

File No. 127

## **MATTHEW 16:13–28**

Mark 8:27 — 9:1; Luke 9:18–27

### **'WHO AM I? (PETER'S CONFESSION)**

(SBS Book 5 Story No 9)

#### *Story Notes*

Jesus was dealing with the 'little faith' of his disciples (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; and later at 17:20). Their consciences were more settled by managing the detail of their lives than by the greater duty of believing in Jesus. But they were men of faith, albeit little, and could be tutored into something richer.

'Who am I?' Jesus asked. The community had not seen what the disciples had seen in Jesus. He was more than a prophet, and more than someone raised from the dead, as Herod supposed. Peter (speaking for all) said he was the Christ, the Son of God, he whose coming the prophets had announced. God's King was among them. Only the Father could have revealed this to Peter, and he would be blessed.

In the confession of this, Peter would be a foundation of a new assembly or church, a people raised up by Christ who could no longer be defeated by death or hell. The other apostles would share this task with him (as in Eph. 2:20).

Peter would have the keys to the kingdom. A little later, Jesus spoke of all the apostles, or the assembled church, having these keys (Matt. 18:18). Peter, who confessed that Jesus was the Christ, and who would proclaim the good news (4:23), would provide entrance to the kingdom (cf. those who took away the key of knowledge in Luke 11:52). Because there are no other keys to the kingdom, any who rejected the gospel would be excluded from it (cf. Acts 4:11–12; 8:20–23).

Jesus then began to tell the disciples of his death and resurrection. By these events, the church would be built. Peter's trying to avoid this did not come from God. He was with Adam (who gambled with death) rather than with Christ. He did not understand the power of death or the power needed to overcome it.

Nor did Peter understand that life consisted in laying it down rather than keeping it. His mind was not on the self giving God who had sent his Son, or on the Son of God who would lay down his life. However, Jesus dying would open up the way of true living. He would overcome the world's last enemy, and truly offer himself to the Father.

So, to be a follower, Jesus said that we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. If we seek our own profit and succeed, we will have gained nothing when Christ comes as Judge.

Taking up our cross is part of the action of following Christ. It is not suffering in general but what happens when others hate our testimony and seek to do us harm. Our self-denial would have no credibility if it were not first a participation in the crucifixion of Christ (Gal. 2:20; 6:14–15), a confession of the power of his cross (I Cor. 1:17–18; 2:1–5) and a joyous bearing of the sufferings that come to us because we belong to him (II Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24).

Was the matter really so final? Yes, says Jesus. Some would soon see him coming in the power of his kingdom. Within days, some saw an anticipation of this when Jesus was transfigured before them. Before long, Christ would be raised from the dead and be declared the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:3). The Spirit would come, and so, the opening of the kingdom to all believers. Those who truly saw these things would know that Messiah had overcome death and that there was life for the world through his self-giving.