

OpenTheo

March 7th: Exodus 14 & Matthew 16:13-28

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Alastair Roberts

The Red Sea Crossing. Peter's confession.

Some passages referenced:

Exodus 9:16 (God gaining honour through Pharaoh and the Egyptians); Genesis 50:9 (chariots and horsemen accompanying the body of Jacob); Genesis 6:15 (the dimensions of the ark); Psalm 66:6 (Red Sea and Jordan crossing combined); Psalm 74:13-14 (defeat of the sea monster); Isaiah 63:10-14 (Moses the shepherd through the waters); Hebrews 13:20 (Christ the great shepherd like Moses in Isaiah 63).

Jeremiah 11:19 (Jeremiah like a lamb to the slaughter); John 1:42 (renamed Peter); Isaiah 51:1-2 (Abraham the rock); Matthew 3:9 (children for Abraham from the stones); Jeremiah 12:16; 18:9; 31:4; 33:7; 42:10 (building of a people); Jeremiah 1 (call of Jeremiah); Galatians 1:11-16, 2:7-9 (parallels between Paul's unique redemptive historical calling and Peter's and between them both and Jeremiah); 2 Samuel 7:4-16, 1 Chronicles 17:3-15 (Davidic covenant); Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7 (the keys of the house of David); Matthew 18:18-20 (the church and binding and loosing); Matthew 23:13 (closing the kingdom through false teaching); 2 Samuel 19:21-22 (parallels between Peter and the 'adversary' Abishai); Isaiah 8:14 (stumbling stone); Matthew 4:10 (Satan's temptation).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Exodus 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-Hahoroth, between Migdal and the Sea, in front of Baal-Zephon. Ye shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, They are wandering in the land, the wilderness has shut them in.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. And they did so.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people. And they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us? So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel, while the people of Israel were going out defiantly.

The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them, encamped at the sea, by Pi-Hahoroth, in front of Baal-Zephon. When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord.

They said to Moses, Is it because there are no graves in Egypt, that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt, Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness. And Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward, lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, so that they shall go in after them.

And I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his

chariots and his horsemen. Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel.

And there was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen. And in the morning watched the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud, looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels, so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen. So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea, the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen.

Of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. The story of Exodus chapter 14, the crossing of the Red Sea, is a pivotal event in the Exodus narrative.

It's the hinge that leads from the Exodus narrative and the plagues to the story of the wilderness. It's a narrative once again sandwiched in liturgical material. On the one hand it has the material concerned with the Passover celebration and the law of the firstborn, and on the other side it has the song of the sea.

God is going to gain glory over Pharaoh. He strengthens Pharaoh's heart again. Pharaoh has changed his mind in verse 5, and God intensifies Pharaoh's resolve.

This is for his glory and also for the revelation of his glory to the Egyptians. In verse 25 of the chapter, the Egyptians declare that the Lord fights for the Israelites. God will gain honour over the Egyptians in this, and gain honour from them as they declare his glory.

God said in chapter 9 verse 16, For this purpose I have raised you up to show you my

power so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. There are 600 chosen chariots that pursue the Israelites. 600,000 Israelites have left the land of Egypt, so there's one chariot for each one of the thousands of Israel.

And beyond that there are many other chariots besides. Back in Genesis chapter 50 there was an honour guard of chariots that accompanied the body of Jacob as it was being brought to the land of Canaan to be buried there. God once again is having chariots accompany his people out of the land, this time as pursuers, no longer as an honour guard.

But there is a sense of the honour that he will gain in both instances, either with the Egyptians as an honour guard, or with them as pursuers to be defeated. The numbers are interesting. 600,000 of Israel, divided in 50s as they're going out in 50s in their ranks, is 12,000.

It's the tribes times a thousand, then times 50. It probably is a significant number for that reason. We can think maybe back to the story of the flood as well.

There are 120 years leading up to the flood. The width of the ark is 50 cubits. Israel goes out in 50s and they're 40 times the length of the ark, is in cubits, in numbers of their ranks.

Maybe there's something to this. Maybe we're supposed to see a new ark going through the waters. The Egyptians overtake the Israelites and Israel is trapped between the sea and the Egyptians.

At this point the people cry out against Moses. Moses tells them not to be afraid. God will fight for his people.

All they have to do is be silent and watch God's deliverance. Once again God strengthens the hearts of the Egyptians. The point is not to harden them, but to give them the courage and the resolve to go through with their purpose.

They become foolhardy enough to follow the Israelites into the sea. Moses in this story plays a central role. He is the one who goes before Israel.

He is the one who is the backbone of the nation, giving them confidence in a time of terror and fear. And he declares that as they stand and watch, that God will accomplish his salvation. This whole event is in some way encapsulating the greater deliverance.

It's returning to the original crime of the Egyptians. The Egyptians cast the Hebrew boys into the waters of the Nile. Now they are being cast into the Red Sea.

Their boys are being cast into the Red Sea. And there is a sort of poetic justice occurring here. We might also see symmetry with the story of Moses himself.

The sea is the Red Sea, but it also could be translated as the Reed Sea. The word that we have for the place where Moses was placed among the reeds is the same word used for the description of the sea here. Moses received his name as he was drawn out from the water.

Israel is drawn out from the water here. Moses was greeted by his sister Miriam as he was delivered. She was the one who came and spoke with the daughter of Pharaoh and ensured that he was given to his mother to nurse him.

Now we have a similar situation. Miriam will greet the people with song at the other side. So Moses does not merely lead them through the Red Sea, but he does not merely give them confidence as they take the route that God has opened to them.

He is also the one who is the exemplar of the salvation that God is about to work for them. He has already experienced this. They are entering into something that he has already undergone.

The angel of God goes before them. And the connection between the angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud is interesting here. They are associated together, and yet they seem to be slightly different.

Maybe we can think about this in terms of the relationship between the angel of the Lord and the glory cloud of the Spirit. At various points in the book of Genesis we have an appearance of the angel of the Lord. And the angel of the Lord, I believe, is associated with the second person of the Trinity.

And at many of those points the angel of the Lord does not appear with glorious manifestations surrounding him. Whereas here there is that association. And maybe we should see a movement into a greater degree of glory occurring at this point.

There are many creation themes that we might recognize in the story of the Red Sea crossing. There is the presence of the Spirit, the glory cloud of the Spirit, that might remind us of the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the deep at the very beginning of the story of creation in Genesis chapter 1. There is the light in the darkness, the light of the pillar of cloud. There is the division of the waters.

There is the raising of the land from the waters and dry land emerging from the waters. It is a new creation event. And there are continued themes of God's hypernatural work against the nation of Egypt.

Evening and morning were the first day, and now there is a new evening and morning. The evening of the crossing passes and a new day emerges where everything has changed. Israel has been created as a new nation.

The Egyptians lie dead at the bottom of the sea and they have emerged into a new

freedom. The Egyptians descend into the tomb of the deep and they recognize that the Lord fights for Israel and none of the Egyptians remain at the end. The response of the Israelites is to fear God and to believe in his servant Moses.

This once again recalls the early story of Moses, that Moses is set apart from the people as a leader but also as an example, as one who has undergone this experience before them. He goes before them in his personal life through the waters. He is drawn out of the waters.

They are drawn out too. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Paul speaks about this as them being baptized into Moses. What happened to Moses happens to them later on.

It is a similar pattern with us and Christ. Christ is drawn out of the waters of death and we follow through him as he has opened up the abyss of death so that we might walk through on dry land. The crossing of the sea is a definitive transition.

In the story of Israel, we have a series of these transitions, water crossings, at which the identity of the people is defined. They served foreign guards on the far side of the great river, the Euphrates. They received the name of Israel at the ford of the Jabbok.

They are delivered from Egypt through the Red Sea. They enter in through the Jordan. Each one of these transitions is an event in which Israel receives something of their identity.

As they would look back to these events and also see these physical boundaries of their nation, they would be reminded not only of past deliverances but of their present identity. Water crossings bookend the entire wilderness experience. The whole wilderness period could be spoken of as if it were in this period of the crossing.

It's as if they're in the middle of these two bodies of water and they have to pass through this liminal realm, this space on the threshold between Egypt and the Promised Land. This can be spoken of as a conflation of the two events, as we can see in places like Psalm 66, verse 6, the drying up of the sea and the passing through of the river. Those two events belong together.

And that bookending also leads to a symmetry of the going out and the coming in. Those two events are similar and they also express something of the connection between what Moses does and what Joshua does. The event of the Red Sea crossing has an incredibly important part to play in the later praise of Israel.

They would look back to this event, look upon God's deliverance and recount it in praise and in song. It was also something that was connected with deeper themes, God's power over evil and the forces of chaos, for instance. You divided the sea by your might.

You broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the heads of

Leviathan. You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

That's the way it's described in Psalm 74, verse 13-14. In chapter 63 of the book of Isaiah we see a similar thing. But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

Therefore he turned to be their enemy and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them, to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths like a horse in the desert? They did not stumble.

Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So you led your people to make for yourself a glorious name. Israel is led through the sea but this is described as if it were a new creation experience.

As if God was setting the heavens in place. As if God were working with the deep to divide the waters, bring out dry land. Israel is being formed as a new cosmos.

God created the heavens and the earth. Now God is creating a new heavens and a new earth. A new people from this water crossing.

And the cosmic themes that come to the surface here are not accidental. Nor is it accidental that within the New Testament we'll have further uses of this material concerning the Red Sea Crossing to describe the experience of the Church, the actions of Christ, and the events of his ministry. For instance, in the story of Jesus' temptations, the event of the baptism leading to the 40 days in the wilderness.

We should not be surprised to see some sort of connection here. I've already mentioned Isaiah chapter 63 verses 10 following. And if you listen carefully to those verses, you will have heard the words that the book of Hebrews brings out in verse 20 of chapter 13.

He's drawing upon the Old Testament story of the Red Sea Crossing as it is recounted in the story of Isaiah. And he's presenting this as a paradigm for thinking about the resurrection. That Christ is the one who opens up this new sea before us.

Bringing out a new flock of God's people. He is the new shepherd, the great shepherd of the sheep. Like Moses brought the people out and formed the people under his leadership, so Christ forms a new people as he leads people up, not from the womb of Egypt, but from the womb of the tomb itself.

So that they might walk through on dry ground, through the abyss of death itself. Water crossing in the story of the Exodus is a new birth. It's a new birth also in the story of the resurrection.

Creation and redemption are connected here. We see that God who delivers his people from Egypt is the same God who created the heavens and the earth to begin with. A question to consider.

Throughout the history of the church, the story of the Red Sea Crossing has provided an important paradigm and pattern for thinking about Christian baptism. How can you see the pattern of Christian baptism within the story of the Red Sea Crossing in chapter 14 of the book of Exodus? Matthew chapter 16 verses 13 to 28. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

He said to them, but who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan, you are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

In the second half of Matthew chapter 16 is one of the strongest declarations of Christ's identity within the Gospels, given by Peter as he confesses that Christ is the Son of God. Jesus asks his disciples who men say that he is, and there are a list of prophets given in response. Elijah, or maybe John the Baptist who has come back, or maybe Jeremiah or some other of the prophets.

The association with Elijah can be seen back in Malachi. At the end of Malachi that

promise that Elijah will come before that great day of the Lord. Maybe Jesus is that promise coming to pass.

Maybe John the Baptist was only the start of the mission and there needs to be another coming in the spirit and power of John the Baptist to complete it. Maybe in the same way as Elisha finishes the ministry of Elijah. And Christ could be that one.

Other prophets seem to be mentioned. No one seems to mention Moses here which is interesting. He is the great prophet that is to come like Moses.

But that is not mentioned at this point. Why is Jeremiah mentioned? Jeremiah is a righteous sufferer and martyr. He's led as a lamb to the slaughter in Jeremiah chapter 11 verse 19.

He's a prophet who preaches against the temple. Maybe Christ is coming in that mould. When Peter declares Christ to be the Son of the Living God, Christ responds by giving a symmetrical statement.

You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church. There is a symmetry between those two statements.

What does it mean that Christ declares Peter to be the rock? First of all this is something that is not exclusive to the book of Matthew. We find a similar statement in John chapter 1 verse 42. He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas which means Peter. There are various theories about what it means for Christ to call Peter, Peter.

Why is he called the rock? Why is he associated with this? Maybe we can look back at Isaiah chapter 51 verse 1 to 2 for some hint of what it could mean. Listen to me you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug.

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you. For he was but one when I called him that I might bless him and multiply him. Abraham there is the rock.

He is the rock from which Israel was drawn and hewn out as a nation. In John the Baptist teaching in Matthew chapter 3 we have already seen what might be an allusion back to this. When John said that God could raise up from the stones children for Abraham it was most likely that his hearers would think back to this chapter from Isaiah.

Peter like Abraham is one who stands at the head of a people. As Christ forms his church he forms it with Peter as the leading one of the disciples. Christ is going to build a church.

It's interesting seeing the interplay of the language of an assembly. The church is not so much a building as an assembly of people like a military assembly. Christ is going to establish a new assembly but he's going to establish it as a building.

It's a building and also an assembly of people. We can think about a military assembly, we can think also about the building of a temple. And so these two things go alongside each other.

Within the epistles this interplay is explored in much more detail. We see the way that Paul on the one hand will talk about Christ building a body and on the other hand talking about him building a building. Or of the building being knit together as if by sinews.

This language of the body, this language of the house. And the way that the people are described as living stones or built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We're building a house but we're also building a people, an assembly of people.

Jeremiah uses some sort of language of building people in places like chapter 12 verse 16, 18 verse 9, 31 verse 4, 33 verse 7 and 42 verse 10. So this does have some sort of precedent in the Old Testament. The military connotations of an assembly might also be worth looking into here.

Maybe we're supposed to think back to Israel encamped around Sinai. God forming a people in that context. And there the tabernacle itself is supposed to represent Sinai and the people at Sinai and also a body.

The tabernacle is described in many ways that recall the formation of a body. Beyond this background I think there's a particular passage that may be especially important for understanding what Christ is declaring here to Peter. In the book of Jeremiah chapter 1, Jeremiah is called for his mission.

Reading from verse 9. And the word of the Lord came to me saying, Jeremiah what do you see? And I said, I see an almond branch. Then the Lord said to me, you have seen well for I am watching over my word to perform it. The word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, what do you see? And I said, I see a boiling pot facing away from the north.

Then the Lord said to me, out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. For behold I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord. And they shall come and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah.

And I will declare my judgments against them for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshipped the works of their own hands. But you dress yourself for work, arise and say to them everything I command you.

Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you.

For I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you. Paying attention to this passage, we may be seeing a number of the elements that we find in Matthew chapter 16. God promises to give to Jeremiah the power to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

It's similar to the power that is given to Peter to bind and to loose. There's a similar pairing there. And that's given to Jeremiah through God's placing of his words in his mouth.

So that Jeremiah might act with the authority of God's word as he bears God's word upon his mouth. Other things to notice. There are the references to gates.

The gates that are threatened in the case of Jerusalem. And then also all these people bringing themselves against the gates of Jerusalem. These various kings and rulers that are conspiring to break down those gates.

And the way that Jeremiah himself is set up. Set up like Peter is set up as a rock. Peter is set up as a rock.

Jeremiah is set up as a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls. God declares that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. Here he declares that they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.

And I believe that paying attention to this, it will help us to unlock the meaning in part of the statement that he can bind and loose. In its core meaning, it's much the same as what's given to Jeremiah. And what Jeremiah is given is the power of God's words upon his lip.

It's not just a blank check of authority. Rather, it's God giving him his word, his revelation, so that with that revelation, he can transform the world. And God has called Jeremiah, God calls Peter.

And Peter is going to be the one who brings forth the word of God in the most powerful way. He's going to be the one who preaches the sermon on the day of Pentecost. He's going to be the one who brings the word of God to the Gentiles.

He's opening doors and he's closing doors as well. The judgment upon Jerusalem, the judgment upon the Jews who reject Christ. Peter is the one who pioneers in both of those respects.

And we should take the singular you seriously. Peter is not just addressed as the spokesperson of the disciples at this point. Although the other disciples later on have the same power given to them in chapter 18.

No, the point is that he has an authority as the one who's at the head of them. As the one who's going to lead them in this new stage of the kingdom. The father has revealed the son to Peter.

It's usually the other way around. We usually speak about the son revealing the father. But Peter is the one who's going to bring forward this revelation to others.

We might notice that Paul uses the paradigm of Peter's experience and the experience of Jeremiah in Galatians chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1 verse 11 following. And then later on. And then in verses 7 to 9 of chapter 2. And then in verses 8 to 9. Note there the parallel between Peter's experience and Paul's experience.

Paul is seen as representing to the Gentiles what Peter represents to the circumcised. Peter is the one who's been explicitly commissioned with this ministry above all the other apostles. He is the head of the apostles.

He's the first among the apostles. He's the one that stands out, the most prominent apostle with this ministry. And Paul is his counterpart to the Gentiles.

And that relationship between them is expressed by expressing Paul's experience in the same sort of language as Peter's is. And also in the fact that Paul takes, as Peter does, the paradigm of Jeremiah as the paradigm for understanding his call. Further to this, we might note that this is the only place within Paul's letters that Peter is referred to as Peter.

Everywhere else he is called Cephas. And Peter being described as a pillar here connects with the language of rock. A pillar is something that holds up an edifice just as the rock of Peter is the rock upon which the church is built.

That initial building, that establishment. As Jeremiah is established as a fortified city, so Peter is established in a similar manner. The keys of the kingdom that are given should bring our mind back to Isaiah chapter 22 verse 22.

Where similar language is used of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, who is given authority over the household of David. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open.

The authority within David's house is something that is given to Peter. The authority that he has is as a steward of the house of David. David, of course, being Christ.

Now it's very easy to read this as an event that's focused upon Peter. But it's Christ who

is going to build his church. Peter is going to be the one who is the steward particularly.

He's going to play a pivotal, redemptive, historical role. But Christ is the one who is going to establish his church. He's going to build this congregation of people.

The power of the keys can be connected with the power of teaching. It's the power that Jeremiah has, the power of the word of God to open things up. To open up the ministry to the Gentiles.

To open up the ministry to the Samaritans. To open up the ministry of the day of Pentecost. That is the authority given to Peter.

And God gives him the keys by giving him his word. This is not some blank check of authority. It's not some ongoing Petrine office.

It's not the way that the Catholics have often understood this. As the role of the Pope within the church that continues. Rather it's the ministry of Peter as a pivotal figure in redemptive history.

He is the rock as Abraham is the rock. He is the rock as Jeremiah is established as a fortified city. As one who has the power to open up a new period of redemptive history.

We might also think of Matthew 23, verse 13. Where there are people who close up the kingdom of God to others. The scribes and the Pharisees as they do not teach the people.

They end up closing the kingdom. Peter is the one who is going to be opening it up. And he is going to be bringing judgment upon those who are unfaithful.

But he is going to be opening things up. He is exercising an authority here that is also ascribed to the church later on. In Matthew chapter 18, verse 17 following.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask. It will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name. There am I among them. These are two places in the book of Matthew where we find the expression of binding and loosing.

Also where the church is referred to. These are not common places in the book of Matthew. But yet the church is used in different senses.

In the story of chapter 16 in reference to Peter, it is the church universal. Here it is more the church in a particular context. The building of the house upon the rock might also make us think about Christ as the Davidic Messiah.

We have already had the key of the house of David and the way that that is related to Eliakim. And then Peter has that key. He is the steward of the house of David.

He is the one under the king, the Messiah, who is going to open things up for the Messiah. That building of the house is something that is committed to the Messiah. Something that the Messiah would do according to promise.

And now Christ is going to build that house. He is going to be the one who fulfils the promise of the Davidic Messiah. After this grand confession, however, they are instructed to keep these things quiet.

It is not yet the time for this secret to be generally known. In fact, it will not be properly revealed until after the death and resurrection. Which reveal the true character of Christ as the Son of God.

He is not the Son of God in the sense of a military leader. In the sense of a Davidic power who is going to rule over the nations without suffering. Rather, he is the suffering servant.

He is the suffering king. He is the king like David during the coup of Absalom. And perhaps in Christ's rebuke that follows to Peter, we might recall that earlier event.

As David rebukes Abishai, who seeks to strike Shimei. David said, It is very much the similar expression that Christ gives to Peter. Peter is as Abishai.

We see him doing that role later on as well. As Christ has to prevent him from striking with the sword. When Christ is challenged in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Peter here is playing the role of Satan. He is not actually being possessed. Maybe Jesus is saying in part, get back in line Peter.

Get behind me. Follow me. Don't try and lead me.

Peter's challenge here is also a challenge that recalls Satan's challenge in chapter 4 verse 10. When Christ says something very similar in his rebuke of Satan. The parallel there is between the promise of glory without suffering.

And there it was from the mouth of Satan. And here it is from the mouth of Peter. And the similarity should be recognised.

We are reaching a transition point in the narrative. The earlier transition started with the ministry of John the Baptist. And leading to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness

after his baptism.

And now we have a similar cluster of events. We've had the death of John the Baptist. Now we've had the witness of Peter.

And now we have the temptation of Christ. And soon we'll have the transfiguration which parallels with the baptism. These are far more pronounced in the parallelism in the book of Luke.

But it is also present in Matthew. Peter is as a stumbling stone. Maybe we're supposed to think back to Isaiah chapter 8 verse 14.

Christ is a stumbling stone for many people in Israel. But Peter can be as a stumbling stone to Christ. The one who presents this temptation of glory without suffering.

Suffering is absolutely essential to Jesus' identity. And his vocation as the Messiah. There is no glory without suffering.

And Jesus summons his disciples to follow him into suffering. They must take up their cross. Why the cross in particular? It's a symbol of, as it were, being living dead.

You've taken that cross and there's no way back. You're walking towards your execution. You must deny yourself.

Peter will later on deny Christ. But this is a denial of himself that he's called to. All those things that tie you to pursuit of your own life and its own maximization.

Those things you must cut off. You must give those things up in order to find your life as you follow Christ. A question to consider.

Here we are called to take up our crosses and follow Christ. The cross is often seen as Christ's suffering for us. In a way that can exclude the concept of our suffering with Christ.

How can the teaching of Christ in Matthew about our taking up the cross fit in with his teaching about the fact that Christ is suffering for us. That he goes to the cross on our behalf.