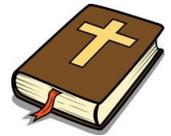


Who IS He?

Jesus asked an all important question: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). His apostles had initially followed Him, it seems, because they thought He was the promised Messiah



How many days was Ezekiel told to lay on his side while eating bread and drinking water?

(John 1:41, 49). However, He had not fulfilled the national expectations regarding the Messiah. For a while, great crowds had followed Him, but then the tide of popular opinion had turned against Him (John 6:66). In light of all this, did the disciples still believe in Him? Were they still sure, rock-solid sure, that He was the Messiah?

Then we hear Peter speak up, voicing what has become known as the “Good Confession” (See 1 Timothy 6:12-13): “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). “Christ” is the Greek form of “Messiah.” Peter was affirming that he did indeed believe that Jesus was the One promised by the prophets, for whom the Jewish nation had been looking.

It is not hard to imagine elation in the voice of Jesus as He replied “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona [Hebrew for “son of Jonah”], because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church” (Matthew 16:17-18a). This does *not* mean Peter had received a “special” revelation that the others had not received. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that the source of the truth about Jesus is God, *not* man. The way God has revealed this to Peter was through the life and teachings of Jesus!

Controversy has raged over the words “Peter” and “rock.” Catholic believers contend that verse 18 teaches that the church was built on Peter. Matthew 16:18-19 is their primary “proof” that Peter was the first pope. It is true that the Greek word Πέτρος (*Petros*) translated “Peter” means “rock”—but Jesus used two different words for “rock” in verse 18. The word translated “Peter” is *petros*, while the word for “rock” is *petra* (πέτρα). Not only are *different* words used, but also the first is in the masculine gender, while the second is in the feminine gender. The meaning of the words differ. “*Petra* denotes a large mass of rock, as distinct from *petros*, a detached stone or boulder, or a stone that might be easily thrown” (Vine’s, 974).

So, what was the *rock* upon which Christ would build His church? Most would agree that Peter confessed a “bed-rock” truth concerning Jesus. Some carefully point out that Christians are “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20). Many conclude from this statement that the apostle concluded that Christ *was* speaking of His church being built on Peter in a sense—except it was not built *just* on Peter, but rather on all the apostles and prophets of Christ. This interpretation is not entirely dangerous, *however*, two comments are needed: 1) The figures of Matthew 16 and Ephesians 2 are *different* and should not be confused. 2) Even in Ephesians 2:20, the meaning would have to be that the church was built on the *teachings* of the apostles and prophets—and their teachings were centered in Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14).

Jesus made a startling statement by asking “Who do you say that I am?” And yet, the question really must be answered by every accountable person because our reply indicates what we believe. If every member of the church were to be killed, this action would *not* destroy the church—why? “The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). The seed of the church/kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The Word is indestructible (1 Peter 1:23-25). The church will *always* exist, at least in seed form. Later in time, Satan began persecution against Christians, but his evil intentions spread the church throughout the world rather than destroy it!

Are you IN the church Jesus established when He died on the cross and arose from the grave? His life, death, and resurrection are central to Christianity. Obey the gospel (see 2 Thessalonians 1:3-8).

Who do YOU say He IS? Matthew 28:18-20.

To all our visitors: *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few “family” announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord’s Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible.

Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

Bday/Anniv Lunch: 2nd Sunday...

NMCCH: Spray & Wash and Bar Bath Soap (pick up **April 6, 2019**)

Friday Bible Study: from 7 to 8 PM.

VBS Meeting: Sunday (3/24) after AM services... anticipation is making us wait!

Singing: at Morton St, Tuesday (3/26) at 7PM