

## On this Rock: Matthew 16:13-18

**Introduction:** Today we are going to be continuing our series on preaching through the life of Jesus: Matthew Edition and we come to hotly debated passage, Matthew 16:13-18. Now there is a lot more in this section of Scripture that we could go into. In fact we could do a short series on just this clump of 20 or so verses but we don't have all day so we are going to focus in on just a few verses.

Its going to be a little different today because we are going to take a deep look into Church history surrounding this passage because unfortunately the reason this passage is so debated has little to do with the actual passage and more to do with sinful people twisting the passage in the pursuit of power. As we look at Matthew 16 today we see that if we can clear away the fog of bad theology surrounding this passage then it is a beautiful passage, which contains an amazing promise.

So lets pray and then dive into the text.

### **Read the word: Matthew 16:13**

*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?"*

### **Paint the Picture:**

- Reorient
  - Birth and early life 1-2
  - Preparation for ministry 3-4
  - Solo public ministry 5-9
  - Public ministry with the Disciples
- Last week Jesus and then Peter walking on water
  - Since then...
  - Heals many people including a none Jewish woman
  - Again multiplies food to feed a large crowd
- Like we talked about last week
  - Jesus influence goes up the opposition goes up
    - Pharisees and Sadducees continue to question Jesus
      - Try to catch him in a trap
      - Demand signs
- (READ) In the midst of all this Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew 16:1-12
  - Abandon any remnants
  - Embrace the teaching of Jesus
- Things are ramping up
  - In midst of all this Jesus asks a question...

### **Ask the Questions:**

- Of all the questions Jesus asks why this one?  
This question is what the salvation of the world hinges on

- This question is the whole point of the Christian faith
  - Not how do I live a moral life
  - Not how do I find happiness
  - Not where do I go when I die
  - All this questions are important
    - All utterly meaningless if we don't know who Jesus is.

**Transition:**

So in the midst of this growing tension right after Jesus has commanded the disciples to reject all remnants of the false beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees Jesus them this question “who do the people say the Son of Man is?” lets go to the next verses and see their response.

**Read the word: Matthew 16:14-15**

*14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”*

**Paint the Picture:**

- Jesus asks all the disciples
  - They all start answering
  - Oh well some say...
- Remarkably similar to today
  - Easy for people to say
  - But that reduced Jesus to just another tool used by God and not God Himself
- The question that really matters
  - Not a faith of consensus
  - Personal understanding and acceptance
    - Invitation

**Transition:**

Even though Jesus is asking this of the whole group only one responds in the next verse...

**Read the word: Matthew 16:16-17**

*16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.*

**Paint the Picture:**

- Peter speaks for the disciples and declares the central truth of the Gospel
  - Relation not origin
    - Two pieces of paper
    - Same kind

- Not just some righteous human
- Not an angel or a spirit
- In biology terms Same species
  - God the Father is eternal, holy, perfect, all powerful
  - Same species Jesus as the Son of God must also be eternal, holy, perfect, and all powerful.
  - The attributes of God that distinguish God as God are the same attributes that distinguish Jesus as the Son of God and that's why we confess belief in a triune God existing eternally in three persons.
- Whether Peter understands the power of his confession is unclear but he is declaring the foundational truth of reality
- How does Jesus Respond
  - By blessing Peter
  - Not because Peter is so great but because this foundational truth has been revealed to him by the Father.
  - Confirming the truth of Peter's confession

**Transition:** The next verse is the last verse we are going to look at today and in this one verse is one of the most amazing promises in the Bible and also the central point of conflict in this passage.

**Read the Word: Matthew 16:18**

*18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*

**Paint the picture:**

- Declaration and Promise
- Jesus Changes his name
  - Peter
    - Cephas
- Very clear especially in Greek that Jesus is saying that Peter is going to play a unique and foundational role in bringing the Church of Christ into the world.
  - May make some of us uncomfortable
    - Clear in English
    - Clearer in Greek
      - Petras Petra Ecclesia

**Ask the questions:**

- How should we understand this declaration from Jesus
  - Turn to Church History
    - Early Church
    - God uniquely used by God to proclaim foundational truths.

- John Chrysostom 407: “What then says the mouth of the apostles, Peter, the ever fervent, the leader of the apostolic choir?”
  - Not a position of complete power
  - Not the top human leader of the Church
- Theophylact of Orchid 1107: “The Lord gives Peter a great reward, that the Church will be built on him. Since Peter confessed Him as Son of God, the Lord says, "This confession which you have made shall be the foundation of those who believe, so that every man who intends to build the house of faith shall lay down this confession as the foundation." For even if we should construct a myriad of virtues, but we do not have as a foundation the orthodox confession, our construction is rotten. By saying "My Church" He shows that He is the Master of all, for the whole universe is the servant of God... The Church is also each one of us who has become a house of God.”
  - We see this acted out in Scripture
    - Acts 2
      - Holy Spirit on all
      - Peter stands up and speaks
    - Acts 10
      - Peter is the first to baptize Gentiles
    - Acts 15
      - All meet to discern how to deal with Gentiles coming to faith
      - Peter stands up and declares the truth that there is not difference and no requirement
      - James then declares the same
      - The letter that goes out is from the apostles, the elders, and the whole church
- What we see from Scripture and the early church
  - Peter was used by God in a unique way to be the spokes person for the apostles
    - Not always but the majority of the time
    - He was not infallible
    - He was not the judicial or authoritative leader over the others
    - The Church was the hands and feet of Jesus no one person
      - Matthew 18
      - Acts 15

- What happened?
  - The split between east and west in 1054
  - The Reformation 1517
  - Papal infallibility first Vatican Council 1870
    - Roman claims: ex cathedra 2x ultimate earthly authority
      - Pope primary representative of Christ on earth
    - Protestant claims
      - Fear of giving up ground
      - Illustration
      - Self talk
- We cannot allow bad theology to force us into bad theology
  - Benefits of looking to the early church for clarity
  - Uncomfortable ask why that is
  - If we find ourselves wrestling away from plain reading meanings ask why that is

**Transition:**

Hopefully that clears up the conflict. Any questions?

Unfortunately sometimes we get so wrapped up in this conflict that we neglect the promise...

**Read the word:** Matthew 16:18

**Conclusion:**

- Jesus Promises the church built on the foundation of this confession will be victorious
  - Military language
    - Which side has gates
  - The Church is hear as the hand and feet of Jesus making war on Hades
    - We are on the offensive breaking down the defenses of Satan
    - Conquering sin
    - Declaring the truth that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of the Living God
    - We echo the same truth that was confessed by Peter.
    - On the truth and power of that confession we stand victorious
- What difference does this make in my life?
  - How often do we live on the defensive
    - Avoid sin
    - Roll with the punches of temptation, and Satan's lies
  - How often do we go through life as the conquered and not the victors
- Jesus has won the war
- All we have to do is stick the flag in the ground
  - This promise means that you don't have to surrender to that website, or that drug, or that lie.

- If we hold fast to Jesus we can live in victory
- Hope, confidence, boldness, to live as citizens of the kingdom of God and members of his household. To declare the truth that Jesus is the messiah the son of the living God.

**Lets pray**