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Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom

Matthew 16:13–20 · Sprout · Ages 5–8

One day Jesus took his disciples far to the north, near a town called Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of a great mountain. There he asked them a question: what were people saying about who he was?

The disciples told him what they had heard. Some people thought he was John the Baptist come back. Others said Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.

Then Jesus asked a harder question. What about them? What did they think?

Simon Peter spoke up. He said that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah God had promised, the Son of the living God.

Jesus told Peter that he was blessed, because no person had taught him this. God the Father in heaven had shown it to him.

Then Jesus said something wonderful. Peter's name means rock, and on this rock Jesus would build his Church. Not even death itself would ever defeat it.

Jesus also promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In those days a king's chief helper carried the keys of the palace. He could open doors and lock them, and

he took care of the king's household. Jesus was choosing Peter to lead and care for his family, the Church. The choices Peter made on earth to bind and to loose, Jesus said, heaven would stand behind.

Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah. It was not time.

Peter was not perfect. Soon after this he made mistakes, and later he even said he didn't know Jesus. But Jesus never took back his promise. He forgave Peter, and Peter became the first leader of the whole Church. The Pope today carries on Peter's job.

Jesus keeps his promises. His Church is built on rock, and it will never be destroyed.

Talk about it

1. What did Peter say when Jesus asked who he was?
2. What did Jesus promise to give Peter?
3. Who carries on Peter's job in the Church today?

Key verse: Mt 16:16. Look it up in your Bible.