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# Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 67—

Peter's second confession

Jesus confers apostolic kingdom authority

Summer, ~ 29 A.D.

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Albuquerque 31 July 2016

## I. Review of recent events

- A. Following Herod's execution of John, Jesus does not go to Jerusalem for the third of the four Passovers of his ministry
- B. At the outset of the so-called Year of Opposition we find him laboring against multiple threats to his still-incomplete ministry
  - 1. Murderous persecution from religious and (probably) political adversaries
  - 2. Misguided support from rebellious Jews trying to make him a mutinous king
  - 3. Unfaithful disciples, falling away on hard teaching
- C. He attempts numerous retreats from the eager multitudes, who follow him from district to district and find him wherever he goes
- D. He retreats even beyond the borders of the Herodian Kingdom for the first and only time as an adult, visiting the foreign (Syrian) districts of Phoenicia and Decapolis and performing miracles in both

## II. Jesus enters Gaulanitis *en route* to Mt. Hermon .....Matt. 16: 13–20; **Mark 8: 27–30**; Luke 9: 18–21

- A. Caesarea Philippi was the capital city of Gaulanitis (now called Golan Heights), situated on the southern flank of Mt Hermon
  - 1. This city was one of about a dozen in the Roman Empire named Caesarea in Caesar's honor
  - 2. This one also bore the name of its builder Herod Philip, Procurator of Gaulanitis and several neighboring districts in the NE of the Herodian Kingdom, who enlarged it
  - 3. Its original name was Paneas, from the Greek deity Pan
    - a. Pipe-playing, fornicating, horned and goat-footed god of shepherds, wild places and rustic music
    - b. One of Pan's several cave shrines was located here at a large spring
      - i. This spring is one of three at the base of Mount Hermon that serve as headwaters of the Jordan River
    - c. The modern name is the slightly corrupted Banias, now only a small village and archeological site in Golan Heights
- B. Jesus entered only the towns (Mark) or the coasts (Matthew) of Caesarea Philippi, which means he did not enter the capital city itself
  - 1. Matthew's *coasts* refers not to seashores but to parts, and is more accurately rendered region or district

2. The narrators give no reason for his only visit to this region, telling only the conversation with the disciples that occurred there
  - a. Unusually, this visit drew no crowds and Jesus did no miracles
  - b. He at last has found the respite and solitude he had been seeking for weeks
3. We suppose that the reason for his visit is explained by the following event, his transfiguration on the mount (Mt. Hermon)
  - a. He is “on the way;” Caesarea Philippi is not his destination

### III. He questions the disciples regarding his identity

- A. Whom do men say I am? ..... Matt. 16: 13–14
  1. The disciples give him several answers
    - a. John the Baptist
    - b. Elijah
    - c. Jeremiah
    - d. One of the prophets
  2. These confirm what we learned of Jesus’ popular conception in the story of Herod and John ..... (Mark 6: 14–16, Installment 60)
    - a. The people easily recognized Jesus as a prophet, but were generally slow to recognize him as Messiah (Christ)
      - i. This represents a contradiction, since Jesus claimed to be Christ ..... John 10: 24–25
        - (i) Mostly he *showed* himself to be Christ; he was not in the habit of calling himself Christ
        - (ii) The scripture records in the mouth of Jesus only a few indirect claims
          1. Tell no man ..... Matt. 16: 20
          2. Many shall come in my name ..... Matt. 24: 4–5
          3. Thou hast said ..... Matt. 26: 63–64
      - (iii) His identity as Christ is abundantly testified in scripture, but mostly in the testimony of others
    - ii. If he were a true prophet, he must also be Christ
    - iii. If he were not Christ, he is a false prophet
    - iv. The same fallacy occurs today, with millions of people recognizing Jesus as a prophet and a good man while denying the central claim of his teaching
- B. Whom do you say I am? ..... Matt. 16: 15–16
  1. Peter’s second great confession closely resembles his first ..... (John 6: 68–69)
    - a. Both confessions establish the identity between Christ and Son of God
      - i. As do numerous other scriptures ..... Mark 1: 1
      - ii. Christ means *anointed one* in Greek, just as Messiah means the same in Hebrew
        - (i) The popular expectation of Messiah did not suppose him to be divine

- (ii) These terms do not mean Son of God; but the correlation is established in many scriptures
- iii. *Christ* refers to his office
- iv. *Son of God* refers to his divinity
  - (i) *Son of the living God* draws contrast to dead idols

#### IV. Jesus responds to Peter's confession by granting apostolic authority in his kingdom ..... Matt. 16: 17–19

- A. Blessed art thou
  - 1. It is a blessing beyond any other to know the Christ and confess him
- B. Simon Barjona
  - 1. Simon was Peter's birth name, given to him by his father Jonah
    - a. The prefix *bar* in a surname means *son of*
- C. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven
  - 1. Carnal reason alone cannot grasp God, although it may feel after him ..... Acts 17: 27
  - 2. God revealed himself to Peter through the work and teaching of Jesus
    - a. He uses the same methods today to reveal himself to man ..... I Cor. 1: 21, 27–31
- D. Although the disciples had confessed Jesus before, Peter's two confessions are the first not directly stimulated by a miraculous sign
  - 1. E.g. they confessed him after he came to them on the sea..... Matt. 14: 33
  - 2. Peter's confession is based on the *words of eternal life* ..... John 6: 68–69
    - a. While these words are as fully miraculous as walking on the sea, most men fail to recognize them so
    - b. God has intermittently revealed himself through miracles (signs and wonders); but he constantly reveals himself through his word
- E. Thou art Peter
  - 1. Peter is anglicized from the Greek 4074 Πέτρος *petros*, a masculine noun meaning rock, a loose stone
  - 2. Peter was not used as a name until Jesus gave it to Simon, though it has been common ever since
    - a. Jesus had already named him Cephas, 2786 Κηφᾶς *Kephas*, which is Aramaic for *a stone* ..... John 1: 40–42
- F. Upon this rock I will build my church
  - 1. Rock is translated from Greek 4073 πέτρα *petra*, a feminine noun referring to a bedrock
  - 2. Jesus speaks of the future
    - a. Though he had followers resembling isolated stones, the building of the church lay yet a year away
      - i. *Church* is translated from 1577 ἐκκλησία *ekklesia*, meaning assembly
    - b. He identifies here the foundation (bedrock) of that great building
  - 3. The identity of this rock is the subject of an age-old dispute
    - a. Is the rock Peter himself, or Peter's confession?

- i. The Catholics point to this verse to identify Peter as the first Pope
    - ii. Peter is indeed part of the foundation of the church ..... Eph. 2: 19–22
      - (i) But he shares that role with the other apostles, the prophets, and Jesus
        - 1. Peter is not uniquely the foundation of the church
          - a. The apostles are preeminent in the church, but no one ranks above the others..... I Cor. 12: 28
          - b. Peter was fallible and subject to occasional rebuke ..... Matt. 26: 75; Gal. 2: 11
        - 2. He is one stone in a bedrock that serves as the foundation
        - 3. That bedrock is unified from several stones by orientation to the chief stone, Jesus Christ
        - 4. Each individual stone became part of the bedrock by confessing Christ
          - a. The apostles all confessed him directly and fully
          - b. The prophets confessed him indirectly and partially
      - (ii) Upon that foundation, we lesser stones align ourselves to the same cornerstone and become part of the same building..... I Pet. 2: 4–10
  - 4. In the metaphor, confession is the act that aligns individual stones into a bedrock and a building
    - a. No other foundation can be laid ..... I Cor. 3: 9–11
      - i. Paul laid the foundation by preaching Christ
        - (i) Preaching can be understood as extended confession
      - b. Building on the rock means hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus..... Matt. 7: 24–27
        - i. Confession is part of an aligning that includes hearing the words of eternal life
        - ii. And acting upon them
- G. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it
- 1. Jesus has not yet fully revealed the concept of Hell
    - a. The word he uses here is *Hades* 86 Ἅδης, realm of the dead
      - i. The power of death is destroyed in Christ ..... I Cor. 15: 54–57
      - ii. They who die in Christ are not hindered from welcoming his return ..... I Thess. 4: 13–17
    - b. He does not use *Gehenna* 1067 γέεννα (the valley of burning torment)..... Matt. 5: 22
    - c. Nor *Tartaroo* 5020 τάρταρόω (from Tartarus, the depths of Hades where the wicked are tormented, and the fallen angels cast) ..... II Pet. 2: 4
  - 2. The assertion is not that the forces of Satan will never have any power over the church
    - a. But that the church cannot be destroyed and its members are not destroyed by death
- H. I will give thee the keys of the kingdom
- 1. The church (assembly) Jesus will build will become his kingdom
  - 2. In that kingdom, the church, Jesus grants certain extraordinary powers to his apostles
  - 3. The apostles will have power in that kingdom analogous to holding the keys to a fortified city

- a. The power to admit or deny entrance
    - i. Cornelius admitted ..... Acts 10: 44–48
    - ii. Simon denied ..... Acts 8: 18–24
- 4. In this they are constrained by the will of Christ ..... Rev. 3: 7
- I. Whatsoever thou shalt bind (or loose) on earth shall be bound (or loosed) in heaven
  - 1. Bind and loose are metaphors meaning forbid and allow
  - 2. The apostles will have the power to make Christian law
    - a. The council at Jerusalem ..... Acts 15: 19–20
  - 3. Although Jesus' promise is given specifically to Peter (the pronouns are singular), it is not uniquely his for the reasons already covered
    - a. The power of the keys and binding and loosing belonged jointly to all the apostles
  - 4. In this they were empowered and constrained by the Holy Spirit
    - a. Empowered..... John 14: 26; John 16: 13–15
    - b. Constrained..... Acts 15: 28–29
  - 5. Thus even their personal judgments carry the force of Christian law..... I Cor. 7: 12
- J. Does this power to bind and loose apply to ordinary Christians, or only the apostles?
  - 1. Some measure of power to bind and loose is given to the church at large, principally in the power of discipline within the congregation
    - a. In matters of personal trespass ..... Matt. 18: 15–18
    - b. In matters of unrepented sin ..... I Cor. 5: 11–13
  - 2. The promise of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles applies only partially to the rest of us
    - a. We have only the ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, not the extraordinary measure granted to the apostles
      - i. The promise of full remembrance cannot apply to us, because we have not heard the words of Jesus as they did..... (John 14: 26)
      - ii. The promise to guide into all truth for us depends on faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine..... Acts 2: 42
  - 3. Divergence from the apostles' doctrine is strictly condemned ..... Gal. 1: 6–9
  - 4. We conclude that the keys and the power of binding and loosing was given principally to the apostles, who were constrained by Christ and the Holy Spirit
  - 5. And only in limited extent to the remainder of the church, which is further constrained by the doctrine of the apostles
    - a. We do not make Christian law; we apply only limited judgment and discipline
      - i. Church discipline is required for transgressions of the apostles' doctrine, not our own preferences
        - (i) Walk not after the traditions received of *us*.....II Thess. 3: 6
        - (ii) Obey not *our* word .....II Thess. 3: 14

- b. Examination of church history illuminates why that power belongs only to the apostles
  - i. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to build Christ's one true church..... Matt. 28: 18–20
  - ii. The ordinary Christians who followed them over the centuries have often shown themselves faithless to the apostles' doctrine, building many false churches in its stead

**V. He charges them to tell no man that he is the Christ..... Matt. 16: 20**

- A. The apostles were not yet ready to act fully in their appointed role
  - 1. Jesus had not accomplished his own mission on which their testimony would depend
  - 2. He had not finished teaching them his doctrine
  - 3. They did not yet have the Holy Spirit as infallible guide
- B. Even when the first two conditions were complete, they waited for the third before they began their mission in full..... Acts 1: 1–5