



## Who Is Jesus

Part Eleven / Wednesday, February 20, 2019

### THE GATES OF HELL

1 Matthew 16:13-19

2 **When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,**  
3 **saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? [14] And they said, Some say**  
4 **that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the**  
5 **prophets. [15] He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [16] And Simon**  
6 **Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. [17] And**  
7 **Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and**  
8 **blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. [18] And I**  
9 **say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;**  
10 **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] And I will give unto thee the**  
11 **keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be**  
12 **bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**

13  
14 The sand in the hour glass was quickly running out. Our Lord Jesus now had several  
15 weeks to live before Roman soldiers pounded 5-inch spikes through His hands and feet,

1 nailing Him to an old rugged cross. Jesus know His time was short in His earthly life -  
2 and He still had vital things to accomplish. Among them this: He took His twelve men  
3 to the lower slopes of Mount Hermon (on Israel's border with Lebanon (Phoenicia in the  
4 Old Testament) and Syria to a place we know as Baniyas. The cave pictured on page 1 is  
5 this very spot. It was the wicked, cultic and totally demonic headquarters of the man-  
6 made god named Pan - the half goat, half man, mythical remnant of Greek mythology.  
7 Jesus wanted all the time remaining to spend with His 12 disciples. He had so much yet  
8 to teach them. For that reason He gathered them some 25 miles north of Capernaum  
9 and the Sea of Galilee to Baniyas, nestled in the foothills of majestic Mount Hermon - a  
10 truly gorgeous location.

### 11 IMPORTANCE OF THE SITE

12  
13  
14 On our trips to Israel, I take our pilgrims to several dozes of biblical locations that had to  
15 do with Jesus. One of my favorites is Baniyas. Jesus would not be bothered here by  
16 ruthless leadership here. It was outside the authority of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee.  
17 It was by and large a Gentile area. William Barclay used words to paint the situation  
18 facing our Lord:

19  
20  
*Confronting Jesus at this time was a demanding problem. His time was short; His days in the flesh were numbered. The problem was—was there anyone who understood Him? Was there anyone who had recognized Him for Who and what He was? Were there any who, when He was gone from the flesh, would carry on His work and labor for His kingdom? Obviously that was a crucial problem, for it involved the very survival of the Christian faith. If there were none who had grasped the truth, or even glimpsed it, then all His work was undone; if there were some few who realized the truth, His work was safe. So Jesus was determined to put all to the test and ask His followers who they believed Him to be.*

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22  
23 Consider this: Baniyas was a hotbed of religion.

- 24 ■ It was located right on the border with Syria. There were at least 14 pagan  
25 temples in the area. This was a center for ancient gods.
- 26 ■ On the front page you see the picture of a great hill, in which was a deep cavern.  
27 In that cave, according to belief of that generation, the god Pan, the god of nature,  
28 was said to be born.
- 29 ■ The cave was said to be the place where the sources of the Jordan originated  
30 (actually there were three such sources throughout that area). Josephus, the  
31 historian of that day, wrote: *There is a very fine cave in the mountain, under*

1           *which there is a great cavity in the earth; and the cavern is abrupt, and*  
2           *prodigiously deep, and full of still water. Over it hangs a vast mountain*  
3           *(Hermon) and under the cavern arise the springs of the Jordan River.*

- 4           ■ In this place, Caesarea Philippi, there was a great temple of white marble built to  
5           the Caesar of Rome. It had been built by Herod the Great. Later Herod's son  
6           Philip further beautified it and added his own name so it became Caesarea Philippi.

7  
8 Into this false religious center came the Son of the Living God with twelve quite ordinary  
9 men around Him. He stands in an area debauched by temples of fake gods. And in this  
10 spot, Jesus asked His men Who they believed Him to be. He wanted an answer. He  
11 still does - from you and me!

### WHO DO YOU CLAIM JESUS IS?

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14  
15 Note carefully the first answers the disciples gave to Jesus:

16  
17 1. ELIJAH Why in the world would they say that? First, they were giving Jesus very  
18 high place in their minds, just not high enough. Elijah had usually, if not always, given  
19 the highest spot on the list of prophets by the rank and file Jews of that day. But they  
20 were also saying that if Jesus was Elijah, He would have been the forerunner of the  
21 Messiah. They were banking their statement on an Old Testament scripture: Malachi  
22 4:5 **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and**  
23 **dreadful day of the Lord:** That answer must have disappointed Jesus for He was not  
24 the forerunner of Messiah; He WAS Messiah.

25  
26 The title "Messiah" means "the anointed one." Jewish religious leaders considered  
Messiah to be a human leader, physically descended from the paternal Davidic line  
through King David and King Solomon. They believed that He would unite all the  
tribes of Israel, re-gather them to the sacred Land (Eretz Israel), and rebuild the  
Temple in Jerusalem., thus ushering in a golden age. They believed that He would  
usher into this world universal peace. In Christianity, the Messiah is called the  
Christ. Christians believe the former qualifications listed for Him, but also believe  
Messiah is the Son of God.

Muslims believe Jesus was only a prophet and the Messiah sent to the Israelites. He  
will come back to earth with His helper, the Mahdi (who qualifies in almost every  
respect to the scriptural Antichrist) and defeat anything set up by the false Messiah.

1 2. JEREMIAH Why would any Jew claim Jesus to be Jeremiah? It was a fairly  
2 common concept about Jeremiah that before the Babylonian invasions (culminating in  
3 586 B.C) that he had taken the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of incense from the  
4 Great Temple and hidden them in some remote cave on Mount Nebo (a mountain in  
5 Jordan overlooking the Dead Sea). Further, it was assumed by these that prior to the  
6 coming of Messiah, Jeremiah would return and produce those sacred relics so that God's  
7 glory would once again visit the land of Israel. So it is rather easy to see why the rank  
8 and file Jew might assume that Jesus was either Jeremiah or Elijah.

9  
10 Then Jesus' must have stared right into their brains and followed up with this: BUT WHO  
11 DO YOU SAY I AM?  
12

Matthew reported that Peter said: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God."  
Mark reported Peter's words as: "You are the Christ!"  
Luke's response is very strong that Peter said, "You are the Christ of God."

13 Jesus must have felt joy that at least someone would verbalize the reality of Who He truly  
14 was! Napoleon was once asked about Jesus and he responded, "I know men. Jesus  
15 Christ is more than a man."  
16

17 The question remains for everyone of us here now. Jesus is asking for your response.  
18 Who do you believe He is? One more thing: Christianity does not consist of knowing  
19 ABOUT Jesus; it always consists of KNOWING Jesus.  
20

## 21 JESUS' RESPONSE AND MANKIND'S RESULTING THEOLOGICAL ERROR

22  
23 Matthew 16:17-19

24 **And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona (son of**  
25 **Jonah): for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in**  
26 **heaven. [18] And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will**  
27 **build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] And I will**  
28 **give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on**  
29 **earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be**  
30 **loosed in heaven.**

31  
32 Several denominations believe that at this point Jesus made Peter the founder, the head, of  
33 His Church. That is an erroneous conclusion. Verse 18: Jesus said, "Thou art Peter."  
34 In Greek, *Peter* is *petros* which means rock or a small stone. Then Jesus said, "Thou art  
35 PETRA," or upon this confession of faith on Me, the Christ and Savior, I will build my

1 church. Most Roman Catholics take these passages to mean that Jesus gave Peter the  
2 keys which gain one admission to Heaven or to exclude one from Heaven. Further, they  
3 claim, that Peter was given the power to absolve a person from his or her own personal  
4 sins. With this power given him, Peter therefore has become the Bishop of Rome and  
5 his successors retain that same authority.  
6

7 To be sure, Peter is to be given his rightful due as a great leader in the early church. But  
8 no scriptures gave this great man the claim to be founder of Christ's church. Early  
9 church persons made that designation, not God. Saint Augustine took this passage in  
10 Matthew 16 to mean: **Jesus said, You are Peter; and on myself as rock I will found**  
11 **my Church; and the day will come when, as a reward for your faith, you will be**  
12 **great in the Church.** An old hymn declares, *My hope is built on nothing less than*  
13 *Jesus' blood and righteousness! I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on*  
14 *Jesus' Name! On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!* No  
15 one should ever take away the distinctions of Peter the Apostle; but to make him more  
16 than what Scripture makes clear is very shaky theology.  
17

#### 18 THE MEANING OF THE GATES OF HELL

19  
20 Matthew 16:18

21 **I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**  
22

23 Jesus declared, "**I will build my church....**" That statement should clarify any confusion  
24 on Who is the author, the founder, of Christ's church."  
25

26 **...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**  
27

28 What does that mean? What are the gates of hell? I read one writer's opinion about  
29 this. He opined, "On top of the mountain overlooking Caesarea Philippi (Banias) there  
30 stand the ruins of a great castle which may well have stood there in all its glory in the  
31 time of Jesus." The writer suggested that "maybe" that old castle was The Gates of Hell.  
32 As a matter of fact, that castle was NOT there in Jesus' day. It is known as Nimrod's  
33 castle and dates back to the Crusades a thousand or so years ago. I have had the joy of  
34 exploring that castle (picture on the next page), but it was NOT the Gates of Hell.  
35

36 Hades is yet another term for Hell. To the ancients, Hell was regarded as the place for  
37 the dead. Once there, it was inescapable. The function of the gates of Hades was to  
38 contain the dead, to keep them in. The One Person whom Hades could not control was  
39 Jesus. So one possibility is that Jesus declared that not even death could hinder His  
40 church. We know that Jesus defeated death three days after His crucifixion.



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21 The forboding ruins of Nimrod's castle, overlooking the hills of Galilee. This structure goes back only to the  
22 Crusades. Though wicked, it was not the Gates of Hell.

23  
24 I lean toward yet another possibility. In that dreadful cave of Pan, with its palatial  
25 surroundings, every despicable act ever hatched in the blackest haunts of Hell found  
26 completion. Historians even speak of human sacrifice in the bowels of that cave. There  
27 is no bottom to the bitter dregs of sin. Satan attacks us humans in every diabolical way  
28 he knows to turn us from God and to himself. While we understand the wickedness  
29 thrown against us, the Body of Christ, we do not fear. It cannot prevail!

30  
31 Today our nation is becoming more and more addicted to drugs and booze. Worship of  
32 Satan has increased as a result of them. Immorality is flagrant and we are seeing a wave  
33 of illegitimate children who will be raised all too-often without fathers in the home. The  
34 coming generation will pay a fearful price for this. Mockery of decency and Scriptural  
35 truths is seen daily on the "boob tube." Yes, the Gates of Hell seem to be prevailing in  
36 America. But are they prevailing - really? No! proclaims our Lord. The Church will  
37 defeat all of it and be ultimately triumphant! NOT EVEN THE GATES OF HELL CAN  
38 PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

39  
40 I have sometimes told my wife that I would like inscribed on my burial marker, "He was a

1 church man!" I am exactly that and will be with all my strength. Everything else will  
2 fade and disappear! But Christ's Church will be triumphant! Gloria Gaither wrote a  
3 great lyric to be narrated in their song *The Church Triumphant*:

4  
5 God has always had a people.

6 Many a foolish conqueror has made the mistake of thinking that because he had forced  
7 the church of Jesus Christ out of site he had stilled its voice and snuffed out its life.

8 But God has always had a people.

9 The powerful current of a rushing stream is not diminished because it's forced to flow  
10 underground.

11 Now the purest water is the stream that bursts crystal clear into the sunlight after it has  
12 forced its way through solid rock.

13 There have been charlatans who like Simon the Magician sought to barter on the open  
14 market that power which cannot be bought or sold.

15 But God has always had a people

16 Men who could not be bought and women who were beyond purchase.

17 God has always had a people

18 There have been times of affluence and prosperity when the church's message has been  
19 nearly diluted into oblivion by those who sought to make it socially attractive, neatly  
20 organized, financially profitable.

21 But God has always had a people.

22 Yes, it's been gold plaited, draped in purple and encrusted with jewels. It has been  
23 misrepresented, ridiculed, lauded and scorned,

24 But God has always had a people.

25 And these followers of Jesus Christ have been, according to the whim of the times,  
26 elevated sacred leaders and modern heretics. Yet through it all, their march is on. That  
27 powerful army of the meek, God's chosen people, who cannot be bought, battered,  
28 murdered or stilled. On through the ages they march - the church! God's church  
29 triumphant!

30 Listen, child of God - it's alive!

31 Discouraged pastor, it's His church and its' still alive. Lonely missionary, sow that seed  
32 with confidence. The church is still alive! Old saint, you're not alone or forgotten.  
33 The church is still alive.

34 Busy mothers, keep trusting Jesus! The church is alive.

35 And faithful fathers, there's rest in the Lord. God's church is still alive! So, family of  
36 God, lift your hands, lift your hands and praise the Lord. The church, God's church  
37 triumphant, is alive! It's alive, my friends - Alive and well!

38  
39 PETER TRIES TO CORRECT JESUS  
40

1 Matthew 16:21-28

2 **From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go**  
3 **unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes,**  
4 **and be killed, and be raised again the third day. [22] Then Peter took him, and**  
5 **began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.**  
6 **[23] But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an**  
7 **offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be**  
8 **of men.**

9 **[24] Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him**  
10 **deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. [25] For whosoever will save his**  
11 **life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. [26] For**  
12 **what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or**  
13 **what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? [27] For the Son of man shall come**  
14 **in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man**  
15 **according to his works. [28] Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here,**  
16 **which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**

17  
18 What a sudden turn-around! A few moments ago Jesus lauded Peter for his faith; now  
19 He rebukes him soundly! It is a startling thing to realize that after three years of ministry  
20 with His 12 disciples, those men still didn't really understand what Jesus was all about.  
21 So when He told them point-blank that they were all heading south now to Jerusalem –  
22 not to some crowning and glorious arrival - but where He would be put to death and then  
23 rise again three days later.

24  
25 After all, that is why He came! As a teacher, Jesus was without peers. As a Healer, He  
26 was unsurpassed. As a philosopher, outstanding. But those were not the principle  
27 reasons why He came from Heaven to Earth. He came to die! In that 21<sup>st</sup> verse, Jesus  
28 could not have made it more clear: **Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus**  
29 **to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many**  
30 **things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again**  
31 **the third day.** How could anyone mistake Jesus' mission after those words?

32  
33 Well....Peter could. **Matthew 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him,**  
34 **saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.** Talk about being  
35 deflated! Just minutes earlier, Jesus had lauded Peter for his growing understanding of  
36 who Jesus really was. And now.... "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

37  
38 After rebuking Peter, Jesus used the opportunity to teach principles of His Kingdom. He  
39 taught His men about:

40 1) Caring about issues that were eternal - more than temporary things. In so many



1 words, Jesus said to Peter, “You are not helping me! You don’t care about the things of  
2 God, but only about the things people think are important.”

3  
4 2) And He warned His disciples about being too encumbered with “things.” “If people  
5 want to follow me, they must give up the things that aren’t important to their eternal well-  
6 being. They must even be willing to give up their lives. What do you profit if you gain  
7 the whole world but lose your own soul?”

8  
9 3. And finally, in this passage, Jesus promised, “I will come again in all God’s glory,  
10 flanked by the Father’s angels. When that happens, I will reward my followers for what  
11 they have done.” I Corinthians 3, to which I often allude, refers directly to this issue.

12  
13 So in one day, apparently, the Apostle Peter was lauded and lambasted by Jesus. BUT  
14 ITS WHAT HAPPENED SIX DAYS LATER THAT WILL SHOCK THREE OF  
15 JESUS’ MEN MORE THAN THEY HAD EVER BEEN SHOCKED BEFORE. And  
16 that will be theme next week:

17  
18 THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION