

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL  
THE RESCUE *begins*  
GOD THE SON  
*Dying and Rising with the Messiah*

It was the Easter season of 1874. Robert Lowry, a highly respected gospel hymn writer, was in the midst of his evening devotions when he became very impressed with **Luke 24:6-7 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,* <sup>7</sup> *that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”*

Lowry found himself seated at the little pump organ in his home and spontaneously words and music of what we know as Christ Arose flowed from his soul.

Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior, waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord! Up from the grave He arose! With a mighty triumph o'er His foes. He arose a victor o'er the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Today, we step out of our chronological study just a bit. Our Resurrection Sunday lesson is an evangelistic message centered on the importance of confessing Christ as Savior. This particular passage has been controversial throughout church history. The question asked then is the same as the one being asked today, “Who is Jesus?” Many people believe that Jesus was only a great man and teacher who did affect human history in significant ways. Theirs is the “common view” concerning Jesus. True followers of Christ recognize Him as being the divine Son of God and Savior of the world!

Jesus had begun withdrawing from the crowds of Galilee to be alone with His disciples. They went to the coast of Caesarea Philippi located several miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the territory ruled by Philip, a son of Herod the Great. This was a Gentile area and there was less flocking after Jesus here than in other places giving Him time for private conversation with His disciples. Disciples of Jesus today still need private time with Him. The influence of Greek and Roman culture was everywhere, and pagan temples and idols abounded. Yet, Jesus chose such a place to bring His disciples to a closer relationship with Himself. Here Jesus claims the title of Messiah.

**Read Matthew 16:13-17 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”* <sup>14</sup> *And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”* <sup>15</sup> *He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”* <sup>16</sup> *Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* <sup>17</sup> *And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*

The disciples gave several answers – one being that Jesus was a great prophet come back to life. This belief may have stemmed from the promise the LORD gave to Moses in **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**<sup>15</sup> “*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—* Over the centuries, Jewish scholars interpreted this to refer to a special prophet who would appear before Messiah came to establish His kingdom.

Some said that Jesus was John the Baptist. King Herod who beheaded John started this rumor.

**Matthew 14:1-2 (ESV)**<sup>1</sup> *At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus,*<sup>2</sup> *and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.”* Jesus was not John the Baptist.

Others thought Jesus was Elijah because of Malachi’s prophecy in **Malachi 4:5 (ESV)**<sup>5</sup> “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes..*” Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire without dying. Jesus was not Elijah.

After their ‘common view’ answers, Jesus became more specific and questioned who His disciples personally believed Him to be. They had seen Him feed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. They had seen Him walk on the water. They had experienced His feeding of 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish. What did they think this was all about?

The word Messiah is a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning, “anointed one” Messiah in Greek is Christos. The word “Christ” is the English version. Therefore, when you “profess your faith in Christ” you are professing that He is the anointed one – the Messiah.

Bold Peter spoke while the others held back and he had the right answer! His confession indicated that Jesus was the promised King of David’s line who would establish an everlasting kingdom. However, Peter’s confession concerning Jesus’ identity at that time was only a partial understanding of who Jesus was. We will soon see how Peter was expecting a literal kingdom at that time instead of the spiritual kingdom that Christ would build. Even with Peter’s limited understanding, Jesus said that Simon Bar-Jonah was blessed in his knowledge. Bar is the Aramaic equivalent for the Hebrew ben which means son of. Bar is used several times in the New Testament as a prefix to names – one example is Barabbas.

**Read Matthew 16:18-20 (ESV)**<sup>18</sup> *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>19</sup> *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*<sup>20</sup> *Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.*

Many Old Testament references used the rock as a symbol of God. One example is **Psalms 18:2 (ESV)**<sup>2</sup> *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge...* Jesus had previously given Simon the new name of Peter in **John 1:42 (ESV)**<sup>42</sup> *He brought him to*

*Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter). Now, Jesus reveals more regarding Peter’s new name. The Aramaic word for stone is Cephas.*

Over the centuries some have concluded that Jesus was indicating Peter would be ‘the rock’ upon which He would build His church. In order to better understand Jesus’ words in verse 18, let’s look at the Greek. Petros (Peter) is the masculine gender for a shifting or insecure stone. On the other hand, the feminine gender of petra describes a solid, immovable rock.

Jesus said: *You are petros [a stone], and upon this petra [immovable rock] I will build My church.* The immovable rock is Peter’s confession of faith regarding Jesus! *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Were they given only to Simon Peter? No, Jesus gives the keys of heaven to those who make the same confession as Peter did – those who know Christ as Savior. The keys are located in the Word of God. If you are a child of God, you have the keys to heaven! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When we refrain from sharing God’s Word of salvation, we ‘bind on earth.’ When we share the Word, we ‘loose on earth’. All followers of Christ have the responsibility to share the good news that Jesus died for our sins and arose to life from the grave to offer us victory over death.

In the following passage, we are reminded of how easily one who has confessed faith in Christ may fall into serious error if acting on merely human principles. Peter inadvertently became the mouthpiece of Satan. Jesus challenges His disciples’ understanding of Messiah.

**Read Matthew 16:21-23 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> *From 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 on the third day be raised.* <sup>22</sup> *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”* <sup>23</sup> *But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*

Jesus was preparing His disciples for what was about to happen to Him. I was born to older parents. As I was growing up, they occasionally tried to prepare me at times that they would not always be with me. As a youngster, I was devastated when they went so far as to purchase cemetery plots. I couldn’t stand to believe that death would come to them. So, I can easily identify with how the disciples refused to believe when Jesus spoke about His death.

Peter was thinking like a man – not taking spiritual matters into consideration. We are told regarding Jesus' speaking of His death and resurrection to the disciples in **John 12:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* When Jesus was glorified, they understood the complete picture.

Peter had a tendency to argue with Jesus' Word. Peter had enough faith to confess that Jesus was the Son of God, but he did not have the faith to trust Jesus regarding the Father's plan. Jesus was disturbed because Peter was trying to convince Him that He was the one who was wrong – the one who did not understand! Peter was acting like he was the one with the insight into the Father's will.

So often in our own life situations, we tend to believe that we know better than God about events in our lives when the truth is we can't foresee God's plans. We must always trust that our Father sees the 'big picture' and knows what is best for us. If Satan himself could not tempt Jesus to sin, Simon Peter sure would not be able to do so. Beware, if we try to dissuade someone regarding God's plan for their life, we are committing a sin! Jesus' own disciple was standing in the way of God's mission. Jesus calls disciples to die and rise with Him.

**Read Matthew 16:24-27 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*

Today the cross is an accepted symbol of love and sacrifice. But in that day the cross was a horrible means of capital punishment. Condemned criminals had to carry their cross through the streets to the execution site. When Jesus used this picture of His followers taking up their crosses to follow Him, the disciples knew what He meant. Following Jesus takes true commitment. Not following Jesus causes us to die spiritually and emotionally. Our lives turn inward, and we lose our intended purpose. When we give our life in service to Christ, we discover joy in Him! Taking up our cross involves a true commitment to Christ and denying self. The hardest person in the world to deny is our own self. We are human and we want what WE want! **1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)** <sup>57</sup> *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Today, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus – in fact, we celebrate His resurrection as a body of believers 52 times a year – hopefully, with every breath we breathe we rejoice that because Christ died and rose again, we will too! **1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)** <sup>51</sup> *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*