

## Matthew 16:17-19 Foundations of the True Confession

Introduction: Recap last week. (Speak of next two sermons: 1) Jesus as builder and 2) The keys of the kingdom.)

1. A True Confession is based on Revelation. There is no true confession unless God reveals. The word reveal means to “unveil,” “uncover”, or “make something known” that wasn’t previously known. It is where we get the English word “revelation.” It is kind of like an ultrasound, when mothers and fathers find out the sex of the baby. In this context, God revealed this truth to Peter. What truth? The truth that Jesus is the Son of God. And he says that flesh and blood did not reveal this truth. In other words, it did not come from man. It did not originate with Peter, nor did another person reveal this truth to Peter. Nor, could this revelation come from “flesh and blood.” Peter did not learn through philosophy, or poetry, or by looking at nature. He did not learn it from the depths of his own heart. Jesus was saying, **“If God had not revealed this to you, you would still be in the dark; and because of this revelation you are truly a blessed man.”**

This means that, for the Christian, the one who confesses Jesus as the Son of God, the immediate cause of faith is divine revelation. Consider the following verses that use the same word “reveal”. Matt. 11:25: Jesus says, **“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.”** Jesus makes it very clear in his teachings that faith is not the effect or product of our own abilities, the best of which are but flesh and blood. Consider John 6:44-45 when Jesus says, **“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”** Also, in John 17:6-8: Jesus says, **“I have revealed Your name to the men who You have given Me out of the world, They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent me.”** Also consider the words of Paul in Gal. 1:15-16: **“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer wit flesh and blood, . . .”** There are scores of other verses from both the Old and New Testaments we could reference. Let’s consider some applications.

Since God reveals this truth to us, there is no room for boasting. God receives the glory! Jesus did not say to Peter, *“Good words, Good answer, Boy you are a bright. Good decision!”* Instead, Jesus says, **“God revealed this to you.”** When we pray, we don’t say, *“Lord, I am so glad Johnny believed in you.”* “I am so glad that he mustered up enough faith to know who Jesus is.” No, we pray, *“Thank you God almighty maker of heaven and earth for saving Johnny, even though He has always rebelled against you and tried his best to bring reproach upon your name and your people. Thank you for opening Johnny’s eyes and causing him to see, for opening his ears so that he could hear. Thank you for*

*taking out his heart of stone and giving him a living faithful heart of flesh that desires you.*” I know of no other doctrine that humbles a man like the doctrine of divine revelation. (See also 1 Cor. 1:26-31)

Application: When we share the good news with our neighbor, coworker, friend, or when we go to the nations (Russia, Bangladesh, Africa, etc.) **we know that our message will be successful.** We know God will reveal Himself to sinners. He will make sure His Word does not come back void with no fruit. As the book of Revelation says, **“He will gather for Himself a people who will worship Him around the throne, from every tribe, nation, and tongue.”** The message of the gospel will be successful. “Flesh and blood” will only reveal those things that are also “flesh and blood,” but God will reveal His Son, so that His people confess, *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Application: If we want people to join Peter’s great confession, we must not rely on flesh and blood devices. We must not be tempted by the things that appeal to men and women today, especially the entertainment that so dominates our secular culture and, sadly, much of the church as well. We may make the most effective appeals to flesh and blood, to the things that are persuasive and enticing to the fleshly nature of mankind. However, those means we will never bring about the saving faith first professed by Simon Peter. Instead, we must rely on the one means God has provided: His Word. As we teach and proclaim God’s Word about Jesus, the Father in heaven reveals the truth to the minds and hearts of men and brings them to true and saving faith.

2. Christ is the Foundation of the Church - After explaining the source of Peter’s confession (divine revelation), He says, “You are Peter, which means “rock,” and upon this “rock” I will build my church.” This is a play on words. “Peter” means rock. And then Jesus “upon this rock I will build my church.” What did Jesus mean by this statement?

This particular verse and the various interpretations of it have caused more divisions and errors within the Christian Church than just about any other verse. There are four main views: 1) Peter is **the** foundation of the church; 2) Peter’s **confession** is the foundation of the church; 3) **Christ** Himself is the rock, the foundation of the church; and 4) Peter is **a** foundation in the church.

The first option is obviously not correct. To speak of a mere man, a fallible child of Adam, a sinner just as we are, as the one upon which the church will be built is not a possibility. Peter is NOT the foundation of the church! If this had been the case, Jesus would have said, *“I will build My church upon you instead of upon this rock, petra.”* Also, just a short time later (Matt. 18), the disciples are arguing over who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. If they had understood Jesus as saying that the church would be built upon the man Peter, they would not have had this discussion.

The second option, in my opinion, is also not correct in and of itself because the spiritual church can not be built on the mere words of a confession. Yes, confessions can be true statements, but they always explain something much deeper and more fundamental. Yes,

Peter's confession was true. And, in a manner of speaking, the church is built upon a true confession. But, the actual building of the church is based on Christ, the one in whom the confession acknowledges.

The fourth option, that Peter is a foundation of the church has some truth to it, at least in the context of this passage because in v. 19 Jesus says, "***I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven***" (next week's sermon). In other words, Jesus is giving some foundational authority to Peter and the Apostles. I say this because, in the Eph. 2:20 Paul says, "**the church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.**" So, there is a sense upon which Peter and the apostles were foundational to the building of the church. But, they weren't "**The Foundation**" of the church.

With this in mind, the third option, that Jesus Himself is the "*Rock*" upon which the church is built is the only possibility.

Istanbul is still my favorite city in the world to visit. And I often think of the original wall around the city. And through all the years with all the earthquakes, these old Roman walls still stand. What a foundation they have been built upon! In 1 Pet. 2:5-8 Peter affirms that Jesus is the foundation of the church. He even quotes the OT saying, "**Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame . . . and The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.**" Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:11 "**For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**"

Brothers and sisters, our faith is based upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. in particular, His person and work. Jesus is the sinless Son of God. And, as the only ONE who could save us from our sins because of his work on the cross, his resurrection, and his ascension, this foundation is the ONLY one!

What happens when someone builds upon another foundation? Here are a couple examples of those who base their faith upon a faulty understanding of Jesus' person: According to Mormonism, *Jesus was the spiritual "first born" Son of God in the preexistence. "Every person who was ever born on earth was our spirit brother or sister in heaven. The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ, so he is literally our elder brother"* (Gospel Principles [GP], p. 11). The Watchtower Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses also deny the deity of Christ and say He was a created being. They even say He was the angel Michael before He came to earth. In both cases, they are building upon a foundation that says Jesus was just a man, but not God. And in both cases, there can be no salvation, there can be no real church. After all, the church is the "saved" people of God.

Jesus had to be God in order to be the foundation of the church. If Jesus were only a man how could he bear up under the infinite wrath of God on the cross? If He were only a man, how could he have power over death? If He were only a man, how could He satisfy God's justice, gain His favor, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation? Listen to the words of Isaiah

9:6-7 **“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”**

Although much fewer, there have been those who have denied that Jesus was a man. Some thought he was only an appearance, a dispensation, a phantasm, a mere cloud acted by divine power. But, Jesus also had to be a man in order to be the foundation of the church. If he were not a man, how could he perform obedience to the law? How could he actually suffer and make intercession for us in our nature? How could he be tested as we are, yet without sin? From the fall of Adam, God required the obedience of a man, to restore what mankind lost in Adam? Consider the words of Heb. 7:24-25 **“But because He continues forever (even now as a man with a glorified body) has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”** Brother and Sisters, this is our foundation! We cannot build upon any other.

Jesus himself tells us what will happen to those who build upon another foundation. (Matt. 7:24-27) **“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”**

What happens when someone tries to add to this foundation? You might ask, *“How can someone add to this foundation?”* Well, this is what the world does. It looks to everything else but Christ as a way to get to God. There are also many who name the name of Christ that are building on the foundation of works. Think back to the walls around Istanbul. Through the years engineers have added to these walls. But through centuries of earthquakes, what has been added has only fallen down.

In the same way, when the world, or anyone for that matter, tries to add to the foundation of the work of Christ, they only fail. In Acts 4:12 Peter says: **“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** The only thing that will stand is the Church’s One Foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. **“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”**

There is no salvation outside of Christ.

In closing, listen to these words from Eph. 2:19-22 **“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”** Our Foundation is sure. It is based upon the revelation of God, which comes down to us through the person and work of Christ as the One upon which God’s church is being built.