

## **Series: The Kingdom of Jesus**

### **Message: The keys to the Kingdom –part 1**

#### **Scripture: Matthew 16:13-28 (Focus verses 13-17)**

**Introduction:** In the center of this passage of Scripture we find Jesus making an incredible statement about His Kingdom. Jesus tells His followers that He is giving them the keys to the Kingdom. The passage breaks down into 3 sections for our study.

- The needed confession
- The Keys Jesus has given
- The mindset needed

Before Jesus communicates to the disciples this giving of the keys to the Kingdom He has spent two years sharing life with them and has taught them many truths about His Kingdom. Now before Jesus can begin to tell them about the Keys He must first know if they understand and truly believe who He is. Before we can begin to serve as a steward of God's Kingdom we must truly embrace who Jesus really is. If we do not fully believe who Jesus is we will be incapable of serving Him much less walking the road of self-denial and suffering that will be required.

Today our focus is on this critical time of questioning as Jesus seeks to know what His followers believe about Him.

In verse 13 Jesus asks the first question. He asks who do people say that the Son of Man is? This is a loaded question. The phrase Son of Man is a title from Daniel and the Psalms which points to the Messiah who would be both God and man. Jesus is inferring in the question a subtle hint. Do people see me as the Messiah? The disciples answer with four responses in verse 14.

Some say you are John the Baptist. This was the thought of King Herod for sure. Some say you are Elijah. The prophets foretold that Elijah would come right before the Messiah. Peter, James, and John would soon learn that this was not correct because after the experience on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured Jesus plainly tells them that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy.

Some say you are Jeremiah. Much of Jesus teaching resembled the style of Jeremiah. Some simply chose to believe Jesus was one of the prophets. This could have meant one that returned or a new prophet. What is clear is that although Jesus is thought well of by the people no one is saying that He is the Son of Man, the Messiah.

Jesus is leading up to the more important question. It is one thing to be asked what others are saying. It is quite different to be put on the spot in front of all the disciples

and asked what you personally believe. The way Jesus phrased the question is not seen as forcefully in our English translations. In the Aramaic Jesus uses the word “You” twice. He says: “But you, who do you, say that I am?”

Jesus was seeking the needed confession. This was an important moment for Jesus. He had shared life with these men. They had received His teaching. They had witnessed His miracles. They had been given supernatural power to participate in the miracles. Now Jesus wants to know what they believe about Him. Are they ready to move to the next level of instruction and leadership?

Simon Peter did not hesitate. In John 6:68 after the miracle feeding of the people and the departure of the crowd Jesus asked if the disciples were also going to leave Him? Peter answered where are we going to go? You alone have the words of eternal life!

Now when faced with a deeper question about personal belief Peter once again steps up to declare the truth that he believed. Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Wow!

In this confession of faith we find the entire doctrine of belief which the church has held for these 2000 years. Through the years the church has amplified it, explained it, and illustrated it, but has not changed this simple confession. In these words Peter described 3 truths concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

- **Jesus’ Office or Position** – “The Christ” – the Messiah. Jesus is the One all of the prophets had foretold would come. The Messiah is the deliverer. He is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is the one who fulfills all of the prophecies.
- **Jesus’ Nature** – “Son of the Living God”. This means Jesus came forth from the nature of God. He is the only one begotten of the Father. To share God’s nature is to be God. To say Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God is to say that Jesus is both fully God and fully Man.
- **Jesus’ Person in the Godhead**– Jesus is the Son of God. He is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the triune Godhead. The one true and living God has revealed Himself to us in 3 persons, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Son is the Word of God. Jesus is the understanding of God about Himself thus the Word who became flesh (human) has revealed God to us.

Peter’s response comprised, in a simple sentence, all we must believe about Jesus to truly follow Him. Every doctrine concerning Jesus Christ of Nazareth can be found in this simple statement.

Jesus responds to Peter with blessing and confirmation of Peter's confession. The other disciples heard Peter's words but we do not know if they would have said the same thing. Now they know that Peter has made a bold proclamation and they wait for Jesus to respond. Jesus response is directed to Peter but it is for all of the disciples and for us as well.

First Jesus says that Peter is blessed. Jesus clarifies that Peter is blessed (favored) because the words he just said did not come from Peter or any other human being. The truth about who Jesus is cannot be learned it must be revealed to a person by God. God had revealed this wonderful truth to Peter. Peter had believed it and then confessed it. We too can be blessed of God when He reveals to us who Jesus really is and we embrace Jesus as God, our Lord and Savior.

Jesus also uses a subtle manner of confirming what Peter has said. Jesus tells Peter: "You are Simon Barjona". This means the son of Jonah or John. At first we may think Jesus is just using Peter full name in this formal blessing. However in the flow of the conversation listen for what Jesus is saying. Peter says "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Then with no pause Jesus says "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah". Jesus is saying just as you are the son of your father I too am the son of my father, the true and living God. Jesus is confirming Peter's statement that He is indeed the Son of the living God. Jesus further adds to this confirmation by saying the words; "My Father who is in Heaven". The truth about Jesus was revealed to Peter by Jesus Father, the true and living God in Heaven.

In verse 20 Jesus warns the disciples not to share this truth yet with anyone. This indicates that each of the disciples with the exception of Judas truly believed as Peter did. Now Jesus would be able to begin to prepare them for the responsibilities of the Keys of the Kingdom. He would now be able to tell them of the need of being faithful stewards. He could tell them of the need to deny self, take up the cross and follow wherever he leads. He could now promise the rewards in heaven. Until they believed that Jesus was more than just a good teacher, or potential earthly leader / king Jesus could not reveal to them to full picture of the Kingdom. Until they knew Jesus was God He could not reveal to them the vastness of his eternal kingdom and the road of suffering required to bring it to earth as it is in heaven.

We too must see Jesus as more than just our escape from hell. We must see Jesus as more than just the one we seek blessings from or comfort when things in this life do not go our way. For Jesus to reveal Himself to you in the power of His

Resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings you and I must first fully embrace who He is.

Jesus of Nazareth who walked this earth 2000 years ago, who died on a cross, who rose from the dead after 3 days is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He is God and the eternal King. We exist for Him. Life is not about us, it is about Jesus, our creator. We are blessed if we are able to see and believe this truth. We do not add Jesus to our lives. We have no life apart from Jesus. To embrace this truth is to confess that Jesus is Lord of all.

This will open doors for the joy of serving Christ for all of eternity and it will give you the mindset needed to follow Him in this life fulfilling His purposes and bringing Him glory in whatever was He requires.

To seek to be a follower of Jesus and not fully embrace who Jesus is will be very frustrating. C.S. Lewis said well that based upon the statements of Jesus, He was a liar, a lunatic or the Lord God. We must decide for ourselves who He is.

Today Jesus is not interested in what others may think about him. He wants to know who do YOU confess him to be? If He asks you this question at home, or work, or among your neighbors who do you confess Jesus to be? Is He God to you? Is He your God? If He is your Lord He is to be above all things. He alone is to be worshipped in your life. He is to be served with no conditions. How do you answer the question Jesus is asking you today?