

Kefa Again Acknowledges that Yeshua is the Messiah

In my last post, we examined another parable of **Yeshua's** that **Kefa** needed to be explained. In this post, we learn that **Kefa** once again acknowledges that **Yeshua** is the **Messiah**.

¹³ When Yeshua came into the territory around Caesarea Philippi, he asked His talmidim, "Who are people saying the Son of Man is?"

Caesarea Philippi was pagan territory, near a cave devoted to the worship of the Greek woodland deity Pan; **Herod** had also dedicated a temple for the worship of Caesar there. Few Jewish people would have expected it as a site for a divine revelation. The city was some twenty-five miles from the **Sea of Galilee** and about seventeen hundred feet higher. **Caesarea Philippi**, the present-day town of Banyas, sits at the foot of **Mount Hermon**, where the **Yarden River** springs forth. **Herod Philip** refurbished this town and renamed it in honor of the Emperor and himself. ¹

¹⁴ They said, "Well, some say Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist), others Eliyahu (Elijah), still others Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) or one of the prophets."

All these answers about who **Yeshua** falls into the "prophets" category, though many members of the Jewish elite held that prophets had ceased, a widespread expectation of end-time prophets remained strong. **Eliyahu** was expected to return (Malachi 4:5), and many of **Yeshua's** miracles resembled **Eliyahu's**. His judgment oracles (Mt 11:20-24) or downplaying the Temple (cf. Mt 12:6; 24:1-2) may have evoked the comparison with **Yirmeyahu**.

¹⁵ "But you," He said to them, "who do you say I am?" ¹⁶ Shim 'on Kefa answered, "You are the Mashiach, the Son of the living God" (emphasis added). ¹⁷ "Shim 'on Bar-Yochanan," Yeshua said to him, "how blessed you are! For no human being revealed this to you, no, it was my Father in heaven.

Kefa announces for all to hear the **Yeshua** is the **Mashiach** (Messiah), the **Son of the living God**. Because he recognized who **Yeshua** was, he is blessed by **Yeshua** with an insight into who he will become.

Shim' on Bar-Yochanan, Aramaic for "**Shim' on, Son of Yochanan**." **How blessed you are** is a standard form of blessing. **A human being**, literally, "**flesh and blood**" corresponding to Hebrew **basar v'dam**, a common expression stressing human limits and weakness. ²

¹⁸ I also tell you this: you are Kefa, [which means 'Rock,'] "and on this rock, I will build my Community, and the gates of Sh'ol will not overcome it.

Kefa is an Aramaic word equivalent to Greek "**Petros**," which means rock.

I want to pause for a moment and concentrate on the use of the word **Community**. In Hebrew, it is **Kehilah**, which means "**assembly, congregation, community**." In Greek, it is **Ekklesia**, which means "**called-out ones**." Unfortunately, most English translation of **Ekklesia** is "**church**," and from it comes the word "**ecclesiastical**," meaning "**having to do with the church**." However, what is being spoken about here is a spiritual community of people based on trust in God and His Son, the **Messiah Yeshua**. This can be all people throughout history who so commit themselves, or a group of such people at a particular time and place, such as the **Messianic Community** in **Corinth** or **Yerushalayim**. Unlike "**church**," **Ekklesia** never refers either to an institution or to a building. ³ Personally, I don't go to church. I go to worship God and fellowship with my congregation (Community) of Believers, where I live.

¹ Bible Background Commentary - New Testament.

² Jewish New Testament Commentary.

³ Ibid.

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

The keeper of the keys was one of the most critical roles a household servant could hold. Because keys were bulky and might be carried by only a single person, they also symbolized authority; a high official held the keys in a royal kingdom and God's house, the Temple. Keys here may signify the authority to admit into the Kingdom (Mt 23:13), based on the knowledge of the truth about **Yeshua**. The Qumran community also had officials deciding whether to admit members; the decision was made based on the prospective member's acceptance of the Community's rule of life. ⁴

In consequence of his confession, **Yeshua** makes **Kefa** both (1) *Shammash* (steward) with the **keys**, and (2) *Dayan* (judge), who, as the one who can **prohibit** and **permit**, establishes new covenant *halakhah* (make authoritative decisions). From this passage, the tradition of St. Peter standing at the Pearly Gates originated.

²⁰ Then He warned the talmidim not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah. ~ Matthew 16:13-20 (CJB)

In my next post, we pick up our chronological journey of **Kefa** and learn that he rebukes **Yeshua**.

⁴ Bible Background Commentary - New Testament.