

THE MESSENGER



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30

Comments on Matthew 16:13-20

by Luther W. Martin

Verse 13 - *"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'"*

Caesarea Philippi was a town in the northern portion of Palestine, some 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was located at the foot of Mount Hermon. Herod Philip extended the town in his day, and named it after himself, to distinguish it from his father's "Caesarea" on the seacoast. This is the northern-most region that Christ is recorded in Scripture as having travelled.

The expression "district" merely refers to the region, territory, or area around Caesarea Philippi.

Verse 14 - *"And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.'"*

The disciples recount the various opinions held by the residents of the area, as to Christ's identity. John the Baptizer had been beheaded. This "haunted" Herod the Tetrarch (Matt. 14:1-2). Malachi, the last of the Old Testament Prophets, had spoken about Elijah being sent back to Israel (Mal. 4:5-6).

Verse 15 - *"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"*

This is a direct and emphatic question. An answer is demanded!

Verse 16 - *"And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"*

The Gospel of Matthew is obviously written to instruct the Hebrews as to the identity of the Messiah, for whom they had looked so long (Matt. 1:16). "The Living God" was an expression used by the Jews for their God in contrast to the pagan gods, who were considered to be 'dead gods'. . . "gods without power". This passage could be rendered "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the God who lives forever."

Verse 17 - *"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjonas, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"*

Congratulations, Simon, son of John (Jonas)! This truth concerning Me, you did not receive from a human source, but from My Heavenly Father. Obviously, Christ was pleased with Peter's confession of His Divinity. So, the word "Blessed," "happy" (as in the Beatitudes,) or even "Congratulations!"

Verse 18 - *"And I also say to you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."*

The Greek word for "Peter" is *petros*, meaning a stone or pebble. So, Jesus was not telling Peter what his name was, but was stressing the size or dimension of stone which Peter's name designated. Then, the contrast was completed when Jesus continued by emphasizing, and upon *this* rock, *petra*, a ledge of rock, or "bed-rock" I will construct or build my church or kingdom. Note that Jesus was NOT promising to build His church upon Peter, but upon something far greater and more stable, i.e., Christ's Divinity which Peter had just confessed. Some translators give the word "rock" a capital "R", but since the original text was in uncials. . .all the same size letters, then any capitals are the product of the translator's own mind, and may or may not be correct. May I suggest the following translation: *"And I also say to you, that you are a pebble, and upon this bed-rock I will build My church. . ."*

to be continued

News and Notes: Tuesday Bible Studies – 11 a.m. Old Testament and 7 p.m. Romans
Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16