

8/30/26

Sermon Title: "Who Do You Say That I Am?"

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

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

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

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus and His disciples arrived at Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi was different from the coastal port city of Caesarea, which was located on the Mediterranean coast northwest of Jerusalem.

It was a beautiful and quiet city situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, about 40 kilometers north of the Sea of Galilee.

The snow on Mount Hermon melted and seeped underground, eventually emerging from beneath the rocks here.

These waters flowed into the Jordan River, making this area one of the major sources of the Jordan River.

Around 20 B.C., Herod the Great received this region from the Roman Emperor Augustus, and it became part of Herod's territory.

Later, Herod Philip the tetrarch, who ruled this region, greatly expanded the city and dedicated it to the Roman Emperor Tiberius.

The city's original name was Paneas, named after the Greek god Pan.

However, Herod Philip renamed it Caesarea in honor of the Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar and added his own name, giving it the name Caesarea Philippi.

Since most of the inhabitants were Gentiles who worshiped idols, the city was filled with temples and statues.

The native inhabitants worshiped Baal, while the Greek inhabitants worshiped Pan, the god of forests and wild animals, and built temples dedicated to their respective gods.

In addition, Herod the Great built a temple dedicated to the Roman emperor in an attempt to curry favor with Augustus.

Except for the fact that it belonged to the territory of the Herodian dynasty, which ruled parts of Palestine, this was a very different city from Galilee.

Its people, their religion, and their way of life were all different.

Yet Jesus took His disciples there.

Considering that Jesus' ministry was centered primarily in Galilee and Jerusalem, there must have been a special reason why Jesus took His disciples to this place.

Jesus began a conversation with His disciples in the midst of this secular city filled with idol worship.

He was taking stock of His public ministry up to that point and, in preparation for the suffering of the cross that lay ahead, was beginning a more intensive period of training for His disciples.

Through a question-and-answer format, He wanted to teach them the essential truths that every disciple needed to know.

Jesus asked His disciples what people in the world thought about Him.

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

“Son of Man” was a title that Jesus frequently used when referring to Himself.

By using this title, Jesus was implying not only that He was God, possessing the very nature and character of God—that is, that the fullness of deity dwelt in Him bodily—but also that He was the Messiah who had come to this earth to accomplish the will of God.

The disciples answered,

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

We can see that the people of the world, including the Jews, not only lacked a full understanding of who Jesus was, but also held mistaken views about the resurrection.

Nevertheless, their views of Jesus were generally favorable.

Some said that Jesus was John the Baptist.

In their memory, John the Baptist was a powerful spiritual prophet who had proclaimed a message similar to that of Jesus.

Others said that He was Elijah.

Elijah was the prophet in the Old Testament who most passionately rebuked the people for their spiritual corruption and religious injustice.

He was also the prophet who was taken up into heaven without experiencing death.

Still others said that He was Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was known as the “weeping prophet,” who shed more tears than any other prophet for the people of Israel.

They may have seen something of Jeremiah in Jesus, especially in the way Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Jesus was not satisfied that the people did not have a correct understanding of who He truly was.

So this time, He asked His disciples what they thought about Him.

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter, who was known for his bold and impulsive personality, stepped forward before the other disciples and made this priceless confession of faith.

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

The words, “You are the Messiah (Christ),” mean that Jesus is the One who has been anointed by God. In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were anointed by God. Jesus is the true Messiah who fulfilled all three of these roles—as the High Priest, King, and Prophet, just as Peter confessed.

The title “the Son of God” emphasizes the divinity of Jesus.

It declares that Jesus is the very being of God, one with the Father, who was sent by God into this world.

Peter was standing in the midst of the magnificent imperial city of Caesarea Philippi, surrounded by splendid temples that were incomparably more impressive than anything he had seen in his hometown of Galilee.

Yet there, before these dazzling temples, Peter confessed that Jesus—who appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary man—was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Peter's confession is regarded as one of the most complete confessions of faith concerning the Lord Jesus.

It contains the essential truths at the heart of the Christian faith: the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the purpose for which He came into the world, and His essential identity and nature.

When Jesus heard Peter's confession, He commended him and said that the One who had revealed this truth to him was "my Father in heaven."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

At this point, Jesus addresses Peter by the name "Simon Bar-Jonah."

Simon Bar-Jonah means "Simon, son of Jonah."

Jesus wanted Peter to clearly understand that the fact that Simon, the son of Jonah, a fisherman from the Sea of Galilee, had made such a profound confession of faith about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was not due to any exceptional human wisdom, knowledge, or status that he possessed, but was entirely the result of God's grace.

Jesus then gave Simon, who had been known by that name, a new name: Cephas, which means Peter.

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

"Cephas" is Aramaic, while "Peter" is Greek.

Jesus was now fulfilling what He had said when He first met Simon, who had been introduced to Him by his brother Andrew:

(John 1:42) "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)

And Jesus went on to say, "On this rock I will build my church."

This is the first occurrence of the word "church" in the Bible.

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

When Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church," He was not saying that He would build the church upon Peter as an individual.

Rather, He was saying that He would build His church upon the confession of faith that Peter had made as the representative of the apostles.

Jesus specifically called it “my church” and said, “I will build my church.”

Once Jesus was recognized and confessed as the Messiah, He declared that He would establish His own people—that is, His church.

This statement is deeply significant because it reveals Jesus’ identity and authority as the Messiah.

Jesus was declaring that those who follow Him, believe in Him, and become part of the new covenant people established through His blood would belong to Him as His church, His people.

He was not speaking of a temple as a physical building, but of a spiritual community—the united people of God under the new covenant.

Jesus came to establish this new temple, the church, which He had spoken of when He said that the temple would be destroyed and raised again in three days.

In fulfillment of this promise, Jesus actually began building His church when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost.

After God the Holy Spirit came to dwell on earth at Pentecost, all believers who shared this confession of faith became the temple of God.

From that time onward, the Holy Spirit came upon those who had been born into new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, uniting them as one body—the body of Christ, which is the church.

This is why we do not ultimately refer to a building as the church, but to each individual believer as part of the church.

Jesus also said that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

The phrase “the gates of Hades” refers to death.

Jesus was declaring that the power of death would not be able to overcome the church.

The church cannot ultimately be conquered by physical death because Christ broke through the gates of death and reigns as the conqueror over death.

Christ defeated death and rose again, and because He lives forever, He is not only the guarantee of the resurrection of all believers but also the eternal foundation and assurance of the church's permanence.

With His absolute sovereignty as the Messiah, Jesus promised to grant special authority in the church that would be established in the future to Peter, the twelve apostles, and, ultimately, to the entire church of Christ that would share this true confession of faith.

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Jesus was promising to give the church, represented by Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven—the authority to exercise spiritual governance and discipline in matters concerning the kingdom of God.

Through the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, the church would be entrusted with the authority to open the way into the kingdom of heaven for some and, for others, to declare that they are excluded from it.

This authority would be exercised through the proclamation of truth, apostolic authority, spiritual exhortation, and, when necessary, church discipline toward those who belong to the church through their confession of faith.

In the early church, church discipline was a special responsibility entrusted to the apostles, the elders, and ultimately to the whole church.

Through this authority, the church adds those who are saved and is strengthened and built up as the body of Christ.

Thus, the "keys of the kingdom," originally belonging to Jesus, the rightful owner, were entrusted to His apostles and, through them, to the churches on earth.

They became essential for the church to carry out its ministry under God's approval and to exercise the authority entrusted to it.

After giving this promise concerning Peter's confession of faith, Jesus commanded His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.

²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus gave them this command because the time had not yet come.

At that time, the Jewish people did not understand the purpose for which Jesus had come into the world, nor did they understand God's plan and purpose.

They simply saw the miracles and wonders He performed and wanted to make Him their king in order to satisfy their immediate needs and desires.

They viewed the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament primarily as someone who would fulfill their political aspirations.

They expected Him to become a political revolutionary who would deliver them from Roman oppression.

If Jesus' identity as the Christ had been widely proclaimed among people who held this understanding of the Messiah, it could have disrupted the course of His mission, which required Him to go to the cross, die for the sins of humanity, rise again, and ultimately ascend into heaven.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Jesus, standing in the very heart of Caesarea Philippi, a city filled with all kinds of idols and worldly powers, asked His disciples and the people the most fundamental question: "Who do you say that I am?"

The people said that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the great prophets.

Although these were favorable opinions of Jesus, they did not reflect a correct understanding of who He truly was.

Peter, however, speaking as the representative of the disciples, boldly confessed through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, “You are the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God.”

This was not merely a confession of knowledge.

It was a confession of faith that Jesus is the Lord of my life and the Savior who alone can deliver me from sin and death.

When Jesus heard Peter’s confession of faith, He was greatly pleased and declared that He would build His church upon this confession.

The church is not a building.

The church is made up of those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells, as well as the community formed by such believers.

Jesus also entrusted the church with the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

This authority was given to the church so that it might proclaim the truth of the gospel, testify to Jesus Christ, and fulfill the mission of proclaiming God’s will to the world.

At this moment, the Lord asks each one of us again:

“Who do you say that I am?”

Who do you believe Jesus is?

May Peter’s confession — “You are the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God”—become our confession as well.

May we build our faith, our families, and the rest of our lives upon this confession of faith.

True faith begins with knowing who Jesus truly is and confessing Him as our Lord and Savior.

But our faith must not end with a verbal confession.

If we confess Jesus as the Messiah (Christ), we must follow the way of Christ.

If we confess Jesus as our Lord, we must surrender the lordship of our lives to Him.

If we confess Jesus as our Savior, we must hold fast to His Word and live by faith.

Let us stand firm and hold fast to Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Lord, refusing to be shaken by any voice or temptation of this world!

May you and I remain unshaken by any temptation or trial in this world, hold firmly to Jesus Christ who has overcome the power of Hades, and live each day in victory through faith.

I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ.