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Text: Matthew 16:13-20
Title: Professing Jesus the Christ!

Intro: Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was situated about 25 miles north of the sea of Galilee and at the base of Mt. Hermon. Caesarea Philippi was a well-watered city which made it attractive. All kinds of religious people settled there causing the city to be polytheistic. Polytheism simply means belief in or worship of more than one god. Caesarea Philippi was dominated by pagan worship.

Jesus asked His disciples, ***“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”*** Through sermons and signs, did the people recognize Jesus as the Messiah? This is a good question to ask after Jesus taught kingdom principles and performed miracles.

The disciples told Jesus the various opinions of the people concerning Him. Verse 14 They replied, ***“Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*** It is obvious that the people were affected by the Greek belief of Metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls. Matthew 14:1-2 ***Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.”*** It is also apparent that the people had the wrong interpretation of Malachi’s announcement of Elijah’s return. Malachi 4:5 says, ***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”***

Matthew 11 Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as the Elijah to come. This does not mean that John was Elijah reincarnated. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17).

The people believed that the soul of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets had come to new life in the body of Jesus. It is apparent that the world doesn’t know who Jesus is. All their opinions assume that Jesus was ‘just a man’. The people only saw Jesus as one of the great men of history, a man of great spiritual insight, a great teacher and philosopher. No one said Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus’ question is a good question to ask today. Almost two thousand years later people are still uncertain as to who Jesus is. People generically know Jesus. People know what they have heard said about Jesus, but really don’t know Him.

Jesus asked a second question. He turns to His disciples and asks them, ***“Who say you that I am?”*** The disciples are brought face to face with the question for themselves. This is a personal question. This question turns the focus from everybody else to you. This question personalizes Jesus in your life. Who is Jesus to you? Not who you make Him out to be, but who He is. Not necessarily what you want Him to be but knowing who Jesus is. Do you know Jesus as the Bible reveals Him? Do you know Jesus as the Holy Spirit reveals Him? Only one of His disciples answered. Jesus said the reason Peter could answer correctly is because he received a revelation from God (Verse 17).

Peter’s Truth Confession: Peter does not hesitate or doubt for one moment. He knows that Jesus is the Christ., the Son of God. There are two things revealed to us by way of Peter’s confession.

- 1) The office of Christ: Peter confessed that Jesus is the long-expected Messiah. The name Christ is synonymous with Messiah, Anointed One, Savior of the world.
- 2) The nature of Christ: Peter's confession also reveals the nature of Christ. Christ is the Son of the living God. Not the son of a god, but the Son of the God, the creator of heaven and earth. A son is in nature with his father. Jesus is in nature with the Father. Jesus said in John 10:30, ***"I and My Father are one."*** Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9, ***"Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me? He that have seen Me have seen the Father."***

This is the one confession that is essential to be saved. Romans 10:8-10, ***But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is LORD," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.***

To confess Jesus as Lord is to make a pledge of allegiance to His authority. You are calling upon Jesus as your Lord-the one you must obey. You cannot make a Scriptural confession if you do not believe in Jesus or if you have not truly repented and are determined to obey Him.

Several things Jesus says about the church that warrant our attention:

- I. **The Foundation of the Church**: Jesus said in Verse 18, ***"I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church."*** The word *church* is *ecclesia* which means "called out." The church is the assembly Jesus calls out.

Peter is not the rock on which Jesus built the church. Peter is flawed, fickle, and frail to build the church on. We can see this as we look closer at Jesus' words. The Greek word for Peter is **petros** meaning stone, rock, a small pebble. However, Jesus used the Greek word **petra** for rock meaning a huge mass or ledge of rock. The two words are different. The church is not built on small pebbles like us. Jesus is the Rock. Jesus is the origin, builder, and foundation of the church.

Isaiah 28:16 says, ***"Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whosoever believes will not be in haste."***

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, ***"Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"***

Acts 4:11 says, ***"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."***

1 Peter 2:4-6 says, ***"As you come to Him, the living stone-rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him-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. 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.”

We can see through Peter’s preaching and epistle that he is not the rock the church is built on.

Jesus did not build just a church. He built His church. Jesus uses the word “my” to show His possession of the church. The church is not mine or yours. The church belongs to Jesus.

- II. The Force that Can’t Prevail against the Church:** Verse 18 Jesus promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church. The word *hell* in Greek is *hades* which denotes the nether world, the realm of the dead. The realm of the dead cannot prevail against those whom Jesus calls out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 3:18-20 says, ***“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”***

According to Peter Jesus prevailed against the gates of hell when He went down and preached the gospel to those in prison.

Jesus prevailed against the gates of hell through His victorious resurrection from the dead.

- A. Offensive Church: Greg DeMey wrote, “It is not the powers of hell that are storming the front doors of the church, rather, it is the power of the kingdom of God manifested in the church that is storming the gates of hell!”
- B. Defensive Hell:

- III. The Function of the Church:** Verse 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.”***

Keys are used to open. Jesus says, “I give you keys of the kingdom.” The function of the church is to open the kingdom of heaven to the lost. The church is unlike the Pharisees who shut up the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces (Matthew 23:13). Jesus gives the church delegated authority to bind and loose on earth. In other words, Jesus gives authority to the church to operate on His behalf. Example of this is in Matthew 10:5-15. Jesus gave the twelve disciples authority to operate on His behalf.