

Peter's Confession - A Summary

Matthew 16:13-20¹

by

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13 But when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea of Philip, He questioned His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

Caesarea of Philip – Usually translated simply “Caesarea Philippi” but the original Greek is correctly translated here. The place was located to the north of the sea of Galilee at the foot of Mount Hermon, in the area governed by Herod Philip, the brother of Antipas, and is therefore correctly translated “Caesarea of Philip” to distinguish it from the other Caesarea, (Caesarea Maritima, or Caesarea Palestinae) which is on the Mediterranean coast north of Tel Aviv, about half way to Haifa.

14 And they said, On the one hand some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, but yet others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. 15 He says to them, But Whom do you say that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

In affirming these two articles of faith, Peter was undoubtedly expressing the object of faith for justification. At this time Jesus was not yet presenting Himself as the One who would die and rise the third day. He presented His Messiahship and His deity. When Peter said that Jesus was “the Christ” he was saying that he (and presumably the other disciples) accepted the Messiahship of Jesus as they understood the Hebrew Scriptures to present it. The term “Son of God” was a statement of His deity, and the inclusion of “the living God” strengthened that statement by associating His deity with the living God of the Old Testament. To Peter, God the Father had revealed that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the Messiah of Israel, as well as God incarnate. Until this moment Christ’s messiahship was not directly revealed, nor was it yet known that Christ must go to Jerusalem and die (see 16:21-22).

17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Happy are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.

Peter received this revelation directly from the Father, but we are not told the mode of the revelation. It may just have occurred to Peter as a random thought, not realizing that it was not random at all, but a direct revelation from God. Hence, the Lord pointed out to Peter the source of his information.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will have no power over it.

This rock – The speculation that Christ was referring to Himself by the phrase “this rock” is unfounded, and based on the misinterpretation that the word translated “church” is referring to the body of Christ. Zealous protestant scholars, not understanding the nature of the kingdom program, have regularly attempted to make “*petra*” rock mean something else than “Peter” and thereby avoid the conclusion of the Roman Catholic Church that it is built on Peter, the first

¹ This is a summary of a teaching on this important passage. It is not intended to teach the intricacies of the passage. For more information see the DVDs available on this passage.

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pope. But, in fact, the word “*ekklesia*” refers to the congregation of Israel, not the body of Christ nor the Roman Catholic church. See the next note.

I will build my congregation – On Peter Christ is building His congregation, His *ekklesia*. To Peter the *ekklesia* would have been the congregation of Israel, not the New Testament body of Christ, of which he knew nothing at the time this statement was made. Ultimately the messianic message was not left to Peter alone. Nevertheless, he is the one, perhaps as the leader of the twelve, who was responsible for spreading the message of Christ’s messiahship.

the gates of Hades – Not “hell” referring to the “lake of fire” but rather the place of the dead, equivalent to the Hebrew “*sheol*.” Hades was a word used in Greek mythology, and borrowed by the Hebrews to express the truth of a holding place for the disembodied dead waiting for the resurrection. The Lord seems to be telling Peter that death will not be a ruling factor in the kingdom. Since the curse of Genesis 3 seems to be lifted for the believer during the millennial portion of the kingdom, death will not be applicable to the believers living in the future kingdom.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth will be loosed in heaven.

See my DVD presentation on Matthew 18:18 ff. concerning the use of the verb forms “will be bound” and “will be loosed.” This statement was made to Peter here and later to the other disciples. It is a simple statement of the authority of the kingdom apostles during the time of the kingdom of God on earth. It is not to be applied to anyone today.

20 He then ordered His disciples that they should say to no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

As previously, the word “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word messiah. At this time in Peter’s experience, he was using the word in all its prophetic glory. The message that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel is now revealed, as Peter proclaimed it, but not yet fully disseminated. The reason for the requirement to not spread the truth of the Messiahship of the Lord is explained in Luke 9:21, 22. The time had not yet arrived for His final rejection and death, and to prematurely proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah would have been contrary to the program of Christ’s earthly ministry.