, "For several reasons it is best to take the phrase "kingdom of heaven(s)"...as a designation of the millennial age."<sup>19</sup> First, this is consistent with its regular meaning throughout the Gospel of Matthew. Second, it is consistent with Peter receiving reward for his confession which will be given at the beginning of the kingdom and not at the beginning of the church. Third, it is natural that the Lord would quickly return to the subject of the kingdom so that His disciples would not conclude that the church would replace the kingdom.

In reality, the sequence of verse 18 and 19 is significant. Jesus will build His church and then after that the kingdom will come where Peter will be rewarded. Constable says, "When Peter first heard these words he probably thought that when Jesus established His kingdom he would receive an important position of authority in it. That is indeed what Jesus promised."<sup>20</sup> **Keys** in the Jewish Scriptures signify authority to open or shut. Isa 22:22, "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open." Some believe Peter exercised this authority in the Book of Acts by opening the door to Jews in Acts 2, Samaritans in Acts 8 and Gentiles in Acts 10. However, there are two problems with this interpretation. First, what Peter did in the Book of Acts related to the Church, not the Kingdom. This is a confusion of the Church with the Kingdom. Peter's role in the Book of Acts is explained more easily by the fact that he was already the first among equals even before this confession. He was the most logical choice to preach the sermons in Acts 2, 8 and 10. Second, if Peter exercised this authority to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, why did he not exercise the authority to open the door to the Disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19. It is better to conclude that Peter did not exercise the authority taught here during the Book of Acts but rather this refers to the kingdom. Second, others want to think that Peter will have the authority to let people into heaven or not. Every joke about Peter standing at the pearly gates is wrongly based on this one verse. Peter is not involved in letting people into heaven. Only the Lord Jesus Christ has those keys (Rev 1:18; 3:7). What is being taught is that Peter will be given keys in the kingdom. These keys are authority to open and shut. Constable says, "Probably the keys stand for the judicial authority that chief stewards of monarchs exercised in the ancient world (Isa. 22:15, 22; cf. Rev. 1:18; 3:7). They could permit people to enter the monarch's presence or give them access to certain areas and privileges."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in the kingdom Christ will be seated in His royal Temple in Jerusalem. Peter will be like a chief steward who permits or forbids people entering into His royal Temple to enter into His presence or other areas. Part of this is due to the presence of the glorified Christ, the presence of the Shechinah Glory and the purity of the Temple. Anyone who comes to the millennial Temple must come in a state of ritual purity. Other reasons may be involved but Peter is the one who permits or forbids entry into the royal Temple. That is what the words **bind** and **loose** mean in the rest of the verse. They are judicial terms for forbidding or permitting entrance into the palace of a monarch. They have nothing to do with forgiving or holding on to sins as the Roman Catholic Church claims. They have nothing to do with letting people into heaven or keeping them out. Peter's decisions will be in accordance with the decisions of heaven since he will be in a resurrection body and

will interpret all entrance standards perfectly. Therefore, in the kingdom Peter will serve in the role of forbidding or permitting people to enter into the Messianic Temple to see the King.

In 16:20 **Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.** There are many suggestions as to why He made this strict order. Wiersbe said the nation in general and the leadership were not ready for it.<sup>22</sup> Ryrie said He did not want to foster a revolution against Rome.<sup>23</sup> Constable said that Jesus wanted people to become convinced that He was the Messiah because of His words and works.<sup>24</sup> Barbieri said the nation had already rejected and there was no use trying to convince them.<sup>25</sup> This last suggestion is probably the best but I think it is more convincing to understand this in the wake of Jesus' statement in Matt 13 that He would no longer speak to the crowds plainly but in parables only. Since the message that Jesus is the Christ is a plain message His disciples were given strict orders to follow His lead and not proclaim His identity openly. That generation had committed the unpardonable sin.

In summary, in 16:13 Jesus took His disciples 26 miles north to the very pagan place of Caesarea Philippi, complete with a massive bedrock background and the cave that was associated with the gates of Hades. As they entered the district He was asking them over and over, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" In 16:14 there were four prevailing opinions. Some said John the Baptist. This interpretation came from Antipas and was popular among the Herodians. Others said Elijah. Others Jeremiah. Others one of the prophets. They wanted to give Him honor but none of these was the right answer. They all recognize their failure to look at Him according to the OT Messianic profile. In 16:15 He said to His disciples, "You, who do say I am? In 16:16 Peter as the spokesman for the group answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the one true God." In 16:17 Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of the man named Jonah, because no mortal revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." In 16:18 Jesus gave Peter new revelation the Father had not given him. "I also say to you that you are a loose, unattached stone, and upon this massive bedrock of Myself I will build My church and death will not overpower it because of resurrection." In 16:19, directly back to the kingdom that will follow the Church's resurrection. "I will give you Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven so that whoever you forbid entry into the royal Messianic Temple on earth will have already been forbidden in heaven and whatever you permit entry into the royal Messianic Palace on earth will have already been permitted in heaven. In 16:20, that He was the Messiah should be told to no one because He was not giving plain revelation to them, but only speaking in parables.

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<sup>1</sup> Associates for Biblical Research, *Bible and Spade (1998) Volume 11* (Associates for Biblical Research, 1998; 2003), 11:24-26.

<sup>2</sup> Also cf. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 57.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 248.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 249.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 200.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 16:15.

<sup>7</sup> Both Christ and Messiah come from a root which means "the Anointed One." An anointed one was one who was rubbed with oil as a ritual ceremony. This set the person apart for some particular service to God. Here Jesus is the Anointed One set apart unto God, the Christ, the Messiah.

<sup>8</sup> John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 122.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 16:15.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 201.

<sup>11</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 16:18.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 202.

<sup>14</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 58.

<sup>16</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 58.

<sup>17</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 203.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 204.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 16:19.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 16:19.

<sup>22</sup> Cf Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Ryrie Study Bible.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible.

<sup>25</sup> Bible Knowledge Commentary.