

Theme: Jesus challenges us to answer who He truly is—not merely a prophet or teacher, but the Messianic Son of God Who builds and sustains His Church and restores us to relationship with God.

I. Peter and A Pope At the Pearly Gates

- A. Peter greets a Pope and shows him to a modest cabin
- B. A HUGE mansion nearby for a lawyer - Pope is shocked
- C. We get a lot of Popes, but he is the first lawyer!
- D. Apology to all the lawyers out there!
- E. This text is where such jokes about Peter come
- F. What is this text really teaching us?

II. Who Do You Say I Am?

- A. Jesus asks who People think He is
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.” Matthew 16:13-14
 - 1. Caesarea Philippi is the farthest north Jesus ever went; from here, He goes to Jerusalem
 - 2. Jesus presses the disciples about popular opinion
 - 3. People think Jesus is a prophet
 - a. Some say John the Baptist risen from the dead (Herod - Matthew 14:2)
 - b. Some think He is Elijah
Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
Malachi 4:5

- 1. Elijah would prepare the way for the Messiah
 - 2. Jesus said this was about John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11-12)
 - c. Only Matthew mentions Jeremiah - certainly he is a model for Jesus’ ministry and rejection
 - d. All of these are ways of saying Jesus is a very great prophet sent by God
 - 4. This would be an honor for most - but not Jesus!
 - 5. In the end, to compare Jesus with John, Elijah, or one of the other prophets is not to honor Jesus but to degrade Him, for He is in a class all by Himself!
- B. But Who do YOU say I am?
He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Matthew 16:15
 - 1. Jesus presses the disciples, “Who do Y’ALL...”
 - a. The Greek for “you” is plural “Y’all”
 - b. The question is posed to all of the disciples
 - 2. This lets the disciples think about their opinion and express their understanding of Jesus’ identity.
 - 3. This is much more personal - it is one thing to discuss what others think, but quite another to express what you think!
 - C. The key question Jesus poses to everyone
 - 1. Jesus presses this question on all of us!
 - 2. This is no mere academic question for a fun discussion - it is the most important question in the universe!

3. Unfortunately, many still want to make Jesus a great prophet or teacher - but not to grapple with Who He claimed to be!
4. But Jesus continues to press us for a true recognition that He is much more than a prophet!

III. The Revelation of Jesus' Identity

A. Peter's bold, perceptive response

Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:16

1. Peter steps out boldly with the right answer!
2. You are the Messianic Son of God
 - a. Matthew gave the right answer in his opening verses

The book of the genealogy of Jesus **Christ**...¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called **Christ**.¹⁷ So all the generations... from the deportation to Babylon to the **Christ** fourteen generations.¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus **Christ** took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with **child from the Holy Spirit**. Matt 1:1, 16-18

 1. Jesus is called Christ/Messiah 4 times in the opening
 2. Jesus was not from Joseph but the Holy Spirit
 3. Thus, Jesus is the Messianic Son of God!
 - b. We also saw this in the baptism and temptation.
 - c. But now Peter is the first person to understand this.
 - d. This is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and is a key turning point in each Gospel.
 - e. It is one of the most important moments in all of human history!

B. Jesus' response to Peter's words of profession

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 16:17

1. Jesus says Peter is blessed for understanding this!
2. All who understand that Jesus is the Messianic Son of God are truly blessed!
3. Further, this is the work of God in Peter's life, not something done by himself or any other human.
4. We can not understand the Sovereignty of God in revealing Jesus to us, but that is not what is critical. What is essential is the humble worship that should flow from knowing this!
5. If you are here as a believer, God has revealed this to you, and you are blessed - praise and worship Him for this!

C. Jesus' promise to Peter and the Church

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. Matthew 16:18

1. Jesus refers to Simon by his name of "Peter"
 - a. He may have had this nickname before, or the Gospel writers may have just used it as the name by which he was known.
 - b. God often gave new names to people at key moments of revelation (Abraham, Sarah, Israel)
2. Peter the rock - a play on words
 - a. A word play that works in both Aramaic and Greek!
 - b. Peter (Πέτρος) means "rock" (same with Cephas)

3. Peter will be a foundation rock in the Church

- a. Protestants have tried to avoid this, wanting to say the word rock is “feminine” or that the rock is the revelation, not Peter.
- b. But this ignores the obvious play on words, that the words are identical in Aramaic, and the actual words of Jesus.
- c. This is not a declaration that Peter is the first pope, but rather that he will have a special place in the formation of the Church - which is very clear from Acts, the rest of the New Testament, and early Church history!
- d. We should not overreact to errors by embracing a different error! (Mary, tradition, the Lord’s Supper)

4. Jesus’ wonderful promise to the Church

- a. Jesus promises that He will build and sustain His Church - this is the true focus of the promise!
- b. The Church is the people of God, and Jesus loves, builds, and sustains the Church against everything that assaults her in this age.
- c. Despite all odds, the Church survives, because not even the “gates of Hell/Hades” can overcome it.
 1. ESV has “hell” but it is “Hades” (NIV, CSB), the realm of death
 2. It could refer to the fact that death will not overcome the Church, or that Satan and his forces will not overcome the Church - and both are true!
- d. Ultimately, this is Jesus’ gracious promise to sustain His people the Church against all odds and against all enemies!
- e. This is why we must always love the Church! Despite whatever flaws she may have, she is the Bride of Christ and He loves her - and so must we!

D. The promise of the keys, binding/loosing

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19

1. This verse is the basis for Peter at the pearly gates
2. It is also used by some to speak of binding demons
3. I will have extended AfterHours going through this.
4. I think the basic idea is simpler, less controversial
 - a. The keys of the kingdom mean there is an authority given to Peter, like stewards holding keys for a king.
 - b. Revelation 1:18 shows Jesus holding the keys of death and Hades - symbolic of authority over them.
 - c. Like Peter the rock, this points to Peter’s unique place in the early Church and its ministry.
5. Binding and loosing refers to the responsibility to proclaim the identity of Jesus as the Messianic Son of God, and to tell people that the only hope of reconciliation with God is through Jesus.
 - a. This is the central idea in the whole passage!
 - b. Unusual Greek construction - “whatever you bind on earth is standing as having been bound in heaven”
 1. Peter’s binding and loosing is derivative, not initial
 2. As Peter proclaims the Gospel, those who respond in faith and submission will be loosed and received into the Kingdom, while those who reject it remain in their sin.
 3. Furthermore, it is through Peter that the Gentiles first have the Gospel proclaimed to them and are received into the kingdom as they respond in faith.

6. Ultimately, Jesus is promising that through Peter's leadership and ministry He Church will establish and sustain His Church as the community who by grace have embraced Jesus as the Messianic Son of God and offer the promise of reconciliation with God to all who respond in faith.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Have I encountered Jesus the Messianic Son of God?

1. So many voices proclaim Jesus is a prophet but no more - but this is to deny Jesus' actual identity!
2. Jesus did not proclaim Himself to be a mere prophet, but rather to be the Messianic Son of God!
3. Jesus did not come just to share revelation about God but as the revelation of God Himself!
4. Like Peter, I proclaim that forgiveness and reconciliation with God is offered to you, but ONLY if you respond to the Gospel in humble faith!
5. Look to Him for new life today!

B. Am I proclaiming this Good News to others?

1. The disciples were told NOT to share this yet (v20)
2. But that was because they did not yet understand how Jesus would die as the Messianic Son, and so the time was not yet right.
3. But after His death & resurrection, Jesus commands them to tell others - and we must do the same!
4. We are not called to compel but simply to offer the Gospel to those around us.

5. Thankfully, we are not responsible to open their eyes - only God can do that! We are simply called to proclaim Jesus and leave it in God's hands!
6. Encouraging testimonies from young people at the recent leadership prayer lunch - God is moving!
7. We have been given the words of life - let's share them freely!

C. The Table - The Gospel Made Visible

1. This Table is a visible picture of this message!
2. Jesus is able to save because He is not a mere prophet, but the very Messianic Son of God Who came to save us and restore us to God!
3. This Table visibly shows us that salvation is found only through Jesus' broken body and shed blood.
4. The Table calls us to personally profess our faith in Jesus the Messianic Son of God!

Encountering Jesus the Messianic Son of God

Matthew 16:13-20

February 15, 2026

Communion

Ephesians 1:17-19

Teaching keywords: Christology; revelation; faith; Church; evangelism and missions

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, ¹⁸ so that you may know him better having the eyes of your heart enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. As the people of God, you are blessed - so go forth and be a blessing!

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, but my Father who is in heaven.”¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. Matthew 16:13-20