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Confessing Christ; Matt 16:13-20
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Introduction – Who do you say that I am? That question demands gut-level honesty. You don't go along with everyone else's answer because everyone else has multiple opinions. Various answers won't do. There is only one correct answer to this question. However, you also don't want to simply say the correct answer because you know that's what you are supposed to say. Jesus not only reads lips; He reads hearts. Jesus is not issuing a fill-in-the-blank test. No. When Jesus asks "Who do you say that I am?" He is asking what you truly believe about Him.

That question then is the great question. That question divides all of humanity. That question represents the difference between the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the believers and the unbelievers, the saved and the lost. That question is so fundamental, it really answers all other questions.

Are we among those who confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God or are we among those who have another answer. When answering from our hearts and our lives, not our lips – how would we answer that question?

- I. Confessing Christ Comes from Revelation
 - a. Jesus first asks His disciples what other people say about Him. What is the word on the street?
 - i. They responded with a list. There were a number of answers people would offer to this question.
 1. John the Baptist – that was Herod's theory in ch14 if you recall. For those not so well acquainted with Scripture, this is their best guess.
 2. Or Elijah – for those a little more acquainted with Scripture, Jesus may be forerunner to the Messiah, Elijah who is to come, as Malachi prophesies.
 3. Jeremiah or one of the prophets – for those who admit that there is something special about Jesus, He must at least be a prophet.
 - ii. None of these are necessarily bad answers. At least it's not the Pharisees' answer that Jesus is a worker for Satan. John the

- Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah – all good men, all godly men, all men sent from God. Not bad answers, but entirely wrong answers.
- iii. Jesus, like this list of possibilities, was sent from God, but Jesus, unlike this list of possibilities, was God. And if you miss that, you've missed Jesus.
 - iv. Those same answers abound today. Jesus was a good man, a teacher, a religious leader, the founder of Christianity, a prophet. All good labels and titles, but all miserably short of the truth. All of these descriptions can be said of others, but the Christ, the Son of the living God, can only be said of one.
- b. So Jesus now asks His disciples, "Who do you (plural) say that I am?" Now He slices to the quick. Now it's not about others; it's about you. Where do you stand? What do you say? What do you believe down deep in your heart?
 - c. And Peter, speaking on their behalf, declares with great clarity, precision, and no equivocation the confession of faith that marks true belief – You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 - d. If that statement is an accurate, faithful assessment of Jesus, if He is indeed the Son of God, come in the flesh as the man Jesus of Nazareth, the implications are massive!
 - i. It would mean that the Bible is true.
 - ii. It would mean that the promises of the OT are realized in the Christ of the NT.
 - iii. It would mean that Jesus is in fact the Savior.
 - iv. It would mean that if you believe in Jesus like that, if you see Jesus like that, if you surrender to Jesus like that, then all the promises of God made to those in Christ would be yours in Christ.
 - e. Note, Jesus did not correct Peter, but rather commended him. 3 implications.
 - f. Blessed are you – spiritually blessed – Sermon on the Mount
 - i. Jesus then explains what this blessing is, what this grace is – it's divine revelation – God has given you this understanding of Me, this belief in Me!
 - g. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. You don't arrive at this conclusion by your own human intellect or capacity. You don't see the glory of God in Jesus unless God gives you eyes to see!

- i. That's why so many answers abound to this question. If you look at Jesus with sinful eyes, you don't see His glory. Sin distorts your view.
 - ii. 2 Cor 4:3-6
- h. "But My Father who is in heaven." That's where Jesus affirms that He is the Son of God. His Father is in heaven. The Father is the source of your confession. He reveals it. He gives it. He shines the light of the gospel into our hearts. It's His grace. It comes from Him!

II. Confessing Christ Forms the Foundation

- a. What does v18 mean? Traditionally there have been 2 interpretations.
 - i. The rock refers to Peter. While the "you" in v15 is plural, the "you" in vv17,18,19 is singular. Whether Jesus spoke these words in Aramaic or Greek, in both languages the words "Peter" and "rock" are similar. Jesus is clearly using a play on words.
 1. Roman Catholic tradition points to these verses to showcase Peter as the first Pope and thus trace the line of the papacy all the way to Jesus' disciples.
 2. The problem arises when Catholicism also teaches that the pope is the vicar of Christ, the voice of Christ on the earth and when he speaks ex cathedra, in the office of Pope, his pronouncements are infallible on the level of Scripture.
 3. Being the good Protestant I am, as I look to Scripture as my chief instructor, Peter does not fit the papal description. Jesus confronts Peter in the very next passage. In v16, Peter knocks it out of the park. In v22, Peter drops the ball and seeks to correct the Lord. In Gal 2, Paul confronts Peter for falling into legalistic hypocrisy and requiring Gentile believers to adopt Jewish requirements when he himself as a Jew did not adopt them.
 - ii. This rock refers to the whole group of Jesus' followers because Peter was speaking for the whole group. They, apart from Judas, would all make the same confession. By extension, that

would include all followers of Jesus who make this confession. Therefore, the rock is really the confession. That's the Protestant view.

- b. I suggest to you a third option. Instead of either Peter or the confession, I believe Jesus intends both Peter and the confession. I believe He means Peter as an individual because no one can argue with the central role Peter plays in the formation of the church when you read the book of Acts.
 - i. Peter preached the sermon on Pentecost where 3000 were saved in ch2. Peter and John, mainly Peter testified in ch3 and 2000 were converted. Peter oversaw the election of Matthias to replace Judas. Peter healed the beggar. Peter proclaimed Christ before the Sanhedrin. Peter wrote 2 epistles. Peter is always mentioned first in the list of disciples. There is no doubt Peter plays a significant, primary role in the building of the church.
- c. However, I believe Jesus is also speaking to all those who would make the same confession as Peter. It was, after all, the confession that Jesus is responding to – not the man. Peter is a first among equals. There would be those with Peter and the long line of believers after Peter, who by the same confession, would be included in the same church that Jesus is building.
 - i. Now the book of Acts is the scriptural evidence that Jesus was speaking to Peter as a person. Matthew 18 is the textual evidence that Jesus was also speaking to Peter as a representative of all believers who make this confession.
 - ii. 16:19 – 18:18
- d. The real point of v18 though is not to whom does this rock refer? The real point is that Jesus is the builder, and this is His church. The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God is the foundational building material of this church. Those who make that confession are in the house that Jesus builds!

Conclusion – So we end where we began. What is your confession? Who do you say that Jesus is? What do you truly believe in your heart about Jesus? Are you in this house, this building, this church that Jesus is building?