

Gospel and Grasping Our New Identity in Christ

Outline

1. The Kingdom of God advances by Revelation
2. Two Aspects of Revelation
3. The Power of the Second Aspect

1. The Kingdom of God advances by Revelation

Matt 16:15-18 [Jesus asks His disciples] ¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Whodo you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of theliving God.” ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

v16: Simon Peter declares Jesus is the **Messiah**, the **Son of God**. What does it mean?

- **Messiah**, a Hebrew term, means the “Anointed One” whom God sent and empowered to deliver His people and establish His kingdom. The equivalent word is “Christos” in Greek or Christ in English. Jesus is the true Messiah, anointed by God to deliver people from Satan, sin and death and establish the Kingdom of God. But the Jews hoped the Messiah would be a king who would save the Jews from Roman oppression. Though Jesus privately accepted the title and function of the Messiah, as in Peter’s declaration in Matt 16:16-17, He told Peter not to tell anyone (Mark 8:29-30). This is known as Jesus’ “messianic secret.” He was the Messiah but did not want the public to know it too early in His ministry. This is because Jesus’ kingdom was not political but spiritual (John 18:36). If Jesus had publicly used the title “Messiah,” people would have thought He was a political king. His ministry would end before the appointed time.
- **Son of God:** When the New Testament presents Jesus as the Son of God, it emphasises two aspects of His person — His eternal relation to God as His Father (John 1:18) and His perfect revelation of the Father to the human race(John 14:9, Heb 1:3).

Simon’s declaration was a unique and mighty declaration of faith in Jesus— declaring Jesus to be Messiah (Saviour) and Son of God (Lord). And though Jesus was not yet crucified for our sins, died, buried and resurrected at that time — Simon accepted Jesus’ true identity and mission. Simon is now a Christian, born of God and entered God’s Kingdom. Jesus says this revelation comes not from *flesh and blood but from “My Father in heaven”*. Jesus makes it clear to us that the entry to the Kingdom of God is only by the revelation that Jesus is Saviour and Lord.

Jesus addresses Simon by his earthly birth name *Simon son of Jonah*, and tellshim that Simon will be called Peter from now on. It is as though Simon, son of Jonah, is now born again, but this time not as a son of Jonah but as a child of God (*John 1:12-13*), a new creation (*2 Cor 5:17*) with a new identity — Peter.

Then Jesus says that He will build His Church on this “rock” — on this new identity that came by revelation from Father God.

The Church will overcome the gates of Hades. (The proper translation is Hadesand not Hell. Hell is the place of eternal punishment). Hades, here, refers to theplace of darkness ruled by evil powers—the kingdom of darkness. “Gates” refer to evil principalities and powers that rule Hades. The Church born from above by

revelation will smash through the forces of darkness on earth and set the captives free—spreading the kingdom of God on earth as it is heaven.

The good news (gospel) is that the eternal Son of God became a man named Jesus, **the Messiah** (Christ) sent by God to deliver the human race from Satan, sin and death. But not only that but also to make them children of God — children not born of human descent (caste, gender or race), not of human decision (whether born of parents who are married or not) but born of God (John 1:12-13). Furthermore, God will partner with these children of God to overthrow the kingdom of darkness and bring about the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

The importance of good behaviour and good works: There are many good things about good behaviour & good works, e.g,

- It glorifies the Father (Matt 5:16) — *they will see your good deeds and praise the Father*
- It makes the believer more credible in their witness (2 Cor 6:3) — *we put no stumbling block in anyone's path so that our ministry is not discredited*
- It disarms an unbeliever's objections and defences (Rom 12:19-20 *Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*²⁰ *On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*)

But the severe limitation of good behaviour and good works is that they cannot smash through the powers of darkness. Only revelation knowledge can do that.

For example, you can show great love and compassion to a person bound by evil spirits, but that will not drive away the evil spirit. You can only drive out the evil spirit in Jesus' Name, provided **you grasp the revelation** of your identity in Christ. So, the Kingdom of God advances only by revelation from God.

2. Two Aspects of Revelation

- The Essential Aspect:** In Matt 16:16, Simon Peter declares, *"You are the Messiah, Son of the living God"* — by this revelation from Father God, Simon, son of Jonah, **enters the Kingdom of God**. This is the first aspect of the revelation. It is the **essential** aspect
- The Effective Aspect:** In Matt 16:18, Jesus said, *"I tell you that you are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"*. This revelation from Jesus gives Simon a new identity that will smash through the kingdom of darkness. The second aspect of revelation enables Peter (the believer) **to bring the Kingdom of God to earth**. This is the **effective** aspect — you are Peter.

If Simon doesn't grasp this **effective** aspect of the revelation, he will declare — I can't do this, and I can't do that. He will not be able to move ahead because of fear. Even though he is born again, he will be stuck in his old identity as Simon, son of Jonah. He cannot do anything except good works (which cannot advance the Kingdom of God on earth). Most people who get stuck in unbelief start blaming others, especially their parents/spouses/children. But remember, **blaming others has an expiry date**. However, people who grasp their new identity don't want to waste time. Despite opposition, they are eager to spread the message of the Kingdom of God. It is the grasping of the second aspect of revelation that empowers Peter. Jesus says that the Church consists of Peters, who grasp the revelation that they are children of the Most-High God and who can smash through the gates of Hades. Of course, the Holy Spirit empowers them to accomplish the mission of Jesus.

But there will be excuses. There will be domestic responsibilities, uncooperative spouses, young children, lack of time, lack of finance etc. In Matt 8:21-22, in response to a disciple who wanted to first bury his father before

following Him, Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury the dead, but you come and follow Me”. The Lord of heaven will not show disrespect to parents—but what He means is don’t make excuses nor fall into traps. There is urgency and priority for the Kingdom of God to expand. Don’t allow stubborn parents or spouses to stop you from answering the call to further the Kingdom of God. Most of us have domestic responsibilities—but we must **set our hearts** on advancing the Kingdom of God despite it. And when and where there is a will, there will always be a way.

So many in our churches are genuinely born again, having grasped the first aspect of the revelation. They love the Lord and live godly lives but do not grasp the second aspect of the revelation. They will certainly go to heaven, but on earth, all their good works will not be able to break through the gates of Hades.

One can also look at these two revelations as:

- a. Who do you say Jesus is? — Simon told Jesus, “*You are the Messiah, Son of the living God.* When you grasp this, **God does work in you** (The Essential Aspect).
- b. Who Jesus you are as a believer? — Jesus says, “*You are Peter, and I will build My church upon this rock. And the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* God works through you (The Effective Aspect) when you grasp this.

3. The Power of the Second Aspect (the Effective Aspect)

Matt 16:18-19 And *I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* ¹⁹ *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

In John 15:5, Jesus says, “*Apart from me, you can do nothing*”. We need Jesus to overcome the kingdom of darkness. God is self-sufficient. He doesn’t need us. But since He has given the earth for man to rule, He chooses not to do anything without partnering with man.

So now, God and believers have become partners to bring the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. In **v19**, Jesus tells us, “*As your partner, I will give you the keys of the kingdom to bind and to loose, and all heaven is behind you*”.

But it would be best if you took the initiative (the keys are in your hands), and I will back you with the power of the Holy Spirit. The only condition is that you must know my character, my will and my mission so that I can be your partner (Don’t expect Me to partner with you to rob a bank)

- When Moses faced the evil magicians of Pharaoh, he used the staff (symbolic of keys), and God’s power was with him to defeat them.
- When David faced Goliath, he was confident of God’s will and used his sling (symbolic of keys) to knock Goliath down.
- When Abraham interceded for Sodom, he was confident of God’s mercy and used intercession as a key to saving his nephew, Lot.

Conclusion: 2 Kings 6:13-18 tells a fantastic story of how a strong army with chariots of the King of Aram surrounded Elisha and his servant to capture him. *The servant cried, “What shall we do”. Elisha replied, “Don’t be afraid. There are more with us than those with them.* And Elisha prayed that God would open the servant’s eyes so that he may see it. God listened, and the servant saw the hills were full of horses and chariots, representing heaven’s armies. Then Elisha prayed that God would strike the armies of Aram with blindness. The enemy forces became blind and were captured, etc.

Paul prays the same prayer as Elisha prayed for his servant—to open our eyes. Paul prays for the two aspects of revelation: (a) **v17** & (b) **v 18-21**. Paul prayed, “*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the*

glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know the hope he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. "(Eph 1:17-22).

I want to pray for you a shorter version of Paul's prayer. I pray for you that:

- You will grasp the first and second aspects of revelation (Essential and Effective Aspects of Revelation)
- Your eyes will be open to know that the armies of heaven are with you as you use the keys of the kingdom in Jesus' Name to smash through the gates of Hades and bring in the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Remember, the armies of heaven are with you as you take the next step in faith. The next step could be small, but the armies of heaven are with you and will multiply your offering. Imagine every believer in the church taking the next step forward—WOW.