

THE GOOD CONFESSION.

I. QUAR., LESSON IV., JAN. 27, MATT. 16:13-23.

**Golden Text – "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."
– Matt. 16:16.**

AFTER the many proofs of his divine anointing which his disciples had seen, the Lord had reason to expect their faith in his claim to the Messiahship to be established. Hence the questions of this lesson – (1) "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" and (2) "But whom say ye that I am?" The former was but a leading question; the latter, the pointed one calculated to bring out a full expression of their faith.

Here Simon Peter's impulsive zeal, which sometimes led him into difficulties and errors, led him to a very warm and prompt expression of his full conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. "And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!'" Such a prompt and full profession of his faith brought the immediate reward of the Master's approval. The conviction thus impressed upon his mind was not such as the carnal mind would arrive at, but such as the mind could gain only by submitting itself fully to the spirit of God. Peter and all the other apostles had done this, but Peter, being the most prompt to confess it, received the first and warmest commendation and reward.

Verse 18. "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter [Greek, *petros*, a stone, a piece of a rock]; and upon this rock [Greek, *petra*, the rock in mass, the foundation rock] I will build my church; and the gates of hell [*hades*, the grave, death] shall not prevail against it."

The foundation "rock" was Christ – "this rock" – which Peter had just confessed, and not Peter, as the Church of Rome claims, and as

some Protestants are now willing to concede. Peter himself disclaims such distinction, and such usurpation of the Lord's place, when he points to Christ as the foundation stone in the spiritual temple of God, and to *all* the members of his body as living stones to be built upon that foundation. – 1 Pet. 2:4-6. See also Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; Psa. 118:22,23; 1 Cor. 3:11.

The promise that the gates of death should not prevail against the Lord's true Church has indeed been verified; for though assailed by the fiercest persecutions she has never yet been exterminated. Throughout the entire age down to its close in the present time the Lord has preserved a people; and his further promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," has also been richly verified.

But while the gates of death (hades) have not prevailed against the Church as a whole, they have done so (temporarily) against its members – even against the Head, our Lord. But they shall not prevail everlastingly. Our Lord triumphed or prevailed over hades (the grave) on the third day in his resurrection (by the Father's power), and we his Church also shall prevail on the third (thousand-year) day. For it is promised that He who raised up our Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus. And thus the gates of the grave shall not eventually prevail or triumph over us. "Weeping [and death] may endure for a night, but joy [in resurrection] cometh in the morning."

Verse 19. The "keys of the kingdom" granted to Peter signified the privilege which he subsequently enjoyed of opening the gospel door to both Jews and Gentiles: **[R1760 : page 22]** to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, after the anointing of the holy Spirit (See Acts 2:14-40); and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. (See Acts 10:33-46.) The ability to bind and loose on earth and in heaven, while here expressed to Peter specially, applied also to all the other apostles. It was the guarantee of that divine inspiration which subsequently so guided their teachings as to make them infallibly authoritative to the entire Church. Whatever they, under divine

inspiration, bound upon the Church as duty was bound in heaven; and whatever they loosed, e.g., the obligations of the Mosaic law, were loosed in heaven. – See our issue of May 1, '93.

Verse 20. The charge that they should not yet begin to preach this doctrine was given probably in consideration of the fact that the people in general still needed line upon line and precept upon precept in the way of evidence before they would believe. The Lord apparently desired to multiply the evidences rather than the assertions of his character. He gave them the evidences and led them thus to the right conclusions.

Verse 21. Having fully convinced the apostles – his chosen witnesses – of the verity of his claims, he now began to instruct them further in the purposes of God with reference to himself. Step by step, as a wise teacher, he led them into the truth.

Verses 22,23. While the love of Peter would, if possible, protect the Lord from his predicted tragic end, the Lord promptly rebuked any interference with the divine plan to which he himself was fully submitted. Like our Lord, we should be so fully submitted to the will of God that even the kindly meant dissuasions from duty on the part of our own friends, or the natural desires of our own flesh, we should recognize as besetments of the Adversary; and we should promptly and firmly resist them.

Thank God for the Peters of his flock, with their own earnest confessions. Their characters, as well as that of the Paul class, demand and have our admiration – notwithstanding their need of reproofs at times, for misdirected zeal.
