

The Great Confession

January 24, 2010 – Pastor Dr. Ronnie Wolfe

Matthew 16:13-16

I. TWO EARTHLY QUESTIONS (16:13-16)

A. Whom Do Men Say That I The Son of Man Am?

1. Notice, first, that he calls himself “the Son of man.”
 - a. He speaks of himself as a human being, not a vision or a phantom.
 - b. His genealogy was of human origin, that from Mary, his mother and from his earthly father, Joseph.
 - c. He was asking what the earthly opinion of him was.
 - d. Everyone has an opinion about Jesus, and they are not all the same.
2. Some say he is John the Baptist
 - a. This is because Herod, no doubt, announced that he thought that John the Baptist was going to come back to life to seek revenge upon him, Matt. 14:1-3.
3. Some say he is Elias (Elijah).
 - a. In chapter 17:11-13 we read of this discussion concerning Elijah.
 - b. They have just seen Elijah in the great transfiguration of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.
 - c. Now they are wondering why, if it is true that Elijah must first come, that Elijah did not come before this time, before Christ himself appeared.
 - d. Jesus explains the application of Mal 4:5 *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*
 - e. Notice Matt. 17:13 *Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*
 - f. See Matt. 11:12-14.
4. Some say he is Jeremias (Jeremiah)
 - a. It is suggested by some that the Jews thought Jeremiah was the prophets that was to come like unto Moses (See Deut. 18:15-18).
 - b. But this prophet that was to come was Jesus Himself (John 6:14).
5. Some say he is another prophet
 - a. This means one or another of the several other prophets, such as one of the minor prophets or perhaps Isaiah, who was the most loved of all the prophets.
 - b. Even Jesus quoted or made reference 15 times in Matthew from the book of Isaiah.

B. But Whom Say Ye That I Am? (15)

1. This is the more pertinent question.
 - a. It really does not matter what others say about Christ; it mainly matters what you say about him.
 - b. Sometimes the world follows what others think about Christ, especially in our day with the myriad books that are written about him.

- c. But we should have our own opinion about Jesus based upon the word of God and not upon what others say.
- 2. Thou art the Christ (16)
 - a. The first recognition that Simon Peter had of the Lord here is that he is the Christ (the Messiah, the anointed One, the coming Prophet, the Savior).
 - b. The most important thing for the Jews to see in Jesus was that he is the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one, the Lord of lords, the Son of God.
 - c. This is our first recognition of him: that he is God's Savior, Jesus the Messiah, the Christ of God, as admitted by Peter in Luke 9:20.
- 3. The Son of the living God (16)
 - a. Satan questioned that he was the Son of God
(1) Matt 4:3-6
 - b. Demons recognized him as the Son of God
(1) Matt. 8:29
 - c. The Centurion recognized him as the Son of God
(1) Matt. 27:54
 - d. Mark calls him the Son of God in Mark 1:1
 - e. John bare record that he was the Son of God, John 1:34.
 - f. Martha believed that he was the Son of God, John 11:27.
 - g. Jesus called himself the Son of God, John 19:7
 - h. The Ethiopian believed he was the Son of God, Acts 8:37
 - i. The first sermon Paul preached was that he was the Son of God, Acts 9:20
- 4. Whom do you say that Christ is?
 - a. 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5; 5:10; 5:12; 5:13; 5:20

II. ONE HEAVENLY BLESSING (16:17)

A. Blessing of Peter

- 1. He is not blessed because he is the son of Jonah (Barjona).
- 2. He is not blessed because he is any greater than any of the other disciples.
- 3. He is blessed, because something has been revealed to him from heaven

B. The Revelation of God

- 1. Gal. 1:15-17 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*
- 2. Mt 11:25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*
- 3. 1 Cor. 2:9-10 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into*

- the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*
4. Even God's word was revealed from heaven: 2 Peter 1:21 *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.*
 5. 2 Tim. 3:16 *All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*
 6. God's righteousness is revealed from heaven: Rom 1:17 *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*
 7. God's wrath is revealed from heaven: Rom 1:18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*
 8. God's glory is revealed in us: Ro 8:18 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*
 9. This is a wonderful heavenly blessing!

III. THOU ART PETER (18)

- A. The Greek name Peter is PETROS.
 1. Petros was a common word among the Jews, which means "rock" or "stone."
 2. This was Peter's name mostly.
 3. He was also called Cephas, an Aramaic name, which also means "stone."
 4. Just as Peter was to know who Jesus was, Peter was also to know who he was.
 5. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 6. Peter is a rock; and with the Greek word PETROS, the designation is to a pebble.
 7. He is just Peter, nothing else.

IV. UPON THIS ROCK (18)

- A. The Greek word for "this Rock" is PETRA
 1. This is the feminine in Greek and designated a very large bedrock.
 2. 1 Peter 2:7 *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock (PETRA) of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*
 3. 1 Cor. 10:4 *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock (PETRA) that followed them: and that Rock (PETRA) was Christ.*
- B. Upon This Rock
 1. So, here in Matt. 16:18 we are speaking of the Rock, Jesus Christ, not the rock, Peter.
 2. What is to be built is to be built upon a bedrock, the spiritual Rock, Jesus Christ, not upon Peter and not on his confession; because his confession was a confession of who Jesus is.
 3. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and here he is the Rock.

V. I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH (18)

- A. If you are going to build something, it should be on a firm foundation – Matt. 7:24-27. The word “rock” in verse 24 is PETRA.
- B. The church is built upon Christ, the Rock - PETRA
 1. Eph 2:20 *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone];*
 2. Col. 2:6-7 *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*
- C. What Is The Church?
 1. The Word Ekklesia
 - a. The Greek word for church is EKKLESIA.
 - b. The word is used 112 times in the New Testament, and in most of those times the word designated a particular assembly of people in a certain place or in certain places.
 - c. Here the word is used *generically*, which means that it simply names the institution. It is also called the *institutional* usage of the word.
 - d. Jesus says it is “my church,” which means it is a certain kind of church.
 - e. His church will differ from the form of church that Israel knew about in Jesus’ day, such as the legal, social, and even the religious assemblies.
 - f. These are specific assemblies that have Christ as their Head. He is the Head of each local church.
 - g. There is no universal, invisible church that we hear so much about, no spiritual church, no “big” church.
 - h. First Baptist Church is one church, a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.
 2. Plural Churches
 - a. That is the reason that the word church is used in the plural many times in the New Testament.
 - (1) Ac 9:31 *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*
 - (2) 36 times the word is used in the plural in the New Testament.
 - b. Also specific churches are mentioned in the New Testament:
 - (1) Col. 4:16; Rev. 3:15 – the church of the Laodacians
 - (2) Rev. 2:1 – the church of Ephesus
 - (3) 2 Cor. 8:1 – churches of Galatia
 - (4) Gal. 1:22 – churches of Judea
 - (5) 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1 – church of God which is at Corinth
 3. The Body of Christ
 - a. 1 Cor. 10:16; 12:18, 24, 25, 27

- b. Eph. 4:12, 16; 5:23
 - c. Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19
 - d. Whatever the church is, the body of Christ is—they are both local, visible bodies, assemblies of baptized believers.
4. Baptist Confessions
- a. Article 12 said in 1925 – “A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, goerned by his law, and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by his word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are bishops or elders and deacons.”
 - b. Victor I. Masters wrote a book in 1937 entitled *Re-Thinking Baptist Doctrines* in which he restates the idea of a local church. He defines the church thus: “A church is properly defined as a congregation of Christ’s baptized disciples, acknowledging Him as their Head, relying on His atoning sacrifice for justification before God, depending on the Holy Spirit for sanctification, united in the belief of the Gospel, agreeing to maintain its ordinances and obey its precepts, meeting together for worship, and cooperating for the extension of Christ’s kingdom in the world.”

VI. THE GATES OF HELL (18)

A. The Gates

1. Out there somewhere are gates that lead to hell (hades), which we shall speak of in a moment.
2. These gates seem a danger to the church, because they may open and swallow up the church. They may be the damage and doom of the church that Jesus is going to build.
3. But these gates will not prevail against the church, says Jesus.

B. Hell

1. The word here is *hades*, and the word literally means *unseen*.
2. The idea is that people go through the gates of death into the place of unseen spirits. Some say that *hades* is the “place of departed spirits.”
3. *Hades* is a synonym to the Old Testament word *Sheol*, say most scholars.
4. In Hosea 13:14, the word *Sheol* in the Hebrew is translated *grave*.
5. So, the idea here is that, no matter how many people may die who are in the Lord’s churches, the church will never go out of existence.
6. Jesus was in *hades* (Acts 2:27), and he showed victory over it in his resurrection; so he is teaching us that, because he resurrected from the grave, he can promise victory for his kind of church.
7. So Jesus went through the gates of *hades* and came back to give perpetuity to his kind of church.

VII. SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT (18)

- A. The words “prevail against” are one word in the Greek.
- B. KATISCHUO

1. This word means “to be superior in strength”
 2. “To overcome”
 3. “To prevail”
- C. Who or what would be superior in strength to the Lord’s church? Even Satan cannot fit this bill.
- D. Who can overcome his church? Paul tried it, and it did not work. Ga 1:13 *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:* but it was to no avail. He could not prevail.
- E. Jesus told Saul on the road to Damascus “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” He cannot prevail against Christ.
- F. See Romans 8:35, 39 (No one can separate us)
- G. Rev 12:11 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*
- H. So, there are some churches somewhere on the earth which are the Lord’s churches, his kind of churches, which are promised by the Lord that the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.
- I. We call this *church perpetuity*. These churches have been here ever since Jesus was here, and they will be here until Jesus comes again.
- J. There has never been a time since the time of Jesus Christ that these churches have not existed, nor have they needed to be reformed or changed. They have in every age preached the truths of God’s word and performed the church ordinances and had the scriptural church officers throughout the history of this church that is built upon the Rock, Jesus Christ.

VIII. THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM (19)

- A. “I Will Give Unto Thee”
1. Jesus is speaking to Peter, and that is the reason he speaks here in the singular, not because the keys are given only to Peter.
 2. This was given to all the apostles as the foundation of the church of the Lord, Jesus Christ. We shall see this in a moment.
- B. Keys of the Kingdom
1. The word “keys” is plural, and it indicates the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his death, burial and resurrection.
 2. Also, they include the doctrines of the church that hang on the Gospel; and when those doctrines are preached, the keys are properly used: the keys are not turned backward.
 3. In Luke 11:52 this is called the “key of knowledge.”
 4. In Rev. 3:7 this is called the “key of David.”
 5. The idea of keys alludes to authority.

IX. BINDING AND LOOSING (19)

- A. Use Of The Keys
1. Notice how this authority is given to more than Peter in Matt 18:18 *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose*

on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

2. This passage handles church discipline.
3. Notice the plural word “ye.”
4. This is the church, not an individual pastor.

B. Binding And Loosing

1. The church is to obey heaven’s orders when binding (binding away from church fellowship) and loosing (the restraints on a church member, bringing them back into fellowship of the church).
2. The tense of the verse “shall be bound” and “shall be loosed” are said to be literally “shall have been bound” and “shall have been loosed” in heaven.
3. So, the keys were given to Peter individually, because Christ was speaking to him alone.
4. But the keys are to be used by the church (Matt. 18:18).
 - a. Preaching, baptizing, and teaching is to be done by the church - Matt. 28:18-20.
 - b. Discipline is to be done through the church - Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17; Phil. 3:17; 1 Cor. 5:11.
 - c. Giving is to be done in the church - 1 Cor. 16:1-2
 - d. We are to receive members into the church - Rom. 14:1 *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, [but] not to doubtful disputations.*
 - e. We are to assemble in the church - Heb. 10:25

Conclusion

We have now learned about the Lord’s church.

1. We noticed that the word church in Matt. 16:18 is used generically, not literally. There are a plurality of churches, not just one universal church, not that his church is not literal, but that he speaks of the church as to kind.
2. We have learned that Jesus is building his church, and he is the head of it (Eph. 5:23).
3. We have learned that the keys of the kingdom were not given exclusively to Peter but to all the apostles as the foundation of the Lord’s church by using Matt. 18:18 as a reference.
4. We have learned that the churches have the authority of the keys and that God has entrusted this authority only to his kind of churches.
5. We have learned that whatever the churches bind, it should have already been bound in heaven, and the same with loosing.