

Sunday 9 Aug 2020

Good Morning In Jesus' name.

I want to wish all the Ladies a very happy Women's Day. I hope you will all be spoilt by your families.

Let us pray for the farmers and all those affected by the farm murders and those who are responsible for them.

Who am I ?

Malachi 4:5

Matthew 16:13-20

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked the disciples, “Who do the people say the Son of Man is?” They replied “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “ But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered “ You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man but my Father in heaven. 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.”

Matthew tells about where all this took place. Jesus was in the middle of what is often called His “withdrawal” period. Since the beginning of Matthew Jesus has been looking for a quiet place where He could teach His disciples. He went all around the Sea of Galilee and even up into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon, but everywhere he went there were folk that were sick, blind and lame. He had such compassion He put them first. He miraculously fed two great crowds, one of 4000 and one of 5000 people.

We find Jesus and His disciples in the district of Caesarea Philippi. We know they they are just passing through some of the villages on the outskirts of of the city. This city is very close to the ancient city of Dan and to the sanctuary of the Pagan god Pan. It is a very pretty area lying at the foot of Mt Hermon and it one of the sources of the Jordan river. Jesus had just spent time praying alone before He asked them that all important question - “Who do the people say I am”.

The disciples said that people had various opinions. Some said John the Baptist raised from the dead. Jesus' miraculous works show that He is someone special, and John the Baptist was the most recent special person that they were aware of.

There were those who agreed that Jesus was special, but could not be the Messiah. Some said He was Elijah the prophet returned as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Malachi 4:5 alludes to Elijah returning in such a role, but Jesus had already said that John the Baptist had fulfilled it.

1. Peter's Confession

In Verse 15 Jesus makes His question more personal. He wanted to know what the people were thinking but even more wanted to know what the disciples believed and so He asks them, "But who do YOU say I am. The question is asked with the emphasis on the "you." Jesus wants to know what they believe. We need to keep in mind salvation is a personal affair. It really does not matter what others believe, when we stand before God, because when we stand before Him you stand alone. What do you believe about who Jesus is?

Peter answers on behalf of all the disciples, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". Christ is the Greek equivalent of "Messiah". Both mean the "Anointed One." Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Still others agreed that Jesus was someone special, but they did didn't know who, perhaps just one of the prophets who had risen. Now notice that they could not deny that what Jesus did was supernatural, therefore he must be someone special, but they could not accept that He was the Messiah. The signs and wonders that He did proved that He was the Messiah as they were in keeping with the prophecies about him. Even the miracles did not convince them that He was the Son of God.

People are still the same today. Philosophers revere Jesus as a great thinker. Ethicists call Him the great moral example. Liberal religionists say He provided the model of how we should live. Atheists say there is no God. Rock stars have sung "Jesus Christ superstar".

We must remember that people have their eyes blinded by the gods of this age. The people in Jesus' time were first hand witnesses of miracle after miracle. They were present to hear teaching after teaching from the greatest teacher ever. They experienced His love and compassion, and yet did not recognise Him and turned away from him.

He is the promised one. In addition, Jesus is the "Son of God." He is not a son of a god as in the Greek pantheon of gods, but THE Son of God, creator of heaven and earth.

Peter and the disciples were not more intelligent than the crowds. They still did not understand why He had not overthrown both the national political structures and the Roman rulers. This is what everybody was expecting of the Messiah - that He would be a conquering King who would change the social-political structures. The only advantage that Peter and the other disciples had was their sensitivity to the revelation of God. Look at what Jesus says to Peter in verse 17. "Jesus replied, "Blessed are you

Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven”.

Salvation does not come by human means and methods. Human wisdom is foolishness before God. Man's self efforts at being righteous only leave him in the filthy rags of sin. Salvation comes to those who respond to the revelation that God gives them concerning Himself and his Son. It comes to those who seek out God's wisdom rather than human wisdom, for God's righteousness rather than self righteousness, for mercy and grace and the forgiveness of sins rather than a demand for favours.

Jesus made His question personal for the disciples. Let me make it personal for you. Who do you say the Son of Man is? Is he a good example? A great thinker? A model for life? A good teacher? A superstar? Or is he what He himself claims and what Peter says “The Son of the living God.” The manner in which you live your life will tell the world who Jesus is really to you.

Jesus says, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...” Earlier Jesus had called Peter by His given name which was Simon Bar Jonah, the son of Jonah. Now Jesus call him Peter by the name we all come to know him by. His name Peter means “stone” or “rock” Jesus then added that “Upon this rock.... I will build my church.”

The rock refers to Peter. Jesus is promising to build His church on him, not Peter as the primary foundation, nor Peter all by himself. It would be Peter as the man who is a product of God grace. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 it says, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The apostles were foundational in a secondary sense. Ephesians 2:20 tells us, “.. built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”

2.The Builder of the Church.

The emphasis in verse 18 is not on Peter or even upon the rock, but on the builder of the church. It goes about building the church and the the one who does it, is Jesus Christ. Peter and the church would be nothing without Jesus. Maybe that is why there are so many churches around that are nothing because they have left Jesus outside their doors.

It is Jesus that builds the church, not Peter, not the apostles, not any denomination, not any minister. He certainly uses these people. The church could not be built without them, we are just the materials out of which the church is built. We are only valuable when Jesus puts us into His building. The materials that make up the building are wood, concrete, bricks, plaster, metal, fabric and carpeting. How valuable are any of these things until they have been put together by the builder. The wood could have been used as firewood. Instead it is made into beams or a window

or a pulpit. The concrete could have been left in the ground or used for something else, instead it was mined, and poured into the foundation, the same with the bricks used to build the walls.

Peter was useful to Jesus as a rock because he gave himself to be used as Jesus saw fit. In his case it was a foundation stone on which other parts of the church would be built. Each and every brick has its own part to play in building the church.

What part are you prepared to play or what brick are you going to be in the spiritual building up of our church here in Bela Bela. We have all been given a part to play. We are one of the building blocks, as Peter was the foundation.

3.The Strength of the Church.

The end of verse 18 adds a characteristic to the church that Jesus is building. “The gates of Hades shall not overcome (prevail) it.” Jesus is building a strong church able to break through and grow past what would seem to be a limiting factor. This portion of scripture has been interpreted as the church withstanding the attacks of the devil. The word Hades is not hell but corresponds with the Old Testament word Sheol which was the place of the dead. Gates are there to keep something in or something out. In this case, keeping something in for it would make no sense for the church to be looking to enter into the place of the dead.

What are the “gates of hades” referring to? Death. If a builder of a building dies before it is completed the building project also dies. When a leader of a movement dies, often the movement dies or changes direction. In the case of the church, neither is true, Jesus died but conquered death and continued to build His church. In Fact, it was His death as payment for man's sin that made the church possible. In addition when the apostles died and the successive church leaders over the generations have also died, the church has continued on and continued to grow. Why? Because Jesus is the one who builds the church. Not only has he conquered death, but He has made death a vanquished enemy of all believers. The church is built with believers but death does not overpower it.

Peter uses the building analogy to describe the church in 1 Peter 2:4,5. With each individual coming to Jesus as “ the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to Him - you also, like living stone, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

It is Jesus that does the building. Acts records a lot about the activities of Peter and the the apostles, but it was the Lord Himself who, “added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:47b. Are you ready and willing to be a brick, a piece of wood, metre of material or whatever else is needed to be used by Him however He sees fit? If you are, then Jesus will use you and you will be part of the church that He

is building.

Who is Jesus? He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Who is Jesus to you? Are you responding to the revelation of God being given to you or are you rejecting it?

Jesus will build His Church, but He uses people as his building material. Are you ready and willing to be used by Him in this way? If you are, then He will use you and give eternal value to your life.

Amen