



# The universal activity of the Christ

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**A pivotal moment** in the Bible is Peter's affirmation of Jesus' spiritual identity as the Christ, followed by Jesus' reply that his church would be built on the rock, described by Mary Baker Eddy as "the God-power which lay behind Peter's confession of the true Messiah" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 138).

A recent trip to Israel opened my eyes to consider the significance of the particular setting in which this affirmation of the Christ took place. In Jesus' time, the territory east and north of Galilee was primarily inhabited by a pagan, Gentile, or non-Jewish population, though Jews also lived in the area. Jesus took his disciples to the small "towns of Cæsarea Philippi" (Mark 8:27), near modern-day Syria. Nearby, next to the actual Roman regional capital city Caesarea Philippi, was a place where a spring flowed out of the mouth of a large cave. Various pagan shrines were dedicated there, and some people have speculated that there is a connection between this foreboding cave of pagan worship and "the gates of hell" mentioned by Christ Jesus to Peter.

It is interesting that it was in a region that contained this significant place of pagan worship, which could be seen as symbolizing the very opposite of what Christ represented, that Jesus asked his disciples the question about who he was (see Matthew 16:13–20).

In the conversation he had there with the disciples, they told Jesus that some of the people thought he was a prophet who had passed on, such as John the Baptist or Jeremiah. Here again it was about death. But Peter affirmed that the Christ is about living, not dying, for Peter identified Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded favorably to this and said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Jesus' declaration indicates that his church would not be overcome even by "the gates of hell," or the belief in death. Surely there could be no death of his church, for there could be no death of the Christ he represented, which would forever be declaring the power and presence of God, and man's oneness with God. The Christ can't be destroyed, for it is incorporeal, declaring the kingdom of heaven within and at hand—a kingdom that is forever alive, infinite in its progressive unfoldment.

For me, Jesus' declaration that he would build his church on the rock of Christ, Truth, and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it, included a prophecy of his forthcoming resurrection, by which he would prove to the world, for all time, that death cannot prevail because Christ overcomes it. Sometime later, by establishing Christian churches throughout Greece, Jesus' faithful follower Paul beautifully proved that a prevailing belief in paganism, which could include belief in the god of hell or hades, would not prevent people from receiving the blessing of the Christ.

Christ, defined in *Science and Health* as "the divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error" (p. 583), is still relevant today. Christ comes to the fleshly belief that says it is personally attached to us and destroys this personal sense of error by revealing our real individuality as Godlike. There is no individual or collective mortal mentality—such as atheistic thought, secular intellectualism, medical theory, or scientific materialism—that can make irrelevant, or put an end to, the Christ, for its universality and eternity precludes any such possibility. As Paul wrote: "Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Who or what, then, can oppose or stop the Christ and its reforming and healing power?

As "joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17), these truths are a blessing to each and every person, as well as to Christ's church. How gloriously wonderful to embrace the idea that we all have the "mind of Christ" (I Corinthians 2:16), as Paul wrote. We all, therefore, truly possess the understanding of our immortality, which the Christ reveals, and over which death cannot prevail. Having this Christly understanding, in reality we have no mind that can consent to or believe in death. We all truly reflect the conscious awareness of our oneness with Life, God, and of our infinitely unfolding individuality as the likeness of God. We can reasonably conclude that Christ Jesus was prophesying that his followers, and his church, would ultimately prove death to be powerless. We are "rock solid," so to speak, established securely on the rock of Christ, of Life eternal.

Mary Baker Eddy writes: "Thus founded upon the rock of Christ, when storm and tempest beat against this sure foundation, you, safely sheltered in the strong tower of hope, faith, and Love, are God's nestlings; and He will hide you in His feathers till the storm has passed. Into His haven of

Soul there enters no element of earth to cast out angels, to silence the right intuition which guides you safely home” (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896*, p. 152).

As I pondered these insights about Jesus’ declaration, and what they might mean for me and for all his followers, I was impelled to deeply and consistently rejoice in the universality of the Christ, and thus see that nothing can stop its healing activity. Pondering these ideas, and cherishing them in my heart, have deepened and strengthened my Christian Science practice.

I saw how the opportunity is available for everyone to abide on the rock of Christ, to bring out the immortal truth that we are the children of the living God now and always. This is a Christly mission, which Jesus defined when he commanded all his followers: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Let us strive to obey Jesus’ command, that we may bring a cup of cold water to a weary world eager to receive the blessings of the Christ.

The material view of things is false, so it doesn’t satisfy. As children of God, we are innately spiritual, and it is not possible to be content with the poverty of a material approach to life with its fears, limitations, and sorrows. That’s why the human heart seeks to awaken from the confines of a mortal existence to more expansive horizons. As we graciously leave all for Christ, we can expect to see this yearning evidenced by seekers coming across our path and coming to our churches.

Not long ago, a woman stepped into my storefront office looking around with a quizzical look on her face. I went over to greet her. She told me she had been across the street at the bookstore when her eyes saw my office. She said: “It was like something drew me all the way across the street and would not let me go until I opened the door. What is this place?” I explained that this was an office where the healing Science of Christ is practiced and shared with the public. She came in, and we had an inspiring hour of sharing. When she left, holding a copy of *Science and Health*, she commented, “This is exactly what I have been looking for!”

What was it that brought her into the office? Wasn’t it the irresistible calling of the Christ? The loving Christ reveals the Christliness in us that sees the Christliness in all. As we destroy in our own thought the suggestion that anything can stop or silence the Christ, and instead embrace the universal and eternal activity of the Christ, blessings and healing happen!

Let each of us rest and soar on the wings of Christ. Let us lovingly embrace mankind by giving them a cup of cold water in Christ's name. Let us hold dearly in our prayers and lives the needy, the sick, the handicapped, the sinful, the homeless, and the fearful. Let us with compassion pour the tender balm of the loving Christ into the wounds of the world and let its healing activity bring spiritual refreshment and peace to all.

Our individual Christly service is outlined by God, and Spirit's divine energy impels the eternal unfoldment of our service with the order and grace of Soul. Thus, nothing can stop our Christliness nor the undivided, universal Christliness of everyone from shining forth in glorifying God! Truly, this is the Church Universal, of which there is no end.

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