

But What About You? 4-27-05

Matthew 16:13-20 (NIV)

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Jesus and His disciples continued their self-imposed exile from Jewish territories, moving north to Caesarea Philippi. Jews considered this one of the wickedest of Gentile cities. There was even a saying in that day that when the Messiah came, the gates of Caesarea Philippi would fall. They did not believe such wickedness could stand in the presence of the Messiah. A few centuries earlier, Alexander the Great had built a shrine to the Greek god Pan there at the base of a rock cliff. Next to it was a cave from which flowed a spring. The cave was referred to as the gates of Hades. Pan was the shepherd god of fertility, half-goat and half-man, who spent much of his time dwelling in the underworld, Hades. In the temple to Pan, lewd dances were performed, and in the courtyard outside, rituals that included the mating of goats took place. In Jesus' day, the city was vastly improved by Herod Philip and dedicated to Caesar. To distinguish it from Caesarea, Philip added his own name.

Mark tells us that it was on the way to this wicked city that our text takes place. (Mark 8:27) Because of the cave, some referred to the city as the gates of hell. Jesus had spent some time alone in prayer before He brought the question to His disciples. (Luke 9:18) It was time for them to understand who He is. It is of utmost importance for every person to understand this last great teaching of Jesus before He would head to Jerusalem to lay down His life. It is imperative that each of us understands the teaching in the remainder of this chapter that we will be going over in the weeks to come.

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

Surely, Jesus knew the answer to His own question. He could overhear the rumors and suggestions from the crowds. He was asking the disciples to consider what others were saying about Him.

Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man. In the book of Daniel, it is used as a term for the Messiah. (Daniel 7:13-14) God used it referring to Ezekiel as a term of humility. (Ezekiel 2:1) For Jesus it was both. He humbled Himself to become a man, born of a woman. At the same time, He was the Messiah of God. (Philippians 2:6-7)

Commented [notes1]: ²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" Mark 8:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" Luke 9:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ¹ And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. Ezekiel 2:1 (KJV)

Commented [notes5]: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Philippians 2:6-7 (NIV)

Who is the Son of Man? What was the world saying?

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Some thought the spirit of John had taken up residence in Jesus. This is what Herod the tetrarch thought. (Matthew 14:1-2) However, some of these disciples answering Jesus had been John's disciples. They knew He was altogether different.

Some thought He was Elijah. They thought that He was the forerunner of the Messiah. Elijah was predicted to return before the Lord came. (Malachi 4:5) In other words, He was not meeting all their expectations, but He was certainly someone great, so He must be announcing the coming of the Messiah. The problem with that was He never did. The message of the immanent coming of the Messiah was John's message. (John 1:29-30) Others said He must be Jeremiah. Was that because of His message of repentance or His compassion for the people? "Or one of the prophets," they said. However, Jesus was so much more than a prophet.

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

There it is the question of the ages! "But what about you?" Who is He? I have been troubled this week by the number of professing Christians who are not willing to live by the Word of God. When I ask them if the Bible is God's revelation to man, there is a look of uncertainty in their eyes. But what about you? Jesus quoted or referred to nearly every key doctrine and event in the Bible as fact, a revelation from His Father, (John 17:7) historical accurate accounts. Was He right? Who do you say the Son of Man is?

In our day, there is an enormous effort to paint Jesus as one of many enlightened men in history. However, He was like no other man in history. Only in man's myths does anyone other than Jesus claim to be God and back it up with supernatural power and knowledge. All the other major religious figures merely claimed to have found the way. Jesus said He IS the way. He claimed to be the only way to God. (John 14:6) But what about you? Do you believe it? Who do you say He is? And as I have said before and will say again, if He is not God incarnate, who came to give His life as a ransom for us, (Matthew 20:28) the way provided for man to be right with God, then He was either the greatest fraud the world has seen, or He was not capable of passing on His message to men who could relay it to others correctly. Either way suggests some one other than the man we read of in firsthand accounts.

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In Peter's words, we see his conviction that Jesus was Messiah, the Savior of the world! We see that Peter not only believed that Jesus was the Son of Man but also the Son of God. Surely, he had heard Mary's story of the birth. However, an even greater proof to me is their last two and a half years of camping together. Camp with someone for a week and you will find out what kind of a person they are. Camp with them for a year and you will want to either kill them or be camping alone. Jesus' constant example, His miracles, His message, and His love were so powerful that these men knew He could be none other than the Son of God. However, it took more than just watching Him. It also took revelation.

Commented [notes6]: At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, ²and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."
Matthew 14:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ⁵ "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.
Malachi 4:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: ²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'
John 1:29-30 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.
John 17:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
John 14:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

I can give you reasonable arguments that Jesus is God, but unless you have a revelation from the Father in heaven, you will always come up with doubts and excuses not to believe. (Luke 22:26-27) Once you allow the Father to reveal it to you, you will be blessed. Blessed are you and you and you and you. The Father in heaven revealed to you that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God. If you had resisted that revelation, if you refused to soften your heart, you would still be making excuses today. (Hebrews 3:15)

Let me ask you if you are making excuses. Did you grow up a Christian, or did you always go to church because your friends did? Do you think it is a good religion? Or has God the Father revealed to you that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God? If that is the case, then you believe the Word of God because Jesus did. Then you are not trying to make excuses for going your own way, but instead are submitting to the revelation in the Word, and you are growing in grace. You are blessed! *Makarios*— the highest good is yours. Paul wrote that God was our blessed God. (1 Timothy 1:11) The highest good is His. Are you blessed? Who do you say Jesus is? Will you let God reveal the truth to your heart?

Jesus went on to say, ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

This passage may be one of the most disputed passages in the Bible. It is the point of contention between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. About 500 years after Jesus said this, a portion of the church claimed that it meant that Jesus was establishing a leader of the church. The popes are then supposed to carry from man to man the anointing of leadership originally given by Jesus. If I believed that, I would become a Catholic. Let me first say that I believe there are many born again believers in the Catholic portion of the church. They have trusted Jesus for their salvation and not works. John Paul II preached this kind of salvation that the Protestant side of the church believes as well. However, we do differ on this important passage.

Jesus had given Simon bar Jonah the name Peter, or *petros* in Greek. (John 1:42) It is a masculine term meaning stone. The word that Jesus used for 'rock' in this passage is feminine and means a rock outcropping (*petra*). It may be that by this time in their conversation they had reached Caesarea Philippi. There before them would have been a massive rock like some of the cliffs we see around our city. There was a large castle, the Castle of Banias, on one of those rock outcroppings. It would have been an illustration of Jesus' words.

The conviction of Protestant interpreters is that Jesus was referring to the solid rock reality that He is the Son of God. A rule of interpretation is that we can understand Scripture with the help of Scripture. If we look throughout the New Testament, we do not find that Peter was leading the church. If there were a single leader, it would have been James. (Acts 12:17) Peter called himself one of the elders. (1 Peter 5:1) If Jesus were trying to convey to the disciples that Peter was to be the first pope, then when the brothers James and John came to Him to ask for positions on His right and left hand, Jesus would have again reinforced the instruction that it was Peter that was to lead. (Matthew 20:23) He did not!

Commented [notes12]: ⁶⁶ And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, ⁶⁷ thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: Luke 22:66-67 (KJV)

Commented [notes13]: ¹⁵ As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: ¹¹ that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1 Timothy 1:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). John 1:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place. Acts 12:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: ¹ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 1 Peter 5:1 (KJV)

Commented [notes18]: ²³ And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Matthew 20:23 (KJV)

On what rock do we find the church is built? Peter and Paul both declare that the Cornerstone is Jesus and the foundation is the Apostles. (1 Peter 2:4-6) (Ephesians 2:20) We are merely stones laid upon that foundation. The foundation has upon it the names of the 12 apostles, (Revelation 21:14) for it is the apostles teaching that was the basis of the church. (Acts 2:42) Their teaching is that Jesus is the Son of God. No matter how we look at it, the foundation of the church is repeatedly referring to Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah. We are built upon the foundational truths taught by the Apostles, that Jesus is our Savior, the Word made flesh. (1 Corinthians 15:3) Jesus was saying that Peter received a revelation of Jesus from the heavenly Father. He was indeed a stone, and it is on the rock structure of that truth He received from God that Jesus would build the church.

Did you notice that Jesus said He is the builder? (Zechariah 6:12-13) I think that much of the church today has forgotten that expression. We sometimes plan and work as if we were supposed to build the church. You cannot! It takes a revelation from God. You are supposed to share the truth you have received, live the example of a Christ like life, but only Jesus can build the church. We merely proclaim the teaching of the Apostles and tell what great things God has done in our lives, and Jesus builds His church.

We sometimes become discouraged when we look at the organization and the troubles people have among themselves. However, I want to remind you, you are not looking at the church. The church is not a building, or an organization, or the members of church. The church is the people that have received the revelation that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God. Jesus said emphatically, "I will build MY church!" Satan can attack; men can scheme; reprobates can corrupt; governments can pass laws; organizations can fail, but Jesus will build His church. Peter said He is building a temple out of living stones, (1 Peter 2:5) a temple to inhabit. (Ephesians 2:22)

The gates of hell will not prevail against it! Standing in that wicked city that was referred to as the gates of hell, probably near the cave that was also referred to as the gates of hell, Jesus made this declaration. We must understand that He was using the word Hades, not hell as we understand it today, but the place of the dead. The bars of death cannot prevail against those who trust in Christ. Death has no power over us because Jesus is the victor over death. (1 Corinthians 15:56-57) Despair and sin are defeated by the power of His Spirit indwelling us. Like Samson of old, Jesus has torn off the gates of hell and carried them off! (Judges 16:3) In Christ, we are victorious over death, despair, and sin. (Romans 8:37)

This mighty structure built by Jesus is rising all over the globe, all through time. Jesus uses the personal possessive pronoun, my. He says it is MY church. It is a building of living stones that are being transformed, trophies of grace that have hearts miraculously transformed. Their meetings may look different, their languages are not the same, the songs vary in style, but in every tribe, nation, and tongue their eyes are fixed on the Son of God who loves them and gave His life for them.

Commented [notes19]: ⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 1 Peter 2:4-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Revelation 21:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: ¹² Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. ¹³ It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.' Zechariah 6:12-13 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: ³ And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron. Judges 16:3 (KJV)

Commented [notes29]: ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:37 (NIV)

(Revelation 7:9) Paul wrote that this structure rises to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) It is the triumphant church that will descend from heaven like a glorious bride with no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, the New Jerusalem, the city of God. (Revelation 21:2) Yes, Jesus is building His church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it!

Someone might ask, "What is a strong church?" That is incorrect thinking. That is asking if your organization has big numbers, or money in the bank, or is recognized as important in your community. The church is always strong because the church consists of people indwelt by the Spirit of the living God! What we should mean by that question is this, "Is your gathering one of people who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior?" You see if we have ten people who have Jesus as the Lord of their life, it is more effective and influential for the Kingdom of God than a church of 10,000 worldly people with a thousand great ministries. Do you see that? Do you believe it?

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." This is incredible authority that Jesus has given the church, but remember, the church are those who know Jesus as Lord of their life. They do not make decisions or judgments on their own. Jesus was using the language of the Jewish schools of His day. "To bind" meant to prohibit; "to loose" meant to permit.—*Olford's Expository Preaching Outlines* Jesus uses this same language in chapter 18 and in John 20:23 (John 20:23; Matthew 18:18). A careful study of these passages reveals that Jesus is not telling us that Peter is standing at the gate of heaven deciding whether to let the dead in. When we, as the church, make a judgment according to God's word, it is what will be in heaven. That is not because we are so great, but because we act according to the eternal word of God. *The authority of the church lies in the fact that it has heaven's word on everything "pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence"* —*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*

But what about you? Who do you say Jesus is? Will you see Him only in His humility as a son of man? Then let me ask you, who could do such amazing miracles and remain so humble but the Son of God? Will you let the Father reveal to you that Jesus is the Son of God, your Savior? Will you become a living stone, a part of that temple of the living God, built upon the cornerstone Christ Jesus and the truth the Apostles taught? This is the most important question in life; who do you say Jesus is?

Commented [notes30]: ⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Revelation 21:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." John 20:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: ¹⁸ "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matthew 18:18 (NIV)