

## *Focusing In . . . .*

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”

When Jesus asked Peter, “But who do you say that I am?” Jesus was absolutely over the top with excitement at his response. You see, the teachings surrounding the coming Messiah in Judaism did not include the messiah as being divine. The Jewish people were praying for another great king like David who would defeat Rome and give them back their homeland, but never in all of their writings or oral traditions did they think that the messiah would be God. They were a strict monotheistic religion and there would be one and only one God. So when Peter came up with this statement, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”, Jesus really couldn’t believe his ears. Peter had entered a whole new paradigm of thinking outside of his upbringing and spoke truth. “Blessed are you, Simon! No human teaching has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.”

Jesus then says, “. . . upon this rock I will build my church . . .” What is the rock? It was taught in Catholicism that Peter himself was the rock (it is the meaning of his new name) and thus founded the seed of Peter as the authoritative voice for Christendom (as in the pope). In the Protestant tradition, we recognize that the words Peter confessed more than Peter himself was the foundation upon which the church has been built – upon the truth that Jesus truly is the Son of God.

The strength and endurance of the church is found in a fuller understanding of both realities. It is our personal, individual witness to our experiences with Jesus and sharing the things revealed to us by God the Father that will expand the impact of the church upon our world. It is the Gospel according to Matthew and Luke and the Gospel according to Faye and \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name here.) The good news is the impact that Jesus has on our personal lives. It is the good news that the teachings of Jesus actually work when put into practice and things like peace on earth are actually attainable when we turn the other cheek, forgive 70 x 7, love others as God has loved us, and other sayings of Jesus.

Do we underestimate the convictions that are given to us, not by human teaching but by divine revelation? We are so programmed to believe in the rule of the majority but so often the majority is happy with the status quo and quite comfortable to leave things just the way they are. However, God is working in our hearts and speaking truths that may not be expressed by the majority. Peter spoke out of two things – his experience with Jesus and the revelation given to him by God the Father. This became his testimony and what a powerful testimony it was and it continues to be our testimony today. When we walk and talk and experience the living Jesus, and then listen to his Spirit speaking into our lives, we have incredible good news to share. The church becomes alive and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. This is the rock – the testimony of the saints that God continues to speak into our lives. This is the Gospel.

So, who do YOU say that Jesus is?

By Grace Alone,

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