

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 16 (PART 2)

Matthew 16:13-20 - Who Do You Say That I Am?

Question 1 - Who do others say Jesus is? (v. 13-14)

Answer 1 - John the Baptist - resurrected John?

Answer 2 - Elijah - messianic expectation that the literal Elijah was going to come again before the Messiah's coming. This belief was based on some of the closing verses of the Old Testament:

Malachi 4:5-6 - "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

We know Jesus said that John the Baptist had served as the Elijah-like forerunner (Matthew 11:14).

Answer 3 - Jeremiah or one of the prophets - another common first century Jewish expectation relating to Messianic events. This is based on Deuteronomy 18:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 - 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

Question 2 - Who does Peter say Jesus is? (v. 15-16, 17)

Answer 1 - The Christ, Son of the Living God - I believe that these two terms are synonymous. To be the "Christ" (or Messiah) means you are the anointed king over God's kingdom. To be the "son of God" means you are the promised descendant of David, destined to rule over God's kingdom. (More on this later).

Peter is commended for his answer. Jesus affirms that it wasn't Peter who somehow connected the dots to figure this out but that God was working to help Peter see this (that's pretty cool!).

Matthew 16:18-19 - upon "this rock" I will build my church?

Q - What do you think Jesus is saying here?

ESV Study Bible: This is one of the most controversial and debated passages in all of Scripture. Roman Catholics have appealed to this passage to defend the idea that Peter was the first pope. The key question concerns Peter's relationship to "this rock." In Greek, "**Peter**" is *Petros* ("stone"), which is related to *petra* ("rock"). The other NT name of Peter, **Cephas** (cf. John 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12), is the Aramaic equivalent: *kepha* means "rock," and translates in Greek as *Kēphas*. "This rock" has been variously interpreted as referring to (1) Peter himself; (2) Peter's confession; or (3) Christ and his teachings."

Q - Which one do you think? Or could it be something else?

First, there is some word play here - Peter's name means rock and Jesus uses the feminine form of this word to say what the church will be built upon.

Catholic View - the church will be built upon Peter himself. He will become the first leader of the church and Jesus is declaring this to be at this moment. Following up with Jesus giving Peter the "keys to the kingdom" bolster this view as that is an image of power and authority. Catholic teaching says that Peter was the first pope and all successive popes are following after his spiritual line.

Protestant View - though there are varied interpretations, most protestants emphasize the words/confession of Peter as what the church will be founded upon, rather than Peter himself. The church will be built upon the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the Living God - and nothing will be able to stop the church if/when it is founded upon this/him. The next verse about keys/binding and loosing speaks to the authority given by Christ to his church (as opposed to just Peter).

In this view, the **keys** opening and closing speak to the power to offer entrance to the kingdom to others through the gospel. In biblical culture, to be given keys meant you had the power to open or shut doors, granting or restricting entry. This doesn't mean Peter/others decide who is in or not but give them the authority to offer this entrance/key to others.

As for the binding and loosing, this would have been something Jesus' disciples would have been familiar with in a way we aren't. In Jewish rabbinic language, the terms "*bind*" (אָסר, *asar*) and "*loose*" (הִתִּיר, *hittir*) were well-known legal idioms. Binding was a way for a rabbi to prohibit or forbid something and loosing would have meant to permit or allow.

The church would now be the determiners of what was allowed/forbidden, not the old Jewish system - and it would all be based on the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and not some other cornerstone. Jesus extends this to all believers in Matthew 18:18 and re-confirms this after his resurrection:

John 20:21-23 - So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send 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 any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

As I read this, I was taken aback by the weight and responsibility placed on the church. We are the stewards of the keys to the kingdom. Too often I fear I treat the key like I already have it and now it's in some junk drawer in my house. I act like there are other keys out there that people who are lost can stumble upon. But the truth is, we have the gospel message, the only way for people to enter the kingdom and if we just keep it to ourselves, they aren't given the opportunity to enter. We aren't just plodding along, biding our time till the kingdom comes - we're the representatives of the Christ on the earth today. Wow.

Before we move on, let's get some encouragement needed for this calling from the truth that Jesus will build his church and the gates of Hades (hell/evil/the grave) will not be able to overpower it!

Matthew 16:20 - but don't tell anyone...

Classic Jesus.

The Messiah: Son of Man, Son of God

It is interesting that in this section two of Jesus' most significant titles are referenced. Biblically speaking, both of these titles are deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and the promises of God relating to his future eternal kingdom.

1 - Son of Man (v. 13) - this is the title Jesus most commonly uses for himself. The language "son of man" is used throughout the Old Testament to by a synonym of "human" (lit: *ben adam* or son of adam), and yet Jesus will often use this at times when he is pointing to his power and authority. For example, this is the title he uses when healing lame man and forgiving his sins (Matthew 9:6). For the audience of Jesus in the first century, the title "son of man" is more than *just* the title for a human being. And the reason for that is found in Daniel 7. It is in Daniel 7 where a significant vision is described relating to the age to come:

Daniel 7:13-14 - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Notice that the one who receives the kingdom from the ancient of days is "one like a son of man" and this person receives the kingdom dominion from the Ancient of Days. This crucial passage defines "son of man" as a messianic figure and Jesus' use of this phrase is pointing to that. Jesus even quotes Daniel as he talks about his return and as he stands before the High Priest at his trial:

Matthew 24:30 - "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Matthew 26:63-64 - ...And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

To be the “son of man” means you are the Messiah, the one destined to rule over God’s kingdom.

2 - Son of God (v. 16) - the second title for Jesus used in this section is “son of God.” Of course this has a biological/origin element to it due to the fact that God is *literally* the father of Jesus as it relates to his birth. But this phrase “son of God” is another title rooted in the promises of the Bible that would have been packed with meaning and implications for Jesus’ audience. The understanding is found in an important moment in Israel’s history during the reign of king David. The following verses outline the Davidic covenant:

1 Chronicles 17:9-14 - "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again; and the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly, 10 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I tell you that the LORD will build a house for you. 11 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 **"I will be his father and he shall be My son;** and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. 14 "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.""

The concept of the “son of God” from Scripture is rooted in this promise - David would have a descendant who would rule forever who would have God as his father - aka be the “son of God.” Look at the words of Gabriel to Mary announcing Jesus’ birth:

Luke 1:30-33 - The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him **the throne of His father David**; 33 and He will **reign** over the house of Jacob **forever**, and **His kingdom will have no end.**"

And a couple other instances where these concepts are all brought together:

John 1:49 - Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are **the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.**"

John 20:30-31 - Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**; and that believing you may have life in His name.

To be the “son of God” means you are the Messiah, the one destined to rule over God’s kingdom.

The reason why I want to take the time and look at these two titles is because I think that modern Christians should define terms based firstly on how the Bible itself defines these terms, and secondly how the people interacting with Jesus in real time define these terms. The disciples of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament are basing both their understanding and expectation for the Messiah based on the promises and declarations of the spirit-inspired Old Testament.

Also, I would like you to take some time to consider how you answer this important question from Jesus. Jesus asks Peter two questions - “who does everyone else say I am?” and then “who do *you* say that I am?” In this chapter those two answers are different and the first answer, the one that may have been most popular at the time, was actually wrong.

I like to look at the Bible itself to answer this question. Who does Jesus say that he is? In critical moments of the New Testament, what are the words, phrases and titles used of Jesus? When Peter answers that Jesus is the “Christ, the son of the Living God”, Jesus gives him high commendation of that answer. This truth is the foundation stone of the church and a good place for us to start.