

Jesus used to quite often refer to Himself as “The Son of Man”. And one day, He led his disciples, deep into pagan territory. Up until then, He’d been mainly preaching to his own people – the Jews, but they wouldn’t accept Him. And it seemed, the more devout the Jew – the more deeply religious the person (or even the whole region for that matter), the more religious they were, the **more** they rejected Him. Until, of course finally, in the religious capital – Jerusalem, He was crucified...

Being religious isn’t necessarily a virtue...

They just **wouldn’t** believe... They said, “It’s easy – just give us a **sign** and we’ll believe.....” But what more did they want? He’d already fed the 5000 with only 5 loaves and 2 fish. He’d walked on water. He’d healed the sick and He’d driven out demons. And **then**, He fed the 4000 from a picnic hamper,..... And still, they had the hide to say, after all of that, “Just show us a sign and we **will** believe”.....

Their barrier to belief, was **not** a lack of signage.... Their barrier to belief, was **not** the need for more proof... And there are many people today who would say, “If God gives me a sign, I’ll believe”. Don’t you believe it... It didn’t work in Jesus’ day – and it’s no different today...

I reckon, if their barrier to belief was a medical condition, it’d probably be diagnosed as a chronic case of *petra-cardia* (a heart of stone). The barrier, that stopped them from believing, was a hardness of their heart, and the wickedness of their person – even though they were religious....

So, Jesus led His disciples away from this religious area – away from the lake, and they travelled, some 40 km (and it

was a steep climb) , some 500 odd metres, they ascended, to Caesarea Philippi – Pagan territory.

And it was here, that Jesus, asked His disciples a very important question, and it was probably safer for them to answer it there, then in religious territory.... Matthew 16:13 ....

**"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"**

And then He asked them an even **more** important question. He made it really personal for them. "Well, what about you? You nail your colours to the wall. Who do **you** say I am?"

And today, I'm going to be asking, those same two questions.... First question first, so put the second question right out of your mind...

Who do **people** say the Son of Man is? When it comes to **most** people out there in the world, who do they say that Jesus is???? Give me some answers....

(Teacher, moral guide, an example to follow, miracle worker, a good man, a fraud, a myth, a prophet.)

Hindus – say Jesus is someone who, as a teenager, found his way East to India, learned yoga, and returned to become a guru to the Jews<sup>i</sup>. Some believe the Christian God to be one of many gods.

Muslims – a prophet, born of a virgin, sinless, but didn't die.<sup>ii</sup>  
Jehovah Witnesses – Archangel Michael – the first of created beings...

Alright, so that's what some people say about Jesus, but even **more** important than that, is the second question....

15 **"But what about you?"** he asked. **"Who do you say I am?"**

..... Now, think very carefully before you answer that....  
How you decide to answer— what you believe, in response to that question, and what you determine to **do** about what you believe, is by far, the most critical verdict, that you will ever make....

And don't just regurgitate the answer you know I want....  
What do you **truly** believe???

*Got time for a story?*

*One day, person was doing the kids story in church, and person asked, "OK kids, What's big, grey, wrinkly, and has a very long nose???"*

*And young person2 said "I know. I know.... Jesus"*

*And person said "No, it's not Jesus"*

*And person 3 knew he had the answer, because there was only one other "God?"*

*No. It's not God either. It's an elephant...*

God isn't interested in what you **think** you should believe about Jesus. What **is** important, is what you **do** believe about Him.

Who **do you** say that Jesus is???? What's your answer????

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Is that your answer? Do you **really** believe it?

Put up your hand if you really believe that. Well, if you really believe it, say it....

Wow. I seem to be right in the middle of a blessing of God. Because if you truly believe that Jesus is the Christ – the Son of the Loving God, that in itself, is a supernatural blessing.

Why **do** you believe that? Some of you might say, “Well, because my parents taught me.” Others might say, “I was taught that in Sunday School”. Some might say, “Well, I didn’t used to believe, but Such-&-such-a preacher, convinced me.” Some might say “I just know.”

But then others would say, “Ahh, you’ve been brain-washed”. “Ha – you’re just gullible – some people will just believe anything” “A superstition for the weak and the stupid” .....

So, what is it? Is it knowledge, or is it stupidity?

Well, Jesus didn’t go, “Congratulations Peter. You’ve worked out what all these signs mean.”

No. This was not a revelation from flesh and blood. No man or woman taught Peter these things. Peter didn’t possess a higher intellect, such that he could work it out for himself.....

It was a revelation from God ....

17....., **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.**

It was a blessing....

*Have you ever wondered why 2 brothers, or 2 sisters can be brought up in the one family, and one will be a believer, and one will reject God? Have you ever wondered why 1000 unbelievers can hear the same evangelist, and 10 of them will have changed hearts? ....*

It's not because they were the gullible ones. It's not because they were smart enough to see the truth. It's the blessing of God.

Believing and knowing in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, is not a human feat. It's a gift from God. It's a blessing from God.

And if there's one thing I've learned, it's when God gives a blessing, **with** it comes responsibilities.

- When God blesses you with a child, you have a responsibility to love and care for that child, and to bring him or her up in God's ways
- When God blesses you with a home, you have a responsibility to invite in the traveller who has nowhere to stay on a cold winters night.
- When God blesses you with a business, you have a responsibility to do the right thing by your employees
- When God blesses you with finances, you have a responsibility to care for the poor
- When God blesses you with health, you have a responsibility to care for the sick
- When God blesses you with youth or vigour, you have a responsibility to care for the old and the tired.

When God gives a blessing, with it comes responsibilities.

And when your Father in Heaven gives you the greatest of blessings, by revealing to you that Jesus is the Christ, with this great blessing, comes a great responsibility.... And sadly, most of us actually shirk this responsibility.

You and I have a huge responsibility to fulfil, because we've been hugely blessed by God.

Jesus said to Peter, ....., "Blessed are you, Simon (son of)-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter (in Greek means rock), and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

That's a big responsibility that God put on Peter, but you know what? That's not just for Peter. You and I, as believers, along with Peter, the believer, share that responsibility.

With this passage, there's 3 views as to what it means. The first is the one you may be familiar with, particularly if you're from a Roman Catholic background. Peter is promoted as head of the church. He's the first pope, and there's a succession from Peter afterward, from pope to pope. Well, that's really stretching what Jesus said.

*The pearly gates cartoons would picture peter at the pearly gates, deciding who gets into heaven and who doesn't.....*

It's a huge stretch.

The second view, I believe is a protestant reaction against Roman Catholicism, more than being based in the bible. This view would say (and some of you might have heard it) You are Peter (Petros meaning the rock), and on **this** rock (me – Jesus) I will build my church. And that sounds like a nice explanation that we could get from the English, but the problem is, the construction of the original Greek, really does **not** say that. The actual grammar and construction of the sentence, actually puts peter as the rock that Jesus is talking about... Let's not react against unbiblical doctrine, by becoming unbiblical ourselves.

Let me give you the third explanation, and I think you'll realise, this is the one I go with, and this is it:

Peter – not just the man Peter, but the man who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Peter, is used as a prototype... Peter (the man of faith) is the first of many men and women, who will **also** have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The “this rock” that Jesus is talking about, is the man or woman of faith. They have the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. They have the power to bind or loose. They are the Rock on which Jesus builds His church.

Peter – the man of faith – **is the rock on which Christ builds His Church.** You, as a man or woman of faith – given to you

by God – are the rocks on which Christ builds His church. The Christian church – the gathering of believers is not founded or built on a constitution.

I'm in the midst of trying to write a constitution for Bush Disciples, because we legally have to have one to exist in our society – the same as the sports club here has to have a constitution.... But that constitution, is not the basis on which Christ builds His church.

The gathering of believers, is not built on a constitution. It's not built around a building. It is not built by benefactors with big cheque books. The true church of Jesus Christ, is not founded on business principles or ideals, or even nice people. The Church is built with believers.

Get this – God did not bless you with faith, so you can have a nice, private belief, sitting in the comfort of your own home. God blessed you with faith, and on the rock of men and women of faith, He builds His church. You think you're not important? Well, get that out of your head. God gave you faith, and your responsibility, is to be **rock** in the gathering of Christians.

And the gates of Hell cannot prevail against it. Folks, we're in a spiritual battle. Good vs. evil. God vs. Satan. Heaven vs. Hell. Angels vs. Demons. But when together, in Christ, we have nothing to fear. The gates of Hell do not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ.

Satan did everything that he could to destroy the church of Christ. Christians were persecuted and chased to the ends of the earth. But that only spread the gospel further. And everywhere they went, they took the keys to heaven with

them. Everywhere they went, they took the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter, as a man who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, carried the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, wherever he went. And as Peter shared the gospel – the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, every now and then, the key would fit, and another soul would be unlocked from the bonds of hell, and loosed to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Key to the Kingdom of Heaven, is carried by you – the believer. Whatever you bind on earth, will be bound in heaven. Every time that I'm too embarrassed to share my faith with another, I've ensured that that person is bound a bit longer. Every time, what I believe about Jesus, is not what I say about Jesus, I've kept somebody bound up....

But you know what? Praise be to God, the reverse of that is also true. Every time you – the believer, pluck up the courage to witness to the truth that you know – that Jesus is the Christ – the Son of God – every time you do that, is another chance for a soul to be loosed.

That, my friends, is a huge responsibility. And it's a responsibility that most of us have been shirking for many years.... When your Heavenly Father blesses you with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the responsibility is to **share** that faith..... The responsibility, is to be an **active** disciple of Jesus Christ.

As Bush Disciples gets up and running, my hope and my dream, is that you and I, together, will become **active** disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bush Disciples is about encouraging the way of discipleship, in the Bush. And I scoured the New Testament for just the right passage about discipleship to kick off with today... And as I began searching the Scriptures, almost instantly I realised I was starting from the wrong place.

You don't **begin** with Discipleship. Discipleship doesn't make any sense, unless we begin with Jesus Christ.

If Jesus was just another man, who died and was buried, it doesn't make any sense to be a disciple of a dead man. But the fact that Jesus **is** the Christ – The fact that He **is** the Son of God – The Fact that He died, and yet lives again, – discipleship – the life of a disciple, the sacrifice of a disciple – the responsibilities of being a disciple – all of a sudden, are an honour and a blessing. And because Jesus is the Christ, the rewards of faithful discipleship, are out of this world.

And because Jesus is the Christ, the gates of hell, cannot prevail against the gathered disciples.

Next time I preach, I'll be taking the next 8 verses of this same reading, v21-28. But without the foundation that we've laid today, those verses just wouldn't make sense.

The knowledge of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is the key. Don't keep those keys to yourself. Who do you **say** that Jesus is? Not "Who do you believe that He is privately in your heart?" Who do you **say** that He is?

Take every opportunity to say it. Take every opportunity to unlock those who are bound, and bring life where there is currently death.

You've told me that Jesus is the Christ. God's word tells me, that **God** revealed that to you. With that blessing, comes responsibility – to be an **active** disciple of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray....

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Hinduism/2002/05/What-Do-Hindus-Believe-About-Jesus.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.islam-guide.com/ch3-10.htm>