

## The Stone Cut Out Without Hands

*13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

*14And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." 20Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.*

*21From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." 23But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."*

Matthew is a book of stark contrasts. Two kingdoms. One ruled by the ruler of this world, and one ruled by God. A spiritual battle ensues.

The powerful religious leaders and rulers. The powerful monarchs and governors. Dupes of Satan's kingdom, vss. a little rag tag outfit of fishermen and outcasts from no-where's ville.

But the little rag-tag outfit causes a hubbub everywhere they go. Not because they're anything noteworthy, but because of Jesus. Thousands of people are coming and going at any given time. They want to see Jesus. They want to hear Him speak. They want to be healed. They want to be fed. They want to experience miracles.

The Rulers of religious Israel have given their verdict. Madman. False messiah. He does tricks through beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. But still the people follow, and the political leaders and religious leaders and the kings and governors are concerned. They feel threatened. He's a pain in their neck. Love and power and esteem from the people should be theirs, not His.

The people meanwhile are thinking about what it would be like to have someone who can feed everybody and cure everybody, as king. Kick out Rome. Israel back on top as a name to be reckoned with in the world. And a health and wellness plan. A full belly. He makes food.

That isn't on the docket for Jesus. He is a King, but not a paltry one the multitude is thinking about. Rome is small potatoes. Jesus has come for exactly what Satan offered Him at the temptation.

*Lk. 4:5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish...."*

That's what Jesus came for. And it isn't the Devil's to give. Jesus came to depose that usurped ruler and take back what is rightfully His. But He'll do it on an aggravatingly slow time schedule . . . so that He can include the likes of me and you, 20 centuries later.

That day is coming. He is King of heaven. And He will be King of Righteousness here on this earth. Some day. But not in Matthew 16. Except for 12 rag tag guys who will declare, He is Lord.

That's the contrast Matthew has brought us to. The whole world saw all the miracles and missed the point. Twelve nobodies from no-where will realize who He is, and declare it.

That's how God does stuff. Fasten your seat belts. We're in a good spot.

Let me briefly interrupt this introduction to our passage to say something about the lostness and confusion of our world. Satan is still

the ruler of this world. We'll see in this very passage how unstable, even the folks who do get this book, how we teeter between God and Satan.

That moral broken ness is always there. In the background. Peter says the right thing . . . and 5 minutes later Jesus rebukes Satan who was already using Peter to thwart God's plan. The tension of God vss Satan. Good vss Evil.

Wednesday, we were stunned by yet another mass murder mayhem. But almost equally stunning is the cover of the New York tabloid, Daily News,

The headline says, "***God Isn't Fixing This.***"

*"As latest batch of innocent Americans are left lying in pools of blood, cowards who could truly end gun scourge continue to hide behind meaningless platitudes," the cover reads.*

*House Speaker Paul Ryan and GOP presidential hopefuls Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, Jeb Bush and Lindsey Graham all responded with "prayers" for the victims of San Bernardino, Calif.*

People are lying in pools of blood and confused people are using the incident for political gain before the bodies get to the morgue.

This latest terrorist tactic of Secularism has a name. It's called prayer shaming.

You guys want to pray to your stupid god, we want to fix it. Get out of our way.

And therein lies the tension of the confusion. This nation walked away from God. It walked away from decency and morality. It walked away from *Thou shalt not kill* along with the other 9 commandments. And now, God is to blame for not fixing the murders!??

But now the secularists are shaming the last shred of decency offered up

by sympathetic people, and they're going to fix, what? Evil? In the human heart? By taking guns away?

Let's think about this. If as this book teaches, the root tension is between 2 kings, God and Satan, and Satan is the liar and murderer from the beginning, and the current ruler of this world, who do you think is behind people lying in a pool of blood in San Bernardino?

Paul in Thessalonians talks about "he who restrains". Something or someone who restrains evil in this world. That restrainer is the Holy Spirit indwelling people who believe deeply in the principles of this book and who, like salt, keep the meat from rotting. Christians and the influence of christianity, restrains evil. The church is to have that effect on the world. Restrain evil.

A day is coming when that restraint will be gone. Then the whole world will become a daily blood bath a thousand times worse than San Bernardino. Every day. The murderer and liar gets free reign for 7 years to do all the mayhem he wants. Half the worlds population dies.

Then, the God who the tabloid complains *isn't fixing it*, will come to this earth and judge all of the evil. Every time you pray, "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven . . .*" that's what you're asking for.

Meanwhile, until that day, decent people pray; *and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . . recognizing the source of that request . . . for thine IS the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever, Amen.*

Until that prayer about His Kingdom on earth coming in power, and the whole world bending to His Holy will, until that happens, on the day that Jesus returns and deposes Satan, please Lord, deliver us from harm. Deliver us from evil.

The secularists are trumpeting; ***God isn't fixing this***, implying; ***but we will?? Really??!*** The audacious arrogance of that statement is simply breathtaking. God have mercy on those folks!

OK, I now return you to Matthew's gospel. And we'll witness in Matthews story, some of the tension and confusion that I've just described.

*13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

A couple of things to begin with there. Caesarea Philippi is a combination of two mens names who want their due honor. Ceasar who is the big daddy in Rome. And Philip who is the local tetrach, or governor. Philip built up this area and renamed the city. After himself. And of course, ceasar. Well, he had to add his name, because there already was a Caesarea over on the coast about where Joppa is.

Location wise, we're 20 or 25 miles north of Galilee and east right at the base of Mount Herman. Mount Herman catches the snow that becomes the water source of the Jordan river.

The reason we're there is partly because of the tension we've seen this week. Murderers would like to eliminate Jesus. So He moves out.

This is important because Jesus has finally moved out far enough that He can spend some relative quality time with His 12 chosen men. 12 nobodies who will have their names, or at least 11 of them will have their names on 12 cornerstones in Heaven for eternity. This is their time. Critical time! Transforming time.

Notice the word tenses. *He was asking His disciples* His disciples. Personal possessive pronoun. These 12 are His.

*"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

Every man woman and child will answer this question. Every one. This is the division between heaven and hell. Who, exactly, is Jesus.

Notice also the designation that Jesus loves to use for Himself. *Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*

The term Son of Man is familiar to them. Ezekiel calls himself that over 90 times, and we see it used in Daniel and Revelation. One like a son of man.

It is a reference to the fact that man was made in God's image, but it is a contrast reminder of the lowly status of humanity against the permanence and exalted dignity of God and the angels.

Paul has this contrast in mind as he tells the Philipians 2:5 - 8 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Son of man.

This passage has several plays on words. I think Jesus loved words. One of the plays is this word son. Being a son. We'll see it 3 times. Son of Man. Son of God. Son of Jona.

A son possesses qualities inherent in the progenitor. Son of man, God became like man. Son of God, man who is like God. Son of Jona - ordinary Peter, extraordinarily blessed.

*“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”*

These were some of the answers floating around. Herod who murdered John worried that Jesus was John reincarnated.

Elijah was the penultimate prophet. He would return and announce the messiah. Some figured Jesus was Elijah.

There was a rumor loosely based in Malachi that Jeremiah or one of the other major prophets would return like Elijah and announce messiah.

Sort of like today where the world wants to give Jesus a big title, but short of who He really is. Great teacher. Greatest man who ever lived. Anything you want and as high sounding as possible, but short of the truth that can actually save you.

*15He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

Get ready now. This is where Matthew has been taking us for the whole book. This is the pinnacle of Matthew's book. The answer to this question is the most important thing. The high point. The apogee.

After this, we'll begin our descent down from the heights, down down down to the cross. Matthew begins heading to the cross before this passage is over. It's the next thing, but first; Who do you say that Jesus is? He asked Peter, but like I said before. Every man woman and child will answer this question. Who Is Jesus?

The Pharisees didn't know. The Saducees didn't know. The Kings and governors didn't know. The multitudes who followed Him about didn't know. Even his family doesn't seem to know. His brothers and sisters. His hometown people didn't know. Who Is Jesus. What is the significance of Jesus?

Matthew's written a whole book to get us here.

*16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

There it is! And there's a lot of theology in that verse. What does that mean? What did it mean to Peter, and the 12, and to Israel. Who is the Christ. What does He accomplish? What's the significance, that Jesus IS the Christ? The messiah. Son of the Living God.

Don't worry, I'm not a theologian nor do I plan to camp here. Books have been written about this passage of scripture. I'm just going to take you to some low hanging fruit.

What does the annointed one accomplish? Messiah means annointed

one. Turn and Listen to Daniel 9:25. One of the most concise and complete statements of Jewish expectation in the Bible.

*"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.*

Think about what was introduced into the world at the fall in Genesis 3. Paradise lost. Every man born a sinner. Satan usurped ownership of this world. Stole it from Adam. Death entered. Both physically and spiritually. Order turned to disorder. Wickedness reigns. God stepped away.

That's our world. Welcome to San Bernardino. It'll be some place else next week. Mayhem. Catastrophe. Unspeakable wickedness and confusion. This book is the only source of truth. Rejected.

Messiah finishes transgression. He makes an end of sin. Reverses the effect of the fall. He makes atonement for iniquity. He brings in everlasting righteousness. He completes all vision and prophecy. He reigns in Jerusalem. Paradise regained. Satan deposed and locked up. Men will rule and reign with Him forever. Peace will reign worldwide.

You say; Did Peter really understand all that? Yes. and No. Daniel has Messiah being cut off. Murdered. Less than a year out from where they're standing. Jesus says let's head that direction and Peter says Absolutely NOT!

The lights are coming on, one LED at a time. But, yes, they did understand much of the significance if not all of the nuance. And that's borne out in the next verse.

Notice the second use of the word Son. You're the Son of God. Son of man is Son of God. Peter says in effect, you're more than Son of man. You're Son of the Living God!

For all the hosts of heaven the amazing thing was that Jesus was Son of



Man. For all the lost men, the amazing thing is that God visited us, **in His Son.**

*17And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

Jesus keeps the son thing going. Blessed are you son of Jona. That's what barjona means. Like Johnson or Samuelson. Or David's Son.

OK, the easy part's over. Now we walk headlong into scary stuff. Why is Simon Barjona blessed?

Why did the scribes and pharisees and saducees and whatever other cees who followed Jesus around for 2 years and saw all the same miracles and heard all the same teaching as Peter, and didn't come up with this answer. It seems obvious to us! But the folks across the street think we're goonies. Why is that?

*because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

I identify with reformed theology. That is until we get to eschatology, end times things, and then I think those folks are out to lunch. But I think John Calvin and the Westminster divines understood a lot of things that have been forgotten in the mean time. Most of my hero's are reformed. Maybe all of them.

Jesus seems to be saying, Simon, you're blessed and the other folks aren't, because of something God did for you. Simon understands something that the rest of Israel that witnessed most of the same things he did, do not.

Why is that? Is it because Simon's just a lot sharper than all those scribes and pharisees and saducees and kings and rulers and multitudes?

Probably not. In fact Jesus clears that up for both him, and us. Flesh and blood did not reveal this all important truth to you Simon. That

includes Simon's flesh and Simon's blood. *but My Father who is in heaven.*

The reason the lights came on for Simon, and by the way, he's speaking for at least 10 others, he's just the mouthpiece, the reason that came out of his mouth is because God in heaven turned those lights on in his brain.

The first event in the salvation sequence surprises most christians.

Ephesians 2:1 *And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, . . . 4But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), . . . 8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are **His workmanship, created** in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

We were dead. Doornail dead. Stone dead. Spiritually not able to respond dead. And He quickened us, made us alive, together with Christ.

At first it seems counterintuitive to us. **I** was sitting in a meeting and **I** heard John MacArthur quote Romans 8:9 and **I** questioned whether I had ever really been a christian in the first place, and **I** went up to John and spoke with him about it and **I** prayed with him to receive Christ. Me, me, me, me, me. **I** did all that on August 26th 1970. Before a lot of you were born. **I** did that. Or did *I*.

Looking back 45 years it has become clear to me. I went into that meeting dead as ever. Hoping to get closer to a couple of girls who were there that week. See where that might go.

Before I know what hit me, the Word of God is on the attack in my brain. *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* You're not a christian if you don't have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Who the heck is the Holy Spirit. I guess I'm not a christian after all. Not only that, whatever it is these kids around me have, I want it!

So what part of that salvation scenario did I do. God graciously quickened me from the dead. I was alive spiritually for a good hour and a half before I ever finally got to pray with John. I didn't hear anything else he said that night. I couldn't get that verse out of my brain.

I'm stressing that the difference between all the people then and now, who are blinded and can't see or understand the truth, the two sides of this great tension of good and evil is right here.

*"Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. Dead people can't turn the lights on. Only God can do that. That's why Simon is blessed. He can see the truth because God, the Father in heaven, has quickened him from the dead spiritually and the revelation of who Jesus is, is clear.*

That's true today of every true believer, and that's what Jesus is going to say next. Cryptically, I might add.

*18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

This is another play on words. Stay with me here for a few minutes. This is only important to folks who want to survive death and live eternally with God.

Jesus says, *"I also say to you* indicating that this truth is fundamentally connected to the previous one. Revelation that Jesus is God and Messiah.

You are Peter. A name that Jesus gives him way back at his introduction in John chapter 1.

*Jn. 1:41 He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the*

*son of John; you shall be called Cephas " (which is translated Peter).*

That was a prophetic statement. At the moment of introduction Jesus makes a prophecy. You shall be called Rock. Petros. Here we are, 2 1/2 years later, and Jesus says;

*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church;*

Jesus uses a play on the words petros and petra. Petros is a stone. Petra is a monolith. Peter is a piece of granite. Jesus will build His church on enormous Rock. Gibraltar Rock. Half dome Rock.

What's the giant rock. It is the truth little rock uttered. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. That's the monolith. And included in that monolith is the other truth, flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you Peter, but my heavenly Father.

The church will be built out of millions of stones that have had this truth revealed to them and fit together to become a monolith.

Listen to Peter's commentary on what Jesus just said. He wrote this perhaps 40 years later. He didn't miss a lick.

*1 Peter 2:4 - 6 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." ...*

Jesus is the monolith. The stone the builders rejected. We are living stones being built up as a spiritual house. In Him. We are Him. He is us. All mixed up together yet somehow separate.

Listen to a prophecy, again this is from Daniel, chapter 2. Given around 600 years before Jesus said these words to Peter.

A little background. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon where Daniel is a captive with the jews, has had a dream. Then he forgot it. Then he threatened to kill all the wise men if they couldn't make not only the forgotten dream known, but it's meaning.

Dan. 2:31 - 35 *“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32“The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34“You continued looking until **a stone was cut out without hands**, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. **But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.***

The interpretation about the stone cut out without hands is in vss. 44 and 45.

*44“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45“Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*

The stone cut out without hands that crushes all the Satan ruled kingdoms and lives forever is the Messiah of Israel. Cut out without hands because it isn't made by men, but by God. Now listen again to Peters confession.

*Who do you say that the Son of Man is? Thou art the Christ, the Son of*

*the living God.*

Listen again, briefly, to Daniel. This time in chapter 7.

13“*I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.*

14“*And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language  
Might serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one  
Which will not be destroyed.*

I hope the hair on the back of your neck is bristling just a little. These truths go outside of history. Beyond time. From eternity past, to eternity future.

I want you to get a glimpse of why this is the pinnacle of Matthew's book. Why he has painstakingly taken us to this height. All of eternity past, present, future lies in these words of Peters given to Him by revelation of God of Gods. About the King of Kings.

18“*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

This is the first time we see the word church in the New Testament.

We could get all bogged down in muck here, but lucky for you, we don't have the time to do that.

Suffice to say, our Catholic Church brethren take this verse and build a case that says Peter is the rock the church is built on and they build their

whole argument of Papal authority here. Peter was the first pope and there is an un-ending lineage that goes all the way back to Peter.

Then they take the next verse that we'll get to next week, the keys of the kingdom stuff, and build their case for the churches authority to designate remission of sin and hell and everything else.

Ultimately you get to things like indulgences that could be sold. It gets icky.

I was studying about the Crusades last week. The parallels of what went on then in the name of religion and what ISIS is doing now are troubling, to say the least.

The catholic church would guarantee you indulgences that would wipe out most or all of purgatory, if you would suit up and go kill moslems.

Sounds like Islam's promise of immediate heaven for their martyrs. They get a little better deal though, what with the black haired virgins, and all. Just saying. All based in a mis-interpretation of Matthew 16:18

*upon this rock I will build My church*

The word translated church is ecclesia. All the way through Acts and the rest of the New Testament. Literally it means called out ones. Called out ones.

The word is 2 greek words combined. ekklḗsia (from 1537 /ek, "out from and to" (out from something or some place, to go to something, or some place) and 2564 /kaléō, "to call") – properly, people called out from the world and to God,

The church is called out of Satan's dominion, to come into God's dominion.

Paul, explaining to King Agrippa about his own rather spectacular call says, quoting Jesus words to him; *17rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18to open*

*their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'*

That's a description of the church. The called out ones. The ones like Peter who have had their eyes opened, so that they can turn FROM darkness TO light. FROM the dominion of Satan, TO God. Called out ones. Who receive forgiveness of sin and an inheritance among the Saints.

The church is not a building. It's not an organization. Not a denomination. It is a group of people who fit the description Paul just gave to King Agrippa. Called Out Ones. We come out of Satans kingdom, Into God's kingdom. Out of Satans authority, into God's authority. Out of the grip of Death through Sin, and Into the inheritance of the Saints in light.

There's so much in this one verse. Finally;

*18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; **and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.***

What are the gates of Hades? How does that fit?

The gates of Hades is the power of sin to encapture and kill men. They are bound up by sin, to death. No one escapes.

This verse is often looked at as the gates of Hades are offensive and the church defends from it. Like we're beating back the gates of Hades.

But in reality it's the other way around. The gates of Hades are defensive. They are a prison that cannot be escaped from. The wages of sin is death. No one escapes from that prison.

One exception. The church of Jesus who defeated death. The called out ones of Jesus who's sins have gone with Him to the cross. These have beaten the gates of Hades. Death cannot hold us.



Listen to Paul exult in 1 Corinthians 15:54 - 57 *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I think I'll finish this morning with Paul's next words, in the 58th verse following what we just read.

*58 Therefore, my beloved brethren,*

Therefore, why? What is the therefore, there for? Because we are living stones, part of the Rock carved out without hands! *Therefore;*

*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*