

# THE FIRST 15

Thursday, September 19, 2024

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Today is Thursday, September 19 and we are learning what the Bible says about foundation.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and loving God, In the quiet of the morning, I pause to connect with Your Holy Spirit. You are my firm foundation. You are the rock on which I stand. When the future is uncertain, when the world doesn't make sense, when I am anxious, worried, or afraid, I stop to remember Your good promises. Thank You for being with me in every circumstance and reminding me that You place my feet on solid ground. I can trust You completely. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter (petra (Greek) meaning rock), and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:13-18***

## REFLECTION

Who is Jesus? Different people have different answers. A popular world view is that Jesus was one of many great leaders of world history. Because he was assassinated he gained a great following. Different world religions have a variety of understandings about Jesus. Some claim Jesus was a great man like Ghandi who lived a long time ago in ancient Israel and did a lot of good things. Others say Jesus was one of the great messengers sent to mankind by Allah. Jesus was a great prophet like Moses, Elijah or Jeremiah. He was an enlightened teacher like Buddha or one of the many deities of a pantheon of gods in Hinduism. He was a historical figure who lived in Nazareth and taught profound teachings.

In the book of Matthew, the religious leaders of the day could not figure out who Jesus was either. The Pharisees and the Sadducees created conflict over his identity. Jesus and His disciples traveled to Caesarea Philippi, an ancient Greco-Roman city built in a unique area. A rocky face rises one hundred feet into the sky and stretches out five hundred feet wide. Herod the Great built a temple there in 19 B.C. to honor Caesar. The temple sat in front of a cave that was believed to be the gateway to hell. The gates of Hades.

In today's account from the book of Matthew, Jesus and the disciples visited the interesting geological site of Caesarea Philippi. They were engulfed by the massive rocky edifice. Pagan rulers had constructed an enormous white marble temple there for the worship of fertility gods and the emperor Caesar. This was an impressive building and amazing construction

achievement. I imagine I am there alongside the disciples. Jesus asks these questions, "Who do people say the Son of Man is? What about you? Who do you say I am?" How will I answer His question? What is my honest response? What do I believe in my heart of hearts? Peter makes the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The church is built on that confession - the witness of who Christ is.

I consider what I am worried about today. What am I afraid of? What causes me fear? Do I have confidence that the rock of Christ is stronger than the gates of Hades? Do I have assurance that good is stronger than evil, that love is greater than hate, that God is on my side? Do I have confidence that my faith can overcome all forms of evil and the ways that darkness presents itself?

**Ask:** Who do I say Jesus is? Have I built my life on the rock of Jesus Christ's true identity?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus Christ, I confess you are the Messiah. You are the Son of the living God. You are the way and the truth and the life. Thank You Father God for revealing this truth to me and affirming it in my heart. Thank You for the church built on the witnesses of faith over generations. Come into my life anew this day. I believe You have ultimate power over evil. You are the one to fight my battles, vanquish my fears, overcome my concerns, and change my circumstances. I build my life on the truth of who You are regardless of what the world says. Amen.*