

(Luke 9:18~22)

Without a doubt, this lowly drifter from Galilee, that lived during the 1st century, who went by the name of Jesus...has got to be, *the most controversial man* in the history of the world, without question... There is no one, who has ever been the topic of debate, more than this man. He has been at the source of arguments, fighting's, even wars have been started over Him. Our calendar, and many of the Holidays we observe, revolves around this man. Many want nothing to do with Him, while others give up every thing they have, for Him. There are some who do not consider Him worthy of one hour of their time, to come and listen to His words, while there are others, who have given up their life on this earth, to serve Him.

Without a doubt, He is *the most controversial man* in the history of this world... In our day and time, you will be hard pressed to find anyone, anywhere in the world, who has not at least heard of this man. He's the only man I know, that no matter where you are, you need but only mention *His first name*...and everyone knows who you are talking about.

No one denies His existence... the fact of whether there was such a man, is not the subject of debate, but rather, "*Who He was.*" There were differing views as to who He was in their day, just as it remains true in our day. *Who was this man?* Was He the Son of God, as some attested Him to be? Or was He a prophet or simply a Rabbi, as others declared?

Well here in this passage, following the miraculous feeding of the thousands with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus and His disciples, slipped away to Caesarea Philippi, some 25~30 miles away, so they could be alone, and get some much needed rest. While there, Jesus approaches His disciples, and asks them, "*Who the people were saying He was?*" The disciples offered up an array of opinions that they had heard the people saying. Some are saying that you are John the Baptist. Some think you are "*Elijah,*" the one who was to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Others say, "*you're that one of the other old prophets, risen from the dead.*" We understand by the answers of the disciples, that there was a lot of differing speculation as to who He was, among the people. But what I find most interesting though, is by their answers; it becomes clear that the people of Jesus day knew that He was no ordinary man. For their answers revealed, that they thought Jesus was someone who had risen from the dead!

Their answer of John the Baptist, seems to suggest, that they thought John had risen from the dead... The answer of Elijah was no doubt in reference to the prophecies speaking of his coming, just prior to the great and dreadful day of the Lord. According to Matthew's account, some speculated, this was possibly *Jeremiah*. In the book of the Maccabees, Jeremiah is said to have taken the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of incense out of the Temple and hidden them on Mount Nebo, in order to preserve them from the desecration and destruction by the Babylonians. Some Jews thought that prior to Messiah's coming, that Jeremiah would return to earth and restore the Ark and the altar to their proper places in the Temple. Whatever the case, it is clear, that the people perceived Jesus to be no ordinary man, but one of the Holy Men of God, sent back to the earth.

After hearing the responses as to who the people though He was, He asks His disciples, who they think He is. "***Who do you say that I am?***" To which Simon Peter answered, "*You are the Christ of God.*" The term *Christ* means "*Anointed One.*" Peter says, "*You are **the Anointed One** of God.*" The term is synonymous with Messiah. Peter clearly believed that He was the Promised Messiah of God. Matthew records Peters answers as being... "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Turn with me to Matthew's account, because he adds something Luke does not, that is very significant...

*¹³When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?** ¹⁴And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and*

others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵He saith unto them, *But whom say ye that I am?* ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven.* ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, *That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Notice, Jesus mentions the fact, that the only reason that Simon is able to know who He is, is because the Father has “made it known unto you.” In saying “**Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,**” Jesus was stating that Simon had not come to “this knowledge” by “the teachings of men.” Simon, you did not acquire *this knowledge* from men...but rather, this “knowledge” was given to you of my Father, which is in heaven. It is He who has *enlightened the darkness of your heart*, and allowed you the great privilege of recognizing who I truly am. “Therefore Simon, I say unto you, you are a truly blessed man...”

Beloved, I want to make sure we don't miss the truth that Jesus is proclaiming here... That being, to “Possess the knowledge knowing who Jesus is...” to be able to “truly understand who Jesus is,” comes only by divine revelation of God!

Beloved, there is a big difference between “knowing things **about** the Lord,” and “having knowledge **of** the Lord,” and “**Knowing** the Lord.” Listen, the fact Simon “answered correctly” was not the issue here. Simons answer was not from attending Sunday School, and having listened in class, and merely coming up with the correct answer. For a man may possess much knowledge “about” God, having listened to much teachings of men...but yet not “**Know God.**” Simon’s answer was not a response from what he had learned from men...but rather this “knowledge” comes only by divine revelation of God! You may learn a lot of things about God, from men...but you’ll never come to “**Know God**” by the teachings of men, that only comes by divine revelation from God! And listen, if you are here this morning, and you “**Know God**”...you are blessed above all men! For not many have “this knowledge,” which comes from God Himself.

Turn with me to Luke 10... Here we find the disciples returning once again from having being sent out to preach the kingdom. And upon their return home, they began boasting as it were, of the power they had over devils and such. It becomes apparent, they were in awe of the powers they possessed...

¹⁷And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.* ¹⁸And he said unto them, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.* ¹⁹Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

²¹In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: (Contrast between Scribes and Pharisees...and...the lowly disciples) even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.* ²²All things are delivered to me of my Father: and **no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.**

²³And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, *Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:* ²⁴For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

If you “*Know the Lord*”...know this...“*it is only because God has allowed you to know Him!*” He has “*opened your eyes*” and allowed you to see this truth... And for that, we are to praise Him for His goodness towards us! We are truly blessed above all men of the earth...to have this “*Knowledge*” of God.

Can anybody here, think of anything greater than the privilege of “*Knowing*” the Lord?

(Mt. 16:17~19) ¹⁷ *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven....* ¹⁸ *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* ¹⁹ *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Now that last statement there, has been the center of much controversy, for centuries... The Catholic Church points to this passage, to support the “*Papacy*,” referring to the office of the “*Pope*.” They declare that here, Jesus was giving the “*Authority of the Church*” to Simon Peter, in the sense that he was the first “*overseer*” (First Pope) and that when he died, it would be passed down to other men. They see this “*giving of the keys*” of the kingdom, as a transfer of power to Peter himself, and that whatever he says goes, and what he declares is law. Basically that he would govern the church. Something you need to know, is that in the Catholic Church, the Pope has ultimate authority. He is even over scripture!

Beloved, that is not what we see happening here... ***God forbid that the future of the church, rest in the hands of sinful men!*** In terms of man’s intellect and abilities, we are not worthy of even entering the kingdom, much less govern the kingdom! I am grateful to God, that according to the clear teachings of scripture, that “*Christ*” is the “*Head of the Church!*” I tremble at the “*mere thought*,” that the church would be given over to the hands of men! Beloved, do you not think, that if it were given into the hands of men, that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it? Absolutely! No man is any match for the forces of Hell! It is Jesus, and Jesus alone who is the conqueror of death and hell! Beloved, rest easy, for the church is in good hands!

Jesus is not saying, that “upon Peter” He will build His church...but rather, it is upon the “Divine Revelation of God,” that He will build His church! “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is I heaven has revealed this to you.” It is upon this “Divine Revelation” that you have received from my Father, that I will build my church! Upon this very rock, speaks of the true confession of Peter, that Jesus was THE MESSIAH! He is referring to the “Faith” of Simon in Jesus as the Son of God. It is this faith, that was given him from God, that He would build His Church on! “Upon this rock” I will build my church, referring to the “Solid foundation” of the “revealed word of God!” It is upon the Fathers revealed word that He will build His church...a foundation so sure, so solid, that all the forces of Hell can prevail against it! Like a rock, God’s word is sure and unmovable!

That statement, “...*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” is an interesting statement... In ancient times, cities were enclosed inside a wall (much like Jerusalem) with “*openings or entrances*” at certain locations. At these entrances, were large, very secure gates, that they could close upon the attacks of an enemy! These gates had to be extremely thick and well built, because they were the weakest parts of the wall, given the walls were constructed out of enormous stones, which were unmovable.

The picture here is of such a city, signifying the “*Kingdom of Satan*,” with it strong gates... The expression, “...*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” refers to the fact that the gates of the kingdom of Satan will not be able to keep the Lord from rescuing His people. The picture here is of an invading army, coming to conquer a city. And here it refers to the Lord Jesus coming into the world, to deliver His people from the “*Kingdom of Satan!*” Though fortified, with strong gates, (*a picture of the*

strong hold that sin and death have on the souls of men) they will not prevent the Lord from delivering His people.

By the divine revelation of God, in the hearts and minds of men and women, they will be set free!

The “*Power of God’s Word*” will overcome the “*Power of Satan and His Kingdom!*”

Beloved, the “*teachings of Jesus*” had set Simon FREE! They had broken down the “*Gates*” that had kept him captive, for years... They had set him free from the clutches of sin and death! *Praise God!*

(Vs 5~12) Interestingly...Matthew records a conversation just prior to this, that Jesus had with His disciples concerning the “*Leaven of the Pharisees.*” Where he used the metaphor of bread in teaching about the “*doctrines*” of the Pharisees. When He warned them to beware of the “*leaven of the Pharisees*” He was referring to “*their teachings!*” It was false, and misled men. They promised heaven and the blessing of God, but they lead to destruction and damnation in Hell! The only thing their teachings did, were to mislead men, in deceiving them into thinking they were alright with God, based on their adherence to the Law of God! Which could do nothing for them, other than mislead them to think based on their so-called righteousness, they were just before God. When it is only by the righteousness of Christ will any man be spared!

In closing... In His reference to giving Peter the “*Keys of the Kingdom,*” though Jesus certainly did not mean that He was commissioning Peter as the “*Authority over the Church*” ...that is for Christ and Christ alone). Even though He is not doing that, He certainly is giving him some kind of “*Authority.*” Notice...

¹⁹*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ...
...and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven...
...and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

It’s apparent that He DID give Peter some kind of authority! And it’s important to understand what this authority is, because you and I have received a similar authority. The authority spoken of here, is given to the disciples, and now has been passed down to all true believers, those who have received the divine revelation of Jesus Christ, from the Father.

To understand His statement, it helps to first understand a common, Jewish practice that took place among Jewish Rabbis. When the Jews made a man a doctor of the law, they put into his hand *the key of the closet in the temple* where the sacred books were kept, and also tablets to write upon; signifying, by this, that they gave him authority to teach, and to explain the Scriptures to the people.

By the kingdom of heaven, we may consider the true Church, that house of God, to be meant; and by the keys, the power of admitting into that house, or of preventing any improper person from coming in. In other words, the doctrine of salvation, and the full declaration of the way in which God will save sinners; and who they are that shall be finally excluded from heaven; and on what account.

This prophetic declaration of our Lord was literally fulfilled in Peter, as we see him in the book of Acts preaching the divine revelation of Jesus Christ to both Jews and Gentiles! To those who received it, were set free from the bondage of sin and death, and given entrance into the church, the kingdom of God! While those who rejected the word, it was declared they were excluded from the kingdom! The point of giving Peter the “*Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven*” symbolized that Peter, (***Possessing the divine revelation of God***) now possessed the “*Power*” to set men free, or confine them to eternal punishment, depending on how they responded!

The “expressions” of *binding and loosing*, and *in heaven and on earth*, were very familiar to the Jewish people as well... The Jews considered that everything that was done upon earth, according to the order of God, was at the same time done in heaven: hence they were accustomed to say, that when the priest, on the day of atonement, offered the two goats upon earth, the same were offered in heaven. As one goat therefore is permitted to escape on earth, one is permitted to escape in heaven; and when the priests cast the lots on earth, the priest also casts the lots in heaven.

This *binding and loosing* were familiar terms as well, and were in frequent use among the Jews, and that they meant bidding and forbidding, granting and refusing, declaring lawful or unlawful. These words will receive considerable light from Leviticus 13:3, 23: The priest shall look upon him (the leper) and pronounce him unclean. Hebrew $\Sigma \diamond \diamond \backslash \Sigma$ $\omega\epsilon\tau\iota\mu\epsilon \sigma\tau\eta\theta$, he shall pollute him, i.e. shall declare him polluted, from the evidences mentioned before. And in Leviticus 13:23: The priest shall pronounce him clean, $\Sigma \backslash \Sigma$ $\omega\epsilon\tau\iota\eta\alpha\rho\theta \eta\alpha\chi\theta\eta\epsilon\nu$, the priest shall cleanse him, i.e. declare he is clean, from the evidences mentioned in the verse. In the one case the priest declared the person infected with the leprosy, and unfit for civil society; and, in the other, that the suspected person was clean, and might safely associate with his fellows in civil or religious assemblies. The disciples of our Lord, from having the keys, i.e. the true knowledge of the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, should be able at all times to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, and pronounce infallible judgment; and this binding and loosing, or pronouncing fit or unfit for fellowship with the members of Christ, being always according to the doctrine of the Gospel of God, should be considered as proceeding immediately from heaven, and consequently as Divinely ratified.

The point of His statements, were the indication of the “*authority*” of the Church, in the world. Here Jesus is declaring the Church to be the official representative of God! It is a transfer of power you might say, taking it from Israel, and giving it to the Gentiles. The Authority that we have as leaders, is not to govern of our own accord, but rather govern on the basis of this book! Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Lord, has given us “*the power*” and the authority to declare to all men the standard of truth! And we do so, based upon the revelation of God’s revealed word of Jesus Christ. The truths we proclaim from this book, become the truths by which all men are accountable to. In saying that what is bound on earth, is bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth, is loosed in heaven, spoke to the fact that the Church serves as God’s representative on earth, and whatever it teaches, is the word of God.