

Matthew 16: 13-20 – Called to be Purposeful

Sunday, 26th April 2026

1. **What name would describe your personality (it doesn't have to be a conventional name).**
2. **Read Matthew 16:13-20**

Location, location, location ...

Caesarea Philippi was built by Herod Philip and named Caesarea in honour of the Emperor, and Philippi to distinguish it from the seaport of the same name. It was situated about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. In Caesarea Philippi there was a great temple of white marble built to the godhead of Caesar and no one could look at Caesarea Philippi, even from a distance, without seeing the glistening marble, and thinking of the might and of the divinity of Rome.

3. It was within this location, a location made to glorify Caesar, that Jesus asks his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is? Today, we are surrounded by lots of buildings / infrastructure / images etc:
 - What do they glorify?
 - How does this influence society?
 - How does this influence us?
 - What dominates the 'skyline' in our lives?
4. If asked the same question, how do you think people today would answer – 'Who do people say the Son of Man is? Is there a lack of knowledge about Jesus – if you watch quiz programmes how often do contestants get the Bible question wrong! Is there anything that we/you can do to combat this lack of knowledge?
5. Whilst not explicitly stated in this reading, it is suggested that by travelling to Caesarea Philippi, which has been described as, 'a non-Jewish area ... where there was no Galilean crowd in attendance,' Jesus was withdrawing to spend time with his disciples.
 - We often ask this question, but it is an important one - how often do we withdraw to spend time with Jesus?
 - Do you need to make time in your busy schedule?

6. In verse 15 there is a different emphasis in the question from, 'Who do people say I am' ... to ... 'Who do you say I am?' What is your response to this more personal question and why?
7. The people were looking for the fulfilment of the prophecy from Malachi 4:5-6:
⁵ 'See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.'

And thought this to be Jesus. However, in:

- Luke 1:17 - *¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'*
- Matthew 11:14 - *And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.*
- Matthew 17:11-13 - *¹¹ Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.*

We see that this Elijah figure was John the Baptist. It seems that people even today, people are looking for 'Elijah' figures, as well as people claiming to be them.

- How careful are we in ensuring that we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and not charismatic figures who make spurious claims?
8. In Verse 16, Peter makes a declaration that Jesus is, 'the Messiah, the Son of the living God,' and Peter was blessed vs 17. Read Romans 10:9-10 both silently and out loud as a group:
⁹ if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

- Is this your declaration today?
- How easy will it be to make this declaration in our 'Caesarea Philippi' tomorrow?

9. Have you ever tried to 'skim' a stone over the sea or lake? Where? What was your best score?

10. There seems to be a theme running through the Bible of the church being built of rock and stone. It starts in the Old Testament:

- Deuteronomy 32:3-4 - *I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! ⁴He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*
- Psalm 18:31 - *For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?*
- Isaiah 51 - *'Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ²look to Abraham, your father,*

Then the New Testament

- Ephesians 2:20-22 - *²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*
- 1 Peter 2 - *⁴As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – ⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house*

Every stone, including you, is important to the building of the church.

- What stone are you and why?
- Do you offer a good foundation for the next generation

11. If you were a stick of rock, what words would be imprinted all through you and why?

12. Verse 19 tells us that Paul will be given the *'keys to the Kingdom of Heaven'*. It has been written that, *'the images of the keys suggest not so much the porter who controls admission to the house, as the steward, who regulates its administration.'* - an example of this might be the acceptance of Gentiles into the Church (Acts 10-11).
Those keys have been passed down to us. How do we 'regulate' admission to the Kingdom of Heaven?
- Through encouraging or discouraging people?
 - By what we say or not say?
 - By what we do or not do?
 - How do we address our inclinations to 'dislike', or feel that we are more important than, certain groups of people?
13. Vs 19 *'Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'*
- How do we make and enforce rules?
 - Do we ask Heaven to ratify our decisions or do we seek to pass on the decisions of Heaven?
 - Do some of our rules lock the church doors to people? Is this good or bad?

Read Matthew 16:23 - *Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'*

14. Peter seems to go from hero to zero in a matter of a few verses - from making a declaration of faith he moves to be a 'stumbling-block'. What safeguards do we/can we put in place to ensure that our faith remains strong and consistent?
15. How do keep 'in mind the concerns of God' and not 'merely human concerns'? In this coming week, try and focus on the mind of God in all your activities and thinking.