

Research on: Whom say men that I am?

Matthew 16:13-17

“Jesus now undertook another distant excursion, partly to escape the hostility of the Pharisees, but chiefly to hold private conversation with his disciples, and to lead them on to the recognition of his Messiahship and divine Sonship, which was the supreme object of his ministry, so far as the Twelve were concerned.” (Dummelow 680).

Jesus' place in prophecy is the one important fact that the disciples had failed to grasp. Maybe that was the one essential fact on which he must build his church. Peter's affirmation that he was the Messiah did not mean he knew about the suffering. He just saw him as the Messiah in prophecy that he knew about. It remained for Jesus to give them a lesson in prophecy in Luke 24.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Caesarea Philippi was an ancient Roman city built by Philip the Tetrarch and was located at the southwestern base of Mount Hermon (9000 ft.) about twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was a Gentile city and was often called Baniyas (Paneas) because the god Pan was worshipped there.

“What was the significance of this confession, which clearly marked a great epoch in Christ’s ministry? According to some its significance lay in the fact that he was now for the first time recognized as the Messiah. . . The significance of Peter’s representative confession, therefore, lies in this, that what they had before received on the authority of the Baptist, and as a mere working hypothesis, which might or might not be proved by events to be true, they now deliberately ratified as their own conviction, based on their personal experience of what Jesus had shown himself to be. Here then was the solid rock on which Jesus could build, not the shifting sand of possibilities and surmises, nor the weak faith which consists in mere submission to authority, but the strong conviction of earnest souls who know what they believe and why they believe it, and are willing to live by the truth they have apprehended, and if need be, die for it” (Dummelow 680).

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

“Elias = Elijah; Jeremias = Jeremiah the prophet” (Dummelow 680).

Some say that thou art a reincarnated prophet. In popular opinion, no one believed he was the Messiah because he didn’t publically declare that he was, and he wasn’t doing what people expected the Messiah to be and do.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“The Christ i.e. ‘the Messiah.’ The Son of the living God. These words together with the next three are peculiar to Matthew but are nevertheless authentic. They suit the context admirably, and are so thoroughly Hebraic in spirit, that their significance can only be apprehended by going behind the Greek to the Aramaic original. In confessing that Jesus was the Christ, Peter did no more than express the general sense of the apostolic circle. But in confessing that he was the ‘son of the living God,’ he was going beyond what the others at that time believed. . . . Son of God here was no mere equivalent of ‘the Messiah,’ but a confession of Christ’s unique filial relation to God. . . . This is shown by the deep emotion with which the speaker makes, and Jesus receives, the confession; and by the fact that the confession is perfectly satisfactory to Jesus, and is forthwith made the dogmatic foundation of Christianity” (Dummelow 681).

Jesus needed to know what they were thinking. Before they hypothesized that it was true or believed it based on John the Baptist, now, Jesus needed to really know what they were thinking. If the founder is in prophecy, then the church must be backed up scripturally.

Thou art the Christ – (the Messiah in prophecy), the Son of the living God. (appointed by God)

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“Simon Bar-jona = Simon, son of Jonah. Peter’s father is called Joanes’ (John), of which Jonah is probably a contraction. Flesh and blood corresponds exactly to the English expression ‘mortal man,’ and is often found in that sense in rabbinical writings” (Dummelow 681).

No human man has told you, no human opinion, you got that from revelation, from God.

18 Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. (not in this week’s lesson)

It is interesting the use of the two Greek words for “rock” there. *Petros* in Greek is ‘rock.’ But it’s not the real Greek word for ‘rock.’ It’s kind of a nickname. The Greek word is *petra* which is feminine. *Petros* is masculine. It shows that the church is founded on *petra* which is the bedrock and has a feminine context. *Petros*, Peter, is like a chip off the rock. *Petros* in Greek is almost the equivalent of ‘rocky’ in English. It’s a nickname. The church is founded on the bedrock or *petra*.”

“Peter has just said, that he has recognized that Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament. Is that important to the church? Because this is the first time Jesus ever mentions the word ‘church.’ He was probably waiting until the receptivity among his hearers warranted its mention. That receptivity would not be proved until whatever is necessary to be seen was introduced into the conversation. Peter apparently brings in that necessary ingredient by saying, “you are the prophesied Messiah.” In effect, you are not a temporary phenomenon. You were appointed by God to do your job.”

“Every Jew was brought up to consider that the Messiah was to come, but what kind of Messiah? What were the first century Jews expecting? The Jews expected a king, a political leader. . . . In Jewish Messianic thought of the Targum (a book or division of the Old testament in Aramaic), there is no room whatsoever for a suffering and dying Messiah. The Jewish Encyclopedia reads on this same subject “The Messiah was expected to attain for Israel the idyllic blessings of the prophet. He was to defeat the enemies of Israel, restore the people to the land, reconcile them

with God, and introduce a period of spiritual and physical bliss. He was to be prophet, warrior, judge, king, and teacher of Torah (Pentateuch). The early sources do not mention a suffering Messiah. How did Jesus look on the cross to a Jewish nation that had been brought up to regard a Messiah who would be victorious over everything, not be crucified as a criminal.” (Matthew, Crisler 57).

On the truth that I am the Messiah and you see my place in prophecy, I can build my church.