

12th February 2023

Psalm 2:1-12

- ¹ Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
- ² The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,
- ³ "Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles."
- ⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
- ⁵ He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- ⁶ "I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain."
- ⁷ I will proclaim the LORD's decree:
He said to me, "You are my son;
today I have become your father.
- ⁸ Ask me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
- ⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."
- ¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and celebrate his rule with trembling.
- ¹² Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

[Confessing Christ \(Psalm 2:1-12 & Matthew 16:13-20\)](#)

12-Feb-2023

G'Day Church Family

Please have your Bibles in front of you – opened at Matthew 16:13-20 to begin with.

There's the usual **outline** for you to **take notes** – if that helps you **concentrate**.

Let me ask **God** for His **help** and **guidance** first – let's **pray**...

Intro

Let me start with the story of a famous Hollywood actor – I won't mention their name in case I get sued. The famous actor was stranded at Sydney airport – with many other travellers – due to some technical difficulties at the airport. The actor became frustrated and didn't want to be hanging around the airport with all the other passengers who were queueing at the various check-in desks. So, he pushed his way to the front of the queue of one of the check-ins – and said “I demand to be on the next flight to Los Angeles – don't you know who I am?” The young lady at the check-in – said “just one moment, sir” – and she pressed the button for the microphone and announced “Attention ladies and gentlemen, we have a passenger here at check-in desk #2 who doesn't know who he is – if you happen to know who he is, please let us know”

(pause)

In our **NT reading** from **Matthew 16:13-20** – thankfully **Jesus** DOES **know who He is** – but He does ask His disciples “*who people think He is?*”

Before we get to that question

We pick up the story in v13 – where Jesus and His disciples are in a place called

Caesarea Philippi

[Slide 1 – Map]



About 25 miles (46km) north-east the Sea of Galilee. The region was strongly identified with various religions: **Baal worship**; the **worship of shrines for the Greek God Pan** and for the **worship of the Emperor Augustus Caesar** at a temple built by Herod the Great for the Emperor.

Jesus' Identity? (Matthew 16:13-17)

[Slide 2-Identity?]

It's **ironic** that in a region full of false religions – **Jesus asks the question** in verse 13 “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*” [Son of Man is a title Jesus gave to Himself – used 88 times and fulfilling a prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14]

It begs the question – who would WE say Jesus is?

What would we say?

[Son of God? Saviour? Great Teacher? Lord? A Good bloke?]

Jesus didn't ask that question because He didn't know who He was - or because He was somehow insecure and needed to feel good about Himself – like we might ask – “*What do people think of us?*”

No – He asked - because - He wanted to gauge how much people had understood about Him and His ministry – AND – because He had a more important follow up question in v15.

The disciples gave Jesus the opinions of the people in verse 14

Some said Jesus was John the Baptist –because John and Jesus both preached repentance – calling people to turn back to God.

Some said Jesus was Elijah – because God had said Elijah would come again in Malachi 4:5 – and because Jesus performed amazing miracles like Elijah did – and because Jesus stood up to the authorities like Elijah did.

Others said Jesus was Jeremiah –because Jeremiah was a prominent prophet and national reformer – and that's what Jesus appeared to be doing.

And others said Jesus was one of the prophets – because like all prophets, Jesus always spoke the words of God!

(pause)

But what's important to Jesus – is – what the DISCIPLES think.

See v15 – Jesus says “*But what about you? Who do you say I am?*”

Peter has witnessed Jesus' miracles and heard Jesus' amazing teaching and **Peter** comes up with the most remarkable confession of who Jesus is - in verse 16 - **Peter says to Jesus:** *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God*

Messiah is a **Hebrew** term meaning God's **anointed One**

In the Old Testament various people were **anointed** when they were appointed to their positions of **prophet, priest or King.**

But the Old Testament promised a **coming Deliverer, chosen by God to redeem Israel** (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1-3). This **promised Deliverer was known as the Messiah – God's chosen anointed One.**

The Greek equivalent to the word Messiah is the **Christ.**

Peter is identifying Jesus as this promised Messiah – the Christ.

And not only that – Peter is saying Jesus is the **Son** of the **living God.**

There's a wonderful truth for us here – that we have a living God – a God who is **alive** – not like the false god of **Baal** or the false **Greek God Pan** – and not like **Buddha** or the many false **Hindu gods!**

Our **God is alive and active** – and involved in our lives. He is not a God – who creates everything and then walks away from His creation and from us – He is involved in every detail of our lives!

In v17 – **Jesus confirms** that Peter's **statement** about Jesus' **identity** is **correct** – and tells Peter, he is blessed – because Jesus' identity was not revealed to Peter by another human being – but revealed to Him by God Himself – showing indeed that God is active and living!

Application – for us it means **we can be very encouraged** in knowing that God will reveal things to us. In fact, He does this all the time. How many times have we read God's Word – and **it speaks to our hearts and minds** – and **motivates us** to take action? How many times have we felt **God's voice or God's Spirit** –

Speak to us – and **nudge us** in the right direction –and **prompt us** to call someone or to help someone – or to pray for someone. **How blessed are we?**
(pause)

Having confirmed Jesus' identity –

The focus shifts to **Jesus' Church**.

Jesus' Church (Matthew 16:18-20)

In verses 18 and 19 – **Jesus makes a most remarkable statement** in response to Peter's confession of Jesus' identity. Jesus replies to Peter:

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

It's worth unpacking this statement by **looking at the phrases** Jesus uses:

First phrase: ***"You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church"***

"**Rock**" was a familiar **symbol of God** (Deut 32:4; Psalm 18:2, 31)

Peter's name in Greek is "**petros**" and **rock** in Greek is "petra" – so Jesus makes a **play on words** – you are a Rock [Peter] and, on this rock, I will build my church.

Church here is the Greek word **ekklesia** that we learnt in our series on the church, in January 2023. And **Ekklesia** means the "**called out ones**" – people called out to worship God and follow Jesus together.

Jesus is establishing **HIS church** and **He** will **build it** on the foundation of Peter and the other disciples; who will spread the Good News and grow Jesus' church. Something that doesn't start properly until the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

[Slide 3-Jesus' Church]

We are not to forget it is **JESUS' CHURCH!**

And notice **HE** will build **HIS** Church.

The Roman Catholic's claim that this verse – means the **Church** was **built on Peter** – and that Peter is the **first Pope** – and that Peter then **passed on** the **authority** he had been given **to the next Pope** [and that all popes are infallible]

The trouble is – there's **no evidence of this in the Bible!** Both these teachings are unbiblical.

Some teach that when Jesus says "*on this rock I will build my church*" – it means that Jesus is **building His church on Peter's "rock-solid" statement or confession that "You are the Christ"**. I think this is an over-correction to counter the claims of the Roman Catholics. By the time we get to the Book of Acts, we see that **Peter is a central figure** in establishing the early church; but he is **one of the "rocks" of the church**, as is the Apostle Paul who expands Jesus' church to the Gentiles.

An alternative explanation is that: Jesus says "*you are Peter (the rock) and upon this rock (Jesus pointing to Himself), I will build my church*". So, **the rock is not Peter, nor his confession but the rock is Jesus Himself**, The Messiah/The Christ.

This is entirely consistent with other statements in **the New Testament**. 1 Cor 3:11 – When Paul talks about the Church, he says: *For no one can lay any*

foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. And in Ephesians 2:20-21 Paul speaks of the church of both Jews and Gentiles as being ²⁰*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.* ²¹*In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord*

This is consistent with how **Peter himself describes the church** in 1 Peter 2:4-7 that **we are living stones built up into a spiritual house** (church) **where Jesus is the cornerstone [the rock] of the church!**

Second phrase: **“The gates of Hades will not overcome it”**

Hades is literally the abode of the wicked – see Luke 16:23 and Revelation 20:13,14. And later became the word used for the realm of the dead.

So, Jesus is saying that **no forces of evil and darkness and death can't prevail against or conquer His Church.** Jesus' Church keeps marching on.

Also, if we think of Hades as the realm of the dead. **Jesus' resurrection meant that death could not hold him down – and death can't hold us down, if we believe in Jesus!** (Acts 2:24, 27)

This phrase is triumphantly expressing the **indestructibility of Christ and His Church!**

Third phrase: **“I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”**

It's from this phrase **“keys of the kingdom of Heaven”** that we get this picture of **Peter at the Pearly gates of Heaven**, allowing people to enter Heaven or turning people away. This is both unbiblical and in bad taste – and disrespectful to our Lord Jesus who ultimately has the keys to Heaven (Revelation 3:7).

Instead, what we have here is Peter **holding the keys to the “door of faith”** where Peter is instrumental in opening the door of faith to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2) to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14ff) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). But the other Apostles share that authority with Peter (see Matthew 18:18) – and so also does the **Apostle Paul who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles** outside of Israel and beyond!

Fourth phrase: “**Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven”**

As a foundational leader of Jesus’ church, Peter along with the other Apostles (since this statement is repeated in Matthew 18:18 and the “YOU PLURAL” is used). All the Apostles will have authority in this new Church to decide what is permissible (loosed) and what is not permissible (bound) in Jesus’ church (a role that Jewish Rabbis had in Judaism). We see this play out in the book of Acts and how Peter along with the other Apostles fulfilled this role.

The first Church Council meeting in Acts 15 is a good example of this – where some were insisting that non-Jewish Christians should be circumcised like Jewish Christians – **the Council decided NO.**

Jesus is saying here, whatever the Apostles decide is bound or loosed in His Church on Earth is considered bound or loosed in Heaven. **Quite remarkable authority given to them!**

Jesus concluded His statement about His Church in verse 20 by **telling the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah?**

Why?

- a. Because this had **to be revealed in God’s timing.**

- b. The **disciples still needed to learn more** about what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah/Christ. At this stage most people had the idea that the Messiah was a military saviour and didn't have the concept of Jesus being a spiritual saviour
- c. The **disciples had to wait** until after Jesus' resurrection (the sign of Jonah) and His ascension; and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost – BEFORE they had a clear picture of the Jesus as the Messiah.

Take Home Message (Matthew 16:13-20; Psalm 2)

We've heard about Jesus' identity and we've heard about Jesus' Church

What can we take home this morning?

[Slide 4-Take Home]

1. First take-home message - this passage tells us: **Christ and Christ's Church are indestructible** –This is of **great encouragement in dark and discouraging times. Many times, Jesus' church has seemed close to extinction:** under **Saul's savage persecution** of the church in Acts 7-8, under the vicious **Roman persecutions** of the first three centuries, under the **scourge of Muslim conquest** in the seventh and eighth centuries, under the **almost complete loss of the gospel in the Middle Ages**, under the **toxin of liberalism prior to World War II**, and so on. Even today in places like **China**, when authorities close down churches, **they grow with underground churches!**

In our **Old Testament** reading from **Psalm 2** – we read in **verse 1 and 2** that **nations and rulers and leaders on Earth were plotting against God's**

anointed One. We saw that in Jesus' time and we see it **today**, where many nations and leaders are against Christianity.

But the Psalm says in verses 4 to 5; God sees this rebellion as laughable!

Because, He sits in the Heavens and He has installed His King – The Messiah – Jesus - on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem, namely Zion.

And in verses 7 to 9 of Psalm 2, the anointed one, the Son of God speaks of His relationship with the Father and of His inheritance from the Father and of the promise that God's Son will rule the whole Earth.

2. Second take-home message – like Peter - **we need a right confession of who Jesus is** – that is basic to our salvation (Rom10:9-10; 1 John 2:18-24; 4:1-3).

Our confession must be **personal** faith – it's not just a statement about who Jesus is – but a statement about what Jesus means to me. He is my Messiah, He is my Saviour, He is died for my sins to be forgiven; He rose so I can have eternal life; He has fixed the punishment for my sin, He has fixed my death, I am part of His Church!

In Psalm 2 - when God installed His anointed one; verses 10 to 12 called all kings and rulers of the Earth to be wise (v10) and serve the Lord with fear and trembling (v11).

As always, we are all left with a choice like v12 – We either - **Kiss the Son** (Jesus) and take refuge in Him - OR - otherwise **face His anger/wrath and face destruction.**

Jesus doesn't give the option for people to sit on the fence.

When Jesus asked the disciples who He was? He wanted them to realize He is the ultimate fulfilment of Psalm 2 and to realize He is God's ultimate Anointed One and Son of the living God.

It's important that Peter and the disciples know who Jesus really is – AND – that they believe in Him. We must do the same!

[To help us make a right confession – I've included the Nicene Creed written in 325AD- worth reading and meditating on – and saying AMEN to]

3. Third take-home message - Having confessed who Jesus is and what is Church is – **we need to go and BE Jesus' Church.** Our faith must be accompanied by actions. What will that look like?

- **Going and making disciples** (Matthew 28:16-20)
- Realizing - **how can people be saved if no one is sent** (Rom 10:13-15)
- It will mean **binding and loosing** – by **defending and upholding the truth** in God's Word – e.g., **John 14:6**
- It will mean **being both salt and light in the world** – as salt we slow down the moral decay and adding spiritual flavour to people's lives - and as light we call people out of the darkness of sin and into Jesus' light (Matthew 5:13-14)

Conclusion

Let me leave us with **some words from Revelation 1**

[Slide 5-Rev 1:17-18]

The **Apostle John** in his **vision from Heaven**, came face to face with our Lord Jesus, here's what happened, reading from verses 17-18

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Friends, **we do not have to be afraid of whatever lies ahead – we belong to Jesus – the Living One – who **holds the keys of death and Hades.****

Jesus decides what happens at our death – whether it's **Hell or Heaven** – whether it's **eternal separation** from God or **eternal life** with God.

If we have a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ; **we ARE saved.**

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your precious Son, The Messiah, The Christ, the only one who can save people from the punishment of their sins and the only one who can give eternal life to those who believe.

Thank you for Jesus' indestructible Church – which enables people to come to love, know and follow Jesus. Help us through your Spirit and your Word to BE Jesus' Church. In His name, we pray. AMEN.