

Encounters with Jesus

Week 6 — Jesus and Peter (Matthew 16:13-20)

Context:

Our passage comes near the end of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus' criticism of the religious leaders of Israel and their inevitable confrontation which would lead to Jesus' crucifixion was quickly approaching. But Jesus has good news for his disciples and the church that he would build, which should transform our vision of everything in life today.

1. Answering the Central Question

a. Who is the Son of Man?

- (1) Referring to Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel envisioned one "like a son of man" who comes "with the clouds of heaven" to be presented before God in order to receive an eternal kingdom and dominion
- (2) The Son of Man is the one who is destined to be King of all things
- (3) The people only see the Son of Man as a prophet: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

b. Who do you say that I am?

- (1) The most important question we will ever answer is the question which Jesus poses to Peter: "Who do you say that I am?"
- (2) Jesus was making a name for himself, teaching with authority, performing increasingly greater miracles, etc., but most only thought of him as a prophet or a great teacher
- (3) Peter (representing the rest of the disciples) rightly proclaims that Jesus is the "Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16) — he is the "anointed one" (Christ/Messiah)

c. Jesus must be accepted or rejected on accurate terms

- (1) To speak of Jesus as being merely a gifted teacher, a moral philosopher, or even as a prophet fundamentally misses what Jesus actually claims to be: **the** Christ, **the** Son of Man, and **the** Son of God.

C.S. Lewis -

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

d. The Rock of Faith

- (1) Jesus uses Peter's name (which means rock) as a means to explain what the foundation of the church would be—namely, faith in Jesus himself who is the cornerstone. **Peter is not the rock upon which the Church would be build, as many claim, but rather faith in Christ, which Peter professes, is the foundation of the Church Jesus is building.**

- (2) Faith arises from God's grace: "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (16:17).

2. Profession Leads to Community

a. Who are God's people?

- (1) This is the first mention of the word "church"(ekklesia) which means "gathered people" or "called ones" and it is synonymous with the word used to describe Israel as God's people (qahal)
- (2) While many believed that God's people were ethnic and national in identity (physical descendants of Abraham), one of the most important clarifications in the New Testament is that it is not "flesh and blood" that determines who God's people are, but genuine faith (see Galatians 3:7-9, Gal. 3:28, Matt. 8:11-13, John 6:63, Rom. 3:21-27, Rom. 4:11-12, Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 1:21-24, etc.)
- (3) Believers in the Old Testament and believers in the New Testament are all part of one people of God = Spiritual Israel

Deut. 6:7 - "You will be a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deut.7:6)

1 Pet. 2:5 - you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house [a Temple]... a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

b. The Church is a visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God

- (1) Since the beginning in the Garden, God intended to create a people in redeemed relationship with him from every tribe, tongue, and nation — Jews and Gentiles alike united in the one man Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:11-22).
- (2) Because of Christ's work, Hell will never be able to defend against the march of Christ's Kingdom.
- (3) While many have believed in Jesus as a King without a real kingdom and in a devil with near absolute power, the truth is that hell has been losing ground every step of the way since God the Son took a human breath.

3. We Possess the Keys to the Kingdom

a. As God's holy people, priests of God and of Christ, royal heirs of eternal life, we have been given authority, purpose, and power in eternal matters

- (1) We have been equipped and empowered to assault hells gates until they crumble in this world
- (2) If Jesus Christ is the eternal Lord and Savior of all, our calling as Christ followers to proclaim the Gospel and to live so that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven is the most important thing we can do
- (3) Through us, his church, Jesus is bringing hope, restoration, and goodness into the world in need of redemption

Discussion Questions

1. How would you answer Jesus' questions today? How do those around you see Jesus? How did you think of Jesus before you came to know him?
2. Re-read the C.S. Lewis quote in the first section above. What stands out to you about this quote? How does Jesus challenge all of our assumptions about him?
3. If God's people are those who have faith regardless of nationality or ethnic background, how does that challenge the assumptions of God's people in Jesus' time?

In what way have you been tempted to judge others based on external differences (whether that be skin color, social status, political party, etc.), rather than viewing people as equally image bearers of God? How does the Gospel enable us to be freed from our own prejudices?

4. Jesus does not give his disciples a picture of coming defeat, but of victory over the powers of hell. Discuss some of the ways we are regularly tempted to believe that Jesus' promise is wrong?

Are those truly good reasons, or might they be the result of focusing too much on "things of man" (Matt. 16:23)?

5. If today you began to think, believe, and act as if building Christ's church is the most important aspect of life, to which nothing else could compare, what would change?

What are some practical steps you can take so that your life would begin to look "on earth as it is in heaven"?