

## Message #34 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

### *"Upon This Rock - Part 1"*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about the verses of Matthew 16:13-19, and would specifically like to bring your attention the words, "Upon This Rock." Let me go ahead and read this, and then we'll break it down with some explanation. Starting in verse 13, it says, "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? 14 And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. 15 Then he said to them, But who do you say that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Well, these are interesting verses. But not only are they interesting, but they have been the basis for much schism in the Christian church. And the reason for this schism is, of course, Satan, because whenever a specific segment of scripture has great hidden meaning, which will significantly strengthen man's spiritual understanding of God, Satan comes as quickly as possible and introduces his own interpretation, so that if possible he can put a stumbling block to man's understanding of scripture. Let's go back to some of the verses and take them bit by bit. For a

Christian to understand the concept of authority given by God to his people, they must have a good understanding of these verses, or at least not be subject to the lies connected with it.

In verse 13, Jesus had asked a question, “who do other people say that I am?” There were various answers, but Peter answered and said very clearly that he believed Jesus was not only the son of God, but the Christ, the Messiah, that all Israel had been waiting for. Then Jesus said that Peter's statement was a statement of great faith, and that on this great faith, which Jesus referred to as a rock, he, Jesus, would build his church. What Jesus was saying was that Peter had answered, not with his own logic, but by faith in the word of God. Peter had not figured out the different possibilities and chose the best answer, but had come to believe by faith in the Word of God that Jesus was truly the Christ. It was God who had revealed this to Peter. First of all we know that God is a spirit, so we know that Peter's knowledge of Jesus did not come through man, but directly from God by his Holy Spirit. God, who is a spirit, had placed that knowledge in Peter. In the whole history of the people of Israel, faith had not been the mode of coming into knowledge. The Israelites had been under the Law of Commandments, and the only understanding by faith was through the prophets, which were few and far between. Abraham had believed God's word, and it was counted to him for righteousness, but the Israelites were under the letter of the Law, and their attempt at righteousness, up until the time of Jesus, was through that Law of works, which required them to gain righteousness by observing the rites and rituals of the Law of Commandments.

Peter's statement was a statement of pure faith. He just believed the word of God, and that the word of God was pointing directly at the man Jesus Christ who stood before him. It was not through some physical proof that Peter had gained this knowledge, but his knowledge had come by revelation from God. Just as Abraham had believed God's word, Peter had believed God's word also. It was this belief in the word of God that Jesus was referring to when he said that it was a rock. The rock was not Peter himself, but was the word of God which is accepted by faith. In essence, the building material that was going to create the huge edifice of the Christian church was the word of God which would be accepted by faith, just as Abraham had accepted it. And this word of God was Jesus. Scripture makes it plain that Jesus Christ is the Word, God's word from heaven. He was the Word of God. He was the outward showing, the manifestation on earth, of God's word. And the whole foundation of the kingdom established by Jesus Christ is through him, the Word of God, and can only be accepted by faith. That's why Jesus Christ is called the Cornerstone.

The building process that Jesus was using as a graphical description, is a process where a cornerstone is laid first, then other stones are laid next to it until a foundation is completed. Then the structure is built up from that foundation. The rock that is used for a cornerstone must be the best rock, shaped perfectly, and it must be placed perfectly, because all the rest of the foundation stones, and the rest of the material in the complete structure relies on it. Jesus was explaining in these verses that he was the cornerstone, that rock upon which his church would be built. He referred to Peter as a stone that would be added to the cornerstone along with the other apostles and prophets in order to make a foundation. Peter, and the other apostles, and the other prophets

of the Old Testament, would be added to Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Cornerstone, and together this would create the foundation of the church. But the whole foundation, including the other foundation stones, could not be placed until the cornerstone was laid. Peter's name means stone, and he certainly was a stone which would be used as part of the foundation. But the whole structure would be founded upon that one rock, which was the word of God by faith. This cornerstone, which the whole building structure relied upon, had to be not only the Word of God, but the Word of God which was relied upon by faith. Peter had spoken, not only the word of God, but the word of God by faith. He had believed the word of God by faith just as Abraham had believed God's word by faith.

Of course, Satan immediately came in and did his best at lying, by convincing people that Jesus had not been referring to faith in God's word as the rock, but had been referring to Peter himself. We know that the Catholic church believes that Jesus was referring to Peter as the rock that would be used as the foundation for the church, and this has caused untold calamity. This is a prime example, and I do mean prime, a prime example of Christians taking the word of God at face value, instead of looking beneath the surface. By this I mean that most people do not understand what the word of God says unless it is plainly lying out in the open. That's why understanding of the scriptures has to be revealed by God through his Holy Spirit. Natural man cannot understand the deep things of God by his own mental capacities. Natural man must be born-again as a spirit being, and receive the Holy Spirit of God. This then allows a person to understand the word of God, not with logic, or with deciphering tools, but by a revealing process in which the Holy Spirit of God shows man the hidden parts of the Word.

In today's church, just as in the beginning of the New Testament church, there are both sheep and goats. Or in other words, there are both those people in the church who truly do love the Word of God, who truly do desire to serve God, and there are also those in the church who do not have a real love for the word of God. These people who have no real love for the word of God, are easily deceived. Once again I will refer you to 2 Thessalonians 2:10, which tells us that those who are deceived are deceived because they did not have a love for the truth. The worst part of this is that many of our leaders are also in this last group. I believe God would like all his leaders to truly love him and to truly love his people, but we must realize that in every man that has leadership qualities, there are also those strong qualities of desiring power for selfish reasons. Because this desire for power drives this type of person, they will work themselves into a position of authority in the church. Therefore, just as the body of the church is made up of a few that go through the narrow gate, there is also just a few leaders who go through the narrow gate. The broad way that leads to destruction has many travelers. They don't have to crowd to get through this gate. There are many leaders who take the broad way, just as there are many in the church who are not leaders who take the broad way to destruction. Therefore, the elect children of God are taught mostly by the many leaders who lead for money and power, rather than having a love for the word of God. Because they do not have a love for the word of God, they are deceived easily, and because they are deceived leaders, they can only deceive the people they lead. This is why Jesus plainly spoke in Matthew 23:9, that we are not to call any man, "father." He told us this because we are not to look to any man as our authority for our understanding of

the word of God, but we are to look to God and understand his word by revelation from his Holy Spirit.

But exactly what Jesus told us not to do, is exactly what the church did in the early years after the death of the 12 apostles. The church, through the ages, has always been mostly deceived by their leaders. It is only those Christians who do have a love for the truth who are not deceived to such a great extent. Yes, I know that what I'm saying points a finger directly at our church leaders. But bear in mind that not all leaders are bad. But we know for certain that the desire for power destroys the ability to serve people. As the old saying goes, "power corrupts, and absolute power absolutely corrupts." We can see clearly from history that the church has been continually deceived by many of its leaders. We have on record that when the church determined to be the spiritual authority over God's people, the excesses of corruption multiplied exceedingly. We know that in the history of the church, even the chief leaders, in many instances, excelled in the sins of lust, both lust of the flesh and lust of the eye, and that the pride of life, the desire for other people to look up to them and to glorify them, was almost unbelievable. Down through the ages, the pope's of the church committed sins extensively that are too hideous to even talk about. But although we stagger at the thought of someone who is supposed to be the chief spiritual leader being wicked, it is not difficult to realize that an extreme desire for power in a man would necessarily cause that man to end up in the position that would command the greatest obedience to him.

Whether it was the popes of history or the pastors of little churches, we still know that the attack by Satan on God's church is greatest through leadership positions. Once again I refer to Jesus' words which warn us against looking to man for any spiritual authority. We definitely are required by God's word to respect people who are in positions of authority, and to give honor to those where honor is due, but we are never to accept another man's spiritual teaching without searching for the truth of that teaching, and coming to a knowledge of the truth through the Holy Spirit of God. We all need pastors and teachers, just as the Bible says, but they should never be looked upon as the spiritual authority. Our knowledge of the things of God must come by prayerfully seeking God for our understanding, even at the extent of rejecting part or all of what a particular minister says. Yet God's people continually stumble in this area. Some people believe everything their pastor tells them, just because he seems like a nice man. It is important to listen to pastors who seem to have a love for people, but it is more important to take what they say and compare it with scripture, praying earnestly that God would reveal the truth to you himself. Satan's power is built on the principle of ignoring God's truth, and accepting the lie. We should never let Satan deceive us into thinking we can trust man for the truth. Hopefully, every preacher you listen to means well, but this is no guarantee of truth. All humans on this earth are deceived to some extent. Therefore, if you put your trust in a man, what will you do if that man eventually goes to hell?

Now, let's go on with our discussion. To summarize, we see that Jesus Christ was the Word of God, and that the word of God must be received by faith in order for salvation to accompany it. We also see that because Jesus was the Word of God, and that the whole church relies on him as

Savior, and that they rely on him by faith, that this makes him the Cornerstone of the church. We also see that Peter, being an apostle, was one stone that was added to the Cornerstone, and that with the addition of the other foundation stones of the prophets and apostles to the Cornerstone, a proper foundation to the Church of God was laid. Peter was not that rock upon which the church would be built, but it was Jesus Christ the word of God who was the rock upon which the church would be built. For many centuries this truth was not known by most people. Satan's lie, that man should have the authority to tell lesser men what to believe, largely destroyed the power of God's people. Satan's purpose in this world is to do just that, to destroy the power of God's people, by destroying their faith in God.

Every single act of Satan is meant to destroy faith, for it is the only way Satan can destroy God. The reason I say this is because God is truth. Satan is a liar, the father of liars. The warfare that Satan launched was a warfare against truth, against believing God. That is why when we believe God by faith, we show that God's word is true, and we show that we accept God instead of accepting Satan. That's why Jesus Christ must be accepted by all men, for he is the Word of God. When the Bible says that no man can be saved except through the name of Jesus Christ, it means that we must believe in Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the Word. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ, anyone who does not believe that Jesus is actually God who was manifested in the earth, is actually rejecting God. That's why Jesus said in John 14:7, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him."

Jesus was explaining that God could be known by his word and by his works. The testimony that God is truly who he says he is in his written word is given by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. These two witnesses, these two testimonies, who are the two anointed ones and who stand before the Lord of all the earth, as referred to in Zechariah 4:14, testify that what God has said about himself in the written and spoken word of God, is really true. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, the person is actually believing in God. God, by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, brought testimony that God truly is love, and that he is truly all powerful. The Holy Spirit also gives testimony by showing the works of God. The works done through the Holy Spirit prove that God's claim to omnipotence, the claim to having all power, is true. These two witnesses to the truth of God ensure that God is who he says he is, and that we can receive with gladness the spoken and written word of God.

Therefore, when anyone rejects Jesus Christ, they are actually rejecting God, for Jesus is nothing more or nothing less than the Word of God manifested in the earth. Jesus said that if you had seen him you had seen the Father. That's because Jesus was only manifesting the Father. In the same sense, when anyone rejects the Holy Spirit, or as the Bible says, "quenches the Spirit," this is also a direct rejection of God. Most people in the church today quench the Holy Spirit because they do not understand it. But the Holy Spirit is also God, just as Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is God because he is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is God because he is the conduit for the power of God. That's why 1 Thessalonians 5:19, says, "Quench not the Spirit." Yet, Satan's purpose in this world is to destroy the two witnesses who give testimony that confirms God's written and spoken word as being true. Satan knows that the only way that he can destroy

God is to destroy the belief in his word. Satan's constant work is to destroy belief in God, and that's why he uses lies. He uses lies because lies destroy truth. Therefore his aim is to destroy truth. In Daniel 8:12, we have a reference to the truth being cast down to the ground. That's all that Satan wants to do. Because if God is truth, than in order to destroy God, all Satan has to do is destroy the truth, and God will be destroyed.

We must accept Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit just as much as we except God. Until Jesus Christ, the Word of God, was manifested in the earth, he could not be rejected. People could come to God because the essence of God's word was true. If people truly believed in God, they could come to him and be accepted by him. That's why Abraham, and other significant people of the Old Testament, could be accepted by God without using the name of Jesus Christ. But once knowledge is gained of God, to reject that knowledge is to reject God. When God revealed himself more fully through Jesus Christ, and reveals himself more fully through the miracles that Jesus Christ did, God was just giving man a greater perspective of himself. From the time man sees Jesus Christ, and from the time man sees the working of the Holy Spirit, they can no longer reject Jesus Christ, or reject the moving of the Holy Spirit, without rejecting God himself. Of course, there are many religious movements, including many mainline denominational churches, who either reject Jesus Christ, or reject the working of the Holy Spirit, or both. Satan loves it when people reject Jesus, or quench the Holy Spirit, for when they do that, Satan knows that these people do not really know God to any great extent. They may have a fervent desire to worship God in their own way, yet if they cannot recognize God when they see Jesus Christ, or when they cannot recognize God when they see a true move of the Holy Spirit, then they cannot recognize God himself either, even though they think they can.

Well, we must stop here because of time. We'll continue a discussion of the verses in Matthew 16:13-19, next week, in part 2 of, "Upon This Rock." I hope you can be with me.