

# PETER'S CONFESSION OF CHRIST'S DEITY

**BIBLE TEXT: Matthew 16:1-28**

LESSON 113 - SENIOR COURSE

**MEMORY VERSE: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).**

## **Bible Text in King James Version:**

### **Matthew 16:1-28 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. <sup>2</sup> He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red. <sup>3</sup> And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? <sup>4</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. <sup>5</sup> And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. <sup>6</sup> Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. <sup>7</sup> And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread. <sup>8</sup> *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? <sup>9</sup> Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? <sup>10</sup> Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? <sup>11</sup> How is it that ye do not

## **Bible References:**

### **I The Pharisees and Sadducees Rebuked as Sign-Seekers**

- 1 With ulterior motives they sought to tempt Jesus, asking for a sign from Heaven, Matthew 16:1
- 2 Jesus denounced them for discerning the face of the sky but not the signs of the times, Matthew 16:2, 3
- 3 Rebuking them as wicked and adulterous, He promised them only the sign of Jonah, Matthew 16:4;

**Matthew 12:40 (KJV)**

<sup>40</sup> For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

### **II The Disciples Warned Against Their Doctrine**

- 1 Jesus told them to beware of the "leaven" of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, Matthew 16:5, 6
- 2 When they thought it was because they brought no bread, they were reminded of His feeding the multitudes, Matthew 16:7-10
- 3 He explained that He spoke not concerning bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, Matthew 16:11, 12

### **III The Great Question Jesus Put to His Disciples**

- 1 Coming to Caesarea Philippi, He asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Matthew 16:13
- 2 They answered: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets," Matthew 16:1
- 3 Jesus then put the question direct to them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Matthew 16:15

### **IV Peter's Great Answer as Spokesman for the Disciples**

- 1 Without hesitation Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matthew 16:16
- 2 Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matthew 16:17
- 3 He continued, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matthew 16:18

### **V The Apostolic Commission Bestowed upon the Disciples**

- 1 They were given authority to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, with their ministry sanctioned in Heaven, Matthew 16:19
- 2 They were charged to tell no man He was the Christ, because the hour of His suffering was not yet come, Matthew 16:20, 21
- 3 Peter rebuked Him for the revelation of His suffering, and Jesus replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan," Matthew 16:22, 23

### **VI The Sacrifice Attending True Discipleship**

- 1 Jesus revealed that to be His disciple meant a life of bearing one's cross and of self-denial, Matthew 16:24, 25
- 2 It meant the forsaking of the profit of the world, and holding the soul of value above all else, Matthew 16:26
- 3 The glory of Heaven will be revealed when the Son of man comes with all His holy angels, Matthew 16:27, 28

## **Notes:**

In the days of Jesus' ministry the great contention in the minds of men was whether He was in truth the Son of God, or only a man. And that

understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? <sup>12</sup> Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. <sup>13</sup> When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? <sup>14</sup> And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. <sup>15</sup> He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? <sup>16</sup> And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>20</sup> Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. <sup>21</sup> From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third

same contention is still in the minds of men today. It is a question which has never been settled in the world. The nominal Christianity of the world today, instead of getting any nearer the truth, has drifted further and further away from it.

### **The Jews' Conception of Their Coming Messiah**

**The** Jews believed in a coming Messiah, as foretold by the prophets, and they believed, too, that He was One sent of God. It is evident that when Jesus came into the world, the carnally-minded multitudes, including the learned men of the Law — the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees — had altogether a misconception of what manner of man this Messiah should be. They were looking for One to come in earthly glory and power, to set up an earthly kingdom, and to deliver them out of the hands of the Romans. For was it not so promised in the Word? "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luke 1:70. '71).

But what a different Man was their Messiah when He appeared! He came in no earthly splendor. He was born in a manger on a pallet of straw. He lived not in kings' palaces. He grew up as a carpenter's son in a humble home at Nazareth, and then was entertained in the homes of His friends, or spent the night on a barren mountainside. Oft He had nowhere to lay His head. He was not welcomed with the blare of trumpets and military power. He gave no call to arms to summon warriors to His side. He did preach that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, but it was not established by force. Instead, the entrance therein was by repentance. He gathered about Him a following, but it was only a little group of humble men.

The members of the Jewish Sanhedrin were not looking for this "lowly Man of Nazareth." It was true the common people heard Him gladly, and multitudes followed Him. But how could this Man deliver them out of the hand of their enemies? How could He attain to the throne of David and reign in power? So they rejected the Christ as their Messiah, and the words of their prophet were fulfilled, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

### **The Pharisees and Sadducees Rebuked**

Thus the whole angle of view on the part of the rulers, concerning their Messiah, was from the material standpoint. Neither Jesus' teachings, nor the holy life He lived, conformed to their ideas. And malice against Him was kindled in their hearts, lest all the people should follow Him and their nation should be destroyed. They therefore sought to entangle Him with cunning questions, if possibly they could establish a charge against Him.

Among these were the Pharisees and Sadducees who came tempting Him, and desired that He would show them a sign from Heaven. They could discern the face of the sky and know whether it would be fair or stormy, but they could not discern the "signs of the times," when all about them the *signs* were abounding. A certain Bible student, in commenting upon these verses of Scripture, remarked: "Our blessed Lord had already wrought miracles sufficient to demonstrate both His divine mission, and His divinity; only one was further necessary to take away the shame of His cross and death, to fulfill the Scriptures, and to establish the Christian religion; and that was His resurrection from the dead." Throughout His entire ministry, Jesus had wrought miracles — healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and causing the lame to walk. Everywhere He went He did good, relieving the sick and suffering, binding up broken hearts, and bringing joy into lives. And yet these hypocrites asked for a sign from Heaven! Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no

day. <sup>22</sup> Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. <sup>23</sup> But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. <sup>24</sup> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. <sup>26</sup> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. <sup>28</sup> Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

### **The Doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

Jesus, having rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees, "left them, and departed," probably on His trip to Cæsarea Philippi in the remote regions of the north, in order to be alone with His disciples. "Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." And the disciples reasoned that it was because they had forgotten to bring bread that He thus spoke to them. But Jesus, reminding them of the time He fed the five thousand, and also the four thousand, said, "How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?" And then they understood that the Lord was warning them against the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The sect of the Pharisees arose after the Prophet Malachi, when no longer were there any true prophets in Israel until the time of John the Baptist. In the beginning the Pharisees were sincere, holding to the Law of Moses and to the doctrines taught by the prophets. But in Jesus' time they had degenerated spiritually and were little more than an unscrupulous political party. They were substituting the traditions of men for the commandments of God (Matthew 15:1-3). They also believed in the transmigration of the soul, similar to the doctrine of "reincarnation" taught by the Hindus in India. The Pharisees, too, did not believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, denying that He was the Son of God and rejecting Him as their Messiah. The charge upon which they condemned Jesus to death at His trial was that He claimed to be the Son of God.

The Sadducees were materialists, believing neither in the resurrection, nor in angels, nor in spirits (Acts 23:8). While they denied many of the doctrines in which the Pharisees believed, yet they joined with the latter as bitter enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. These doctrines were the "leaven" against which Jesus warned His disciples. And His disciples still need to be warned, for the world today is flooded with false doctrine — an evil which Jesus very fittingly likened to leaven; for when once a false doctrine is accepted by an individual or a group of people, it will eventually leaven the "whole lump." When one lends his ear to anything contrary to the Doctrine of Christ, he is tampering with a poison that can mean death to his soul. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

### **Peter's Great Confession at Cæsarea Philippi**

Cæsarea Philippi is said to be near Mount Hermon in the remote north, and Jesus no doubt selected this town because it afforded Him and His disciples a place of retreat and gave the latter an opportunity to ponder in their hearts the important question which Jesus was about to put to them.

The first question He asked them was this: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Because of Jesus' great works, the miracles which He wrought, and the doctrines which He taught, His fame had gone abroad, and the multitudes believed that a great prophet had arisen in Israel. But Jesus knew well their hearts — that to the multitudes, and especially to the rulers, He was still only a man. He therefore asked this question of the disciples, not to determine what men in general thought of Him, but to approach a far more important issue, and to draw out of their hearts a confession that would settle once for all, as far as they were concerned, the mooted question: "Who is this Jesus?" "For with the heart man

believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10).

Jesus therefore put the next question direct to them: "But whom say ye that I am?" This time He made no allusion to Himself *as* "the Son of man," an expression frequently upon His lips. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16), and walked as a man among men, a fact which the disciples, the multitudes, and the rulers well knew. But there was a more profound truth concerning this Man Jesus which was not revealed to their mortal eyes. Yet Simon Peter, without any hesitation, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And the Apostle Paul had the same confession in reference to the Gospel: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11, 12). Neither Peter nor any of the other disciples received this confession from man, nor from the current opinions of men; neither were they taught it. It is far more than a mental belief; it is a direct revelation from Heaven to every man who is born again; it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

### **The Rock upon Which the Church Is Founded**

And Jesus, continuing in His answer to Peter, said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Lord certainly did not mean, as some have misconstrued this verse, that Peter was the "rock." The personal name "Peter," which Jesus bestowed upon him when first He met Simon, is derived from the word meaning rock. But when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," He used the term *petra* which means a strata of rock, or a foundation. And this is the "sure foundation" of which both the Old and the New Testaments say much. Neither Peter nor any other man is the foundation upon which the church is built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Christ is the Rock, upon which His disciples are founded, when they have that confession from the heart, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The importance of this confession which Peter made as spokesman for the other disciples is disclosed by Jesus' next step, for He proceeded to commission the twelve as apostles to carry on the work to which they were called. And this was needful, for Jesus' crucifixion was drawing near, as is intimated in Matthew 16:21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." When it was demonstrated by Peter's confession that the twelve were established upon the Rock, Jesus said, "I will give unto thee the

keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." A reasonable interpretation of this verse is that Jesus was about to confer upon these twelve apostles the authority (typified by the "keys") to proclaim this Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world, for which the door of grace was about to be opened (Acts 1:8), and to carry on the work for which they had been schooled when they were sent forth two by two to minister to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:1-8). The latter part of this verse, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," seems to indicate that their work on earth, conducted under the authority bestowed upon them, would be sanctioned in Heaven. And the apostles undoubtedly received this authority when they were endued with power by the mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost (**Acts 2:1-4 (KJV)**)

<sup>1</sup> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance).

### **The Son of God**

The whole thought of this sixteenth chapter of Matthew seems to center about Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And, as mentioned above, this statement was a subject of contention among the Jews throughout Jesus' ministry, and is very prominently a subject of contention today. Our salvation is dependent upon the truth of this statement. If, as many unbelievers assert, Jesus is not the Son of God, then He is not divine; He is only a man, and His whole mission is a failure. But His divine Sonship is maintained in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Book of Psalms we read, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). When Nebuchadnezzar gazed into the fiery furnace, where he had cast the three Hebrew children, he cried: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Un of God" (Daniel 3:25). Jesus, after His resurrection, commanded His disciples, saying, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). There is no question about the Deity of the Father, nor of the Holy Ghost. Then the Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, is also divine. The Apostle Paul emphatically asserts His divine Sonship: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God ... concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:1-4).

Even though Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God in both the Old and New Testaments, yet there are some sects who deny His eternal Sonship, asserting that He was not the Son of God until He was born of the Virgin Mary. A certain well-known commentator of the Bible states, "The doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ is, in my opinion, anti-scriptural."

That all doubts may be dispelled concerning this weighty question, let us see, in closing, just what are the teachings of the Bible concerning the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ: He is declared 44 times in the New Testament to be the Son of God. And even among the unbelievers in the days of His ministry, as we have seen above, this was the subject of contention which finally resulted in His crucifixion. They never questioned that He was the "Son of man," but they vehemently denied that He was the "Son of God." And why? Because the latter confirmed His Deity, as was

revealed by Peter's confession, while the former only asserted His human nature. Thus throughout the Scriptures this profound truth that He was the "Son of God" obviously sets forth His divine nature, and the expression "Son of man" reveals His human nature.

Again throughout His ministry He frequently spoke of God as His Father and addressed Him as such, which consequently put Jesus in the position of God's Son. In His great intercessory prayer He -lifted up His eyes to Heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John. 17:1, 5). And this last verse unmistakably declares that the Son was with the Father, amid that heavenly glory, before the world was.

Also in our brief study of the Holy Trinity above (Matthew 28:19), we found that all the attributes which were attributed to one Person of the Godhead could be attributed to the other two Persons, for the Son, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," (Philippians 2:6), therefore could claim all the attributes of the Father and the Holy Ghost. And there is no question about the Deity of the first Person, nor of the third Person. Even the Holy Ghost is referred to in Scripture as the "eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14). Therefore the Son was also eternal and divine.

Finally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is brought out a beautiful likeness of Melchisedec, "priest of the most high God," to Jesus as our High Priest. And of Melchisedec it is said, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually". (Hebrews 7:3). Here Melchisedec, a type of the Son of God, has "neither beginning of days, nor end of life," which confirms the eternal Sonship of Jesus.

He who wants to be a member of that Church built upon the Rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, must have the same confession which Peter had, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And this is no mere mental assent. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (I John 4:15).

**Do you know Jesus,  
Our Lord, our Savior,  
Jesus the Son of God?  
Have you ever seen Him,  
Or shared of His favor?  
Jesus the Son of God.**

**O who would reject Him,  
Despise, or forsake Him,  
Jesus the Son of God?  
O who ever sought Him,  
And He would not take Him"  
Jesus the Un of God.**

**If you will accept Him  
And trust and believe Him,  
Jesus the Son of God,  
Your soul will exalt Him,  
And never will leave Him, Jesus  
the Son of God.**

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 What did Jesus mean by the "leaven" of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?
- 2 What did Jesus mean by telling the Pharisees and Sadducees that the sign of Jonas only would be given them?
- 3 Why, probably, did Jesus depart with His disciples to the distant town of Cæsarea Philippi?
- 4 What was the second question put to His disciples at the town of Cæsarea Philippi?

- 5 Why was it so much more important than the first question He asked them?
- 6 When Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," from what source did he get his knowledge?
- 7 What is the "rock" upon which *Jesus* said that He would build His Church?
- 8 What kind of confession must a man have in order to become a member of that Church?