

JESUS: WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Jesus "I AM" (17)

Banska Bystrica, 22nd February 2015

Mt 16:13-19 ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you (οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι), but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter (σὺ εἶ Πέτρος), and on this rock (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ) I will build my church, and the gates of hell (πύλαι ᾗδου) shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven (τὰς κλεῖδας τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν), and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed¹ in heaven."

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0. INTRODUCTION: THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IN THE WORLD

[TOZER] The causes of my uneasiness are these:

1. The lack of spiritual fruit in the lives of so many who claim to have faith.
2. The rarity of a radical change in the conduct and general outlook of persons professing their new faith in Christ as their personal Savior.
3. The failure of our teachers to define or even describe the thing to which the word faith is supposed to refer.
4. The heartbreaking failure of multitudes of seekers, be they ever so earnest, to make anything out of the doctrine or to receive any satisfying experience through it.
5. The real danger that a doctrine that is parroted so widely and received so uncritically by so many is false as understood by them.
6. I have seen faith put forward as a substitute for obedience, an escape from reality, a refuge from the necessity of hard thinking, a hiding place for weak character. I have known people to miscall by the name of faith high animal spirits, natural optimism, emotional thrills and nervous tics.

7. Plain horse sense ought to tell us that anything that makes no change in the man who professes it makes no difference to God either, and it is an easily observable fact that for countless numbers of persons the change from no-faith to faith makes no actual difference in the life.¹

Our future depends on the answer to Jesus' question "Who do you say I am?" The day is coming when each one of us will stand before the question: "Who does God say I am?" Whoever believes in Him can answer that question today through the cross. This is only and only God's revelation (flesh and blood has cannot reveal this to us).

0.1. THE TEXT

- controversial; biased approaches (Roman Catholics ↔ Protestants)...

...in modern scholarship this text of eight verses [vv. 13-20] is the single most discussed text in the Gospel of Matthew. This is understandable, for it has the first confession of Jesus as the Christ. In particular this text (alone in the NT) has the important and controversial words on Peter the Rock of the church (see Luke 22:31-32 and John 21:15-19, where Peter also seems to have been especially honored). Finally, our text speaks for the first time in the NT of the gift of the Keys of the Kingdom (the great parallels are Matt 18:18-20 and John 20:21-23). We are at an important place.²

0.2. THE CONTEXT

- missionary outlook(?)

Caesarea Philippi about twenty-five miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee. ...The area was scattered with temples of the ancient (1) Syrian Baal worship... Not only the Syrian gods had their worship here. Hard by Caesarea Philippi there rose a great hill, in which was a deep cavern; and that cavern was said to be the birthplace of the great god (2) Pan, the god of nature... In Caesarea Philippi there was a great temple of white marble built to the (3) godhead of Caesar.³

Jesus takes his disciples aside, in Caesarea Philippi, a very pagan place and asks them who people say He is. In the midst of worship of false gods He wants them to be able to confess what they believe – at a place where everything else is worshipped but Jesus.

0.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE

- Jesus and the *knowledge* of Jesus → what is the FOUNDATION of the Church? ~ Jesus as the Head of the Church, the Church as the Body of Christ
- personal knowledge – “the people” ↔ “you” (faith must be individualized)
- revelational knowledge – intuition (spiritual certainty) + proposition (confession)

1. KNOWING JESUS BY HEARSAY

- "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

1.1. JOHN THE BAPTIST

- preached repentance → Jesus as a teacher of ethics → “I should change my life, my ways...”
- it's not enough to believe in Jesus as a teacher of ethics

1.2. ELIJAH

- performed miracles → Jesus as a Wonderworker → “I can be healed, helped, do similar things...”
- we can sometimes witness miracles and yet no have a personal revelation of Jesus

¹ TOZER, A. W. *Man – the Dwelling Place of God*, Harrisburg : Christian Publications, 1966, p. 30-31.

² BRUNER, F. D. *Matthew*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1990.

³ BARCLAY, W. *Matthew II*, Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1976, p. 134. (ORIGEN: "If you shall think that the whole church was built on Peter alone, what shall we say of John, and each of the apostles? What! shall we dare to say that the gates of hell shall not prevail against Peter only?" In: OWEN, J. *Works I*, p. 6-7)

1.3. JEREMIAH

- prophesied the impending disaster → Jesus as a prophet of doom → “I must escape the coming wrath of God”

[CHAMBERS] Have you ever realised Who the Lord is in your life? The call to service is not the outcome of an experience of salvation and sanctification, there must be the recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord and Master as well as Saviour. “Who say ye that I am?” That is the abiding test. Jesus Christ makes human destiny depend absolutely on Who men say He is. Membership of His Church is based on that one thing only, a recognition of Who Jesus is and the public confession of it. Any man who knows Who Jesus is has had that revelation from God. “Blessed art thou, Simon-Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church”. What rock? The rock of the knowledge of Who Jesus is and the confession of it.⁴

2. KNOWING JESUS FOR WHO HE REALLY IS

- not flesh and blood – not from “normal” or natural sources – revelation! **1 Cor 4:6** = creating act

2.1. REVELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- **John 6:45** It is written in the Prophets: And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to Me
- Christ (the king), the Son of God (Trinity) ⇒ My king and my God
 - **John 20:28** Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

2.2. BLESSEDNESS OF ASSURANCE

- revelational knowledge is not *inferential*, it is direct, certainty is supra-rational
- “Simon Bar-Jonah” → stressing his *human weakness* as opposed to his *spiritual power* expressed in the confession

3. KNOWING JESUS FOR VICTORY

- why this is *not* about Peter **only**⁵ → (1) never repeated in the apostolic letters, (2) Peter as a person was fallible – eg. was addressed as “Satan” (**Mt 16:23** "Get **behind me, Satan!**) and later even denied Jesus, (3) Peter was mortal – his experience was foundational, but must be repeated...
- [AUGUSTINE] “Super hanc ergo, inquit, petram quam confessus es, aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. *Petra enim erat Christus* (1Cor 10:4): super quod fundamentum etiam ipse aedificatus est Petrus. *Fundamentum quippe aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Iesus* (1Cor 3:11).”⁶

- Πέτρος ↔ πέτρα⁷ on *this rock* – not “on you” – the church is built on *personal revelation* from God

Peter was a second, given name (4:18; 10:2), and now is the time to explain it. This new name, Petros, representing the Aramaic Kēphâ, “stone” or “rock,” is otherwise virtually unknown as a personal name in the ancient world, which makes it the more probable that Jesus chose it for Simon with a view to its literal meaning. ...This is such a bold image that attempts have been made to evade its obvious force. One has been to point out that the feminine noun *petra*, “rock,” differs from the masculine name *Petros*. This is obviously true, but of questionable relevance. The masculine noun *petros* occurs infrequently in

⁴ CHAMBERS, O. *So send I you*. In: *Collected Works*, Grand Rapids : Discovery House Publishers, 2000, p. 1302.

⁵ We should remember, however, that a similar beatitude has already been addressed to the disciples corporately in 13:16-17, where they have all been declared to be the recipients of special revelation. (FRANCE, R.T. *Matthew*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 2007.)

⁶ AUGUSTINE *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus Centum Viginti Quatuor*, Tract 124.

⁷ *Petros* is usually a smaller detachment of the massive ledge. But too much must not be made of this point since Jesus probably spoke Aramaic to Peter which draws no such distinction (Kēphâ). (ROBERTSON, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

classical poetic Greek to mean a stone (i.e., a broken piece of rock), though the distinction from *petra* is not consistently observed. ...A second escape route, beloved especially by those who wish to refute the claims of the Roman Catholic Church based on the primacy of Peter as the first pope, is to assert that the foundation rock is not Peter himself, but the faith in Jesus as Messiah which he has just declared. If that was what Jesus intended, he has chosen his words badly, as the wordplay points decisively toward Peter, to whom personally he has just given the name, as the rock, and there is nothing in his statement to suggest otherwise. ... All such apologetic rewritings of the passage are in any case beside the point, since there is nothing in this passage about any successors to Peter. It is Simon Peter himself, in his historical role, who is the foundation rock. Any link between the personal role of Peter and the subsequent papacy is a matter of later ecclesiology, not of exegesis of this passage.⁸

- **Mt 18:18** Truly, I say to you [pl.] (ὕμῖν), whatever you [pl.] bind (δῆσητε) on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose (λύσητε) on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- **Jn 20:21-23** Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

3.1. THE ROCK

3.1.1. CHRIST

- **1Cor 3:10-11** According to God's grace that was given to me, as a skilled master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it,¹¹ because no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid-- that is, Jesus Christ.
- **1Pt 2:4-6** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

3.1.2. THE APOSTLES

- **Eph 2:19-20** you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ),

3.1.3. ABRAHAM & SARAH

- **Is 51:1-2** Listen to Me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were dug.² Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain. When I called him, he was only one; I blessed him and made him many.

3.2. THE POWER OF HADES

- gates – "The gates of the cities were the places of greatest concourse for business, judicial proceedings, conversation, and idling..."⁹
 - (3) "Gates" can be used figuratively for the glory of a city (Isa 3 26; 14 31; Jer 14 2; Lam 1 4; contrast Ps 87 2), but whether the military force, the rulers or the people is in mind cannot be determined. In Mt 16 18 "gates of Hades" (not "hell") may refer to the hosts (or princes) of Satan, but a more likely tr is 'the gates of the grave [which keep the dead from returning] shall not be stronger than it.' The meaning in Jgs 5 8.11 is very uncertain, and
- the gates of Hades → (1) the power of death; (2) the power of the arch-enemy of God – Satan, (3) the most powerful and the subtlest devices of the enemies of God...

⁸ FRANCE, R.T. *Matthew*.

⁹ BUCKLAND–WILLIAMS *Universal Bible Dictionary*, 1914.

3.3. THE POWER OF KEYS

- the keys → setting free from death; bondage – if we don't know victory in Jesus (from fear, death etc.) there is another "level" of knowing Him to move to
- rabbinical meaning – interpreting the Torah

4. TO REMEMBER

- Beware of the danger of hearsay knowledge about Jesus.
- Knowing Jesus by revelation radically changes life, values, relationships and self-understanding.
- Knowing Jesus is the key to freedom from the fear of death and all spiritual bondage.