

The Keys of the Kingdom

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Matthew 16:13-19

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Some of you tell me when you write concerning the program that you like to follow in the Bible when I am preaching. So if you will take your Bible and turn with me to Matthew chapter 16, Matthew chapter 16, I am going to be preaching from verses 13 through 19, Matthew 16.

Now verse 13 says when the Lord Jesus came to the coast of Caesarea Philippi that his disciples were gathered about him and he asked his disciples saying, “Whom do men, whom do the natural men of this world say that I the Son of man am?”

Now our Lord never asked a question for information. Our Lord knows all things. The Scripture says he knew their thoughts. But when the Lord asked a question it is in order to reveal the thoughts and attitude of the person to whom he asked the question.

For example, he said, “Cain, where is your brother?”

And Cain replied, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

So his attitude and his thoughts were revealed by his answer.

And our Lord asked Adam, “Adam, where art thou?”

“Well, I was naked and I hid myself.”

So he doesn’t ask a question for information, but to reveal the thoughts and attitude of the person to whom he asked the question.

Peter, what a wonderful reply Peter gave. Our Lord said, “Peter, do you love me?”

And he said, “Lord, you know all things. You know I love you.”

So he asked his disciples this question. “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”

He calls himself the Son of Man. Why does he call himself the Son of Man? Well, because he is a man. Our Lord Jesus Christ became a man, truly man, born of a woman. The

Scripture says, "Made of woman, made under the law and subject to all of the infirmities, the temptations of this flesh." He was a man, truly man.

And then he calls himself the Son of Man because the first biblical reference to the messiah refers to him as a man born of woman. In Genesis chapter three verse 15 the writer calls the messiah "the seed of woman." That is a man, born of a woman. And in Isaiah 7:14 the Scripture says, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and you will call his name Emmanuel, God with us."

So, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?"

And another reason he calls himself the Son of Man is because in appearance, in appearance, now, while he was here on this earth he looked to be only a mere man. When he walked this earth they called him the carpenter. "We know who he is. He is the carpenter."

And Isaiah chapter 53 said, "He is a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We hid, as it were, our faces from him. He hath no form, no comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him."

So he is a man and he calls himself the Son of Man. But he puts the question to the disciples in this way. "Whom do men, whom do the people of the world," not believers, now, not disciples. He knows what his disciples think of him. But what do the people of this world, the people on the streets, the people in the shops, the people in the synagogues, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, "Whom do they say that I Jesus of Nazareth am?"

Who is Jesus Nazareth? What do they say?

Well, the disciples answered him. They said, "Some say you are John the Baptist. And some say you are Elijah. And others say you are Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

You know, I noticed in reading this, the disciples said, "Well, what they are saying out there is that you are John the Baptist or some say you are Elijah and some say you are Jeremiah. Some say you are one of the prophets."

I noticed three things. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here on this earth and men discussed who he is, three things are evident from their reply. The first one is this. They can never agree on who he is. They can never agree. Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, some say Jeremiah, some say one of the prophets. Error is always multi choice. Truth is always one. There is one single truth about who he is. And when you ask men, they never can agree.

The second thing I notice about these answers is this. They contradict one another, totally contradict one another. And not only that, but they contradict the very thing, the one thing that our Lord emphasized when he was here on this earth more than any other. What is

that? He said, "I and my Father are one. I am God. He that hath seen me hath seen God. No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten reveals him."

So these fellows, they called him all these different things, but they never say, never say the one thing he emphasized more than any other, he is God. Oh, they will say he is a good man, he is a good prophet, but never God, never God. The natural man never, ever calls Jesus Christ God.

And the third thing I notice about these answers is this. All of their answers, multi choice, never can agree, never call him God. But their answers contradict common sense. He is not John the Baptist. John the Baptist and Christ were here at the same time. John the Baptist baptized him. He is not Elijah. He is not Jeremiah. And I'll tell you this. If he is not God, he is not a good man.

How can Jesus of Nazareth, if he is not God, now ... think with me. If he is not God, how can he be a good man? He didn't tell the truth. He said he is God. He said, "I and my Father are one."

Now a good man won't say that. A good man won't lie.

And the second thing, how can Jesus of Nazareth, if he is not God, now, how can he be a good man when he deceived people. He said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest." No natural man can say that. He said this. "If you believe on me you have everlasting life. If you believe not that I am, you will die in your sins."

Now, my friends, he is either God, Jesus Christ is either God or he is the greatest imposter who ever lived. That's right.

"Preacher, aren't you afraid to talk like that?"

No, sir. No, sir, not at all, not at all. The apostle Paul wrote that. He said in 1 Corinthians 15:19, listen. "If this life only you have hope in Jesus Christ, you are of all men most miserable." In other words if he is not God, if he is not our God savior, our Jehovah, God my Savior. If he is not crucified and risen, if he is not at the right hand of the Father, then we are miserable deceived people of all people who believe in him we are miserable.

So without comment, though, our Lord asked the disciples, "What are they saying out there?"

And when the disciples told him, "Well, some say this. Some say that. Some say the other. None of them say you are God."

So without comment look at verse 15. Without even taking notice of what the people in general think of him, he asked his disciples, "But whom do you say ... ?" Now he left off Son of Man. But, "Whom do you say that I am ... I am?"

My friends, when you see that statement, “I am,” what do you think of? Well, my mind goes back to Exodus three verse 14 when Moses stood by that burning bush and God was going to send him down to Egypt to deliver his people. And Moses said, “Well, Lord, when I go down there and tell them that God sent me they are going to ask me, ‘What’s his name?’ Well, what do I tell them?”

And the Lord spoke from the bush. He said, “Moses, tell them I am that I am.”

And our Lord Jesus Christ when he asked his disciples, “Whom do you say I am?” He used that phrase often. He said, “I am the door. I am the water of life. I am the resurrection and the life.” And he said this, “If you believe not that I am, you will die in your sins.”

So he says, “Whom do you, my disciples, my beloved friends, whom do you say I am?”

They knew he was more than a mere man. “What manner of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey his voice?” They called him Master and Lord. That is a sweet term. I like to call our Lord Jesus Christ Lord and Mater.

They called him my Lord and my God. That is what Thomas said. They left all to follow him.

Well, when he asked them that, Peter answered. Peter usually spoke for the disciples and he said, “We believe, we believe that thou art the Christ. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Do you remember a moment ago when I said error concerning who he is multiple choice, always they can’t agree on, they say all these different things? Truth is one. He is, the disciples all agreed, they all agreed, Peter was their spokesman. But another place they said, “We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.” But they all agree. Truth is one. He is the Christ. He is the Son of the living God, the only begotten, well beloved Son of the living God.

And I am telling you this. All Christians, all believers, all of the Lord’s people agree on this one thing. They may disagree on Church government and Church principles and practices and all these different things, ordinances and so forth, but there is no division on this matter. Who I am.

“Whom do you say that I am?”

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

That’s the only answer. And that is the answer of every believer. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And let me tell you something. That is the song of heaven. In Revelation 1:5 the Scripture says, “This is the song of heaven. They sang a new song, a

multitude which no man could number.” And they sang in unison without one, without one disagreeable voice, “Unto Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, the only begotten from the dead, the prince of the kings of this earth, unto Jesus Christ who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Unto Jesus Christ who hath made us kings and priests to God, his Father, to Jesus Christ be glory, dominion, forever and ever. Amen.”

That’s the song of heaven, every believer, every Christian, every child of God and every voice. And that song is learned here and it is practiced here on this earth. And the voice that cannot sing that song will not be heard in glory. And that’s the truth.

Look at verse 16. This reply of the apostles has to do with two critical issues, two critical issues. Peter replied, “Thou art the Christ.” That is the first issue. Secondly, “Thou art the Son of the living God.”

Now, “Thou art the Christ.” The entire Old Testament of 39 books, the writings of the prophets, God spake to our fathers by the prophets and they all preached one message: Jesus is the Christ. That is his office.

What was the message God sent by the prophets? Paul said in Hebrews, “God spake to our fathers by the Prophets.” What was the message? I will tell you what that message is. Someone is coming. He is called the Christ. He is called the messiah. He is called the Redeemer. He is called the Desire of all nations. He is called the Lion of Judah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is called the Lord our Righteousness. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of which the prophets wrote.

He said, “Abraham saw my day. He rejoiced to see my day.”

He said, “Moses wrote of me.”

He said, “David spake of me when he said, ‘Thee Lord said to my Lord sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’”

Job wrote, “My Redeemer liveth and he will stand on this earth.”

And I ask you who are readers of the Scriptures. You have read Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. You have read the Scriptures, the Psalms, Isaiah. You have read the Scriptures. I ask you. Who is this seed of woman? Who is it? Who crushes Satan’s power? It is Jesus of Nazareth.

Who is Melchizedek, the high priest of God, the King of Salem, the priest of the most high God? Who is this in the Old Testament? He is somebody. He is a symbol of somebody. He is a prophecy of somebody. Who he is? Who is the Passover Lamb, the Lamb selected without spot or blemish and then slain and the blood put on the door?

Paul said, “Christ is our Passover.” That is Christ.

Who is the manna, the bread from heaven? Who is the rock smitten and the water comes forth? Who is the serpent lifted up? It has got to be somebody. All of these Old Testament prophets declared that someone is coming and he will fulfill all of these prophecies and all of these pictures and all of these types? Who is Shiloh? The scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. Who is this Lion of the tribe of Judah? Who is the high priest going into the holy of holies with the blood on every day of atonement? That's Christ. Of whom does Isaiah speak when he says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed"? Tell me who that is.

I'll tell you who it is. It is Jesus the Christ. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

All right here is that second part. All of the prophets now speak of Christ, of Jesus as the Christ. The woman at the well, do you remember this story? Our Lord Jesus was talking to the woman at the well and finally came to the end of that conversation and she said, "Well, when the Christ comes, when the Christ comes ... " This woman knew the Old Testament Scriptures. She read these prophecies and these types and pictures. "When the Christ comes, he will tell us everything."

And Christ said to her, Jesus of Nazareth said to her, "I that speak to thee am he."

That I what I believe. That is what Peter said they believed. "We believe thou art the Christ, the fulfillment of every Old Testament Scripture, ever jot and tittle, prophecy, promise, type, pattern, picture. Thou art the Christ."

And I will tell you this. John wrote in 1 John, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ is born of God." That's powerful, isn't it? "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, that person is born again, born of God. Whoever believes it, now."

Then Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, but listen to this. Peter said "Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the Son of the living God."

Now John says in 1 John 5, "There are three that bear record in heaven." Now you listen to me. "There are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, who is the Son and the Holy Ghost and these three are one."

Now, my friends, I cannot explain the trinity. I wouldn't even attempt it. But I know what the Word of God teaches. And I know the Word of God teaches that the Lord our God is one God, one God. And yet he reveals himself to us as Father, Son and Spirit. Now that is so. And several times in the Scripture, the Father, Son and the Spirit are mentioned in the same verse. Our Lord said, "Go baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." And John in 1 John said, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." But when our Lord was baptized the Lord Jesus was standing in the River Jordan. The Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove. There is Christ the Son and the Spirit. And then the Father spoke from heaven the Scripture says and declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

I can't explain that. But I can believe it.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, there is Christ talking with Moses and Elijah. And the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son. Hear ye him."

Christ said to his disciples, now listen. He said to his disciples, "I will pray the Father. He will send you the Holy Spirit." Father, Son and Holy Spirit and they are one.

And Isaiah nine declares, "A child is born, the Son is given and his name ..." What is his name, born of Mary in Bethlehem? "Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Now, thou art the Christ. Jesus Christ, born of Mary in Bethlehem's manger was walked this earth, died on that cross for his people, was buried and rose again is none other than the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now, look at the next verse. Here is our Lord's reply to that confession that Peter just gave. "Blessed are you Simon bar Jonah." He reminds Peter that he is still a man. What is "bar Jonah"? "Bar" is son, son of Jonas. And our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are you, man, Simon, son of Bar Jonas, born in sin, still a man. Flesh and blood ..." The second thing he said, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you. My Father revealed that to you. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is taught of God, born of God, blessed of God." Divine truth is learned only one way, by revelation.

"And I say unto you." Now listen to him. "And I say unto you that thou art Peter, Cephas."

Our Lord gave him that name when he first met him. His name was Simon and when our Lord first met him, that was over in John one verse 42, I'll read it to you. "When Jesus beheld him he said, 'You are Simon. Thou art Simon, son of Jonas. Thou shalt be called Cephas, Peter, a stone, firm, solid, a foundation.'"

Peter is not like that yet at this particular time. Oh, he believes Christ Jesus is the Christ and he is the Son of God. But he has got some wavering to do, yet, you know, so forth. And the denial and all these different things. But he is going to be, "You are going to be called a stone, a stone. And on this rock I will build my church."

Now, not on Peter. You couldn't build a church on man, on a man especially that shifts around like Peter did in those days. But what Christ is saying, "I am going to build my church on the rock of that confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"

I told you that is the unity of the Church. That is the voice of the Church. That is the confession of the Church. And every believer and every Christian, every child of God is taught of God who Jesus Christ is. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our Lord is the chief cornerstone of the Church.

In Ephesians 2:20 it says, “The household of God,” that’s the Church, “is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the Word of God, Jesus Christ himself the chief being the chief cornerstone. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against him.”

“Blessed are you, man, Simon, son of Jonas, blessed are you.”

You are blessed if you know who he is, if you know what he did, if you know why he did it, why he died, why he suffered, that God may be just and justifier. And where he is now at the right hand of God he ever lives to make intercession for us. Blessed are you. Blessed is the man who has been taught of God that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“Blessed are you, Simon.”

But flesh and blood doesn’t reveal that. I am preaching and I have preached a long time. And I have preached to a lot of people and I have been telling them who he is. And some believe and some don’t. But those who believe, believe because they have been taught of God. And those who do not believe do not believe because they are depending on this flesh. You have to be taught of him, the Scriptures. Though God uses the Word of God by the power of his Spirit.

Then he said to Peter, now watch this. “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

What are these keys? Well, listen to what these keys will do. They are powerful. “Whatsoever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Would he trust a man with opening the door of heaven or closing the door of heaven, opening the door of heaven for somebody and closing it for somebody else?

Nope. It is this gospel, who Christ is, what Christ did, where Christ is, why he suffered? This is the gospel. And when the gospel is preached by Peter, Paul, James, John, me, you, Fred, whomever, when it is preached, with it comes the key of knowledge that opens the very doors of heaven, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when a man hears it like you are listening right now. Here is this gospel And you are sitting there thinking about what I have said. Who is Jesus Christ? Well, some say he is John the Baptist. Some say he is Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Some say Elijah. Some say this. Some say he is a good man. Some say this, that and the other, you know. What do you say?

“Whom do you say that I the Son of man am?”

“Well, preacher, I am convinced that what you are preaching and reading from the Word of God is the truth that Jesus is the Christ, every Old Testament pictured fulfilled by him, every Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by him, every Old Testament pattern, the high priest, the blood atonement, he is the Passover, he is the Lamb of God promised by Abraham to Isaac, God himself will provide a Lamb. He is all those things. He is the son of God. And because he is the Son of God and the Christ he can suffer as our substitute and take our sins, take our guilt, put it away. That opens the door of heaven.”

And what we bind on this earth will be bound in heaven. Bound to whom? To Christ. What is loosed on this earth, loosed from the gospel, loosed ... leaves the gospel, won't have it, won't have it in heaven.

Now the name of this ... the title of this message is, “The Keys of the Kingdom.” If you want it, write. Send two dollars. We'll send the message to you along with another one I will preach next Lord's Day. Until next time we meet, may God bless you.