

PETER

CORNERSTONE OF CATHOLICISM

STUDY GUIDE

SESSION 5



LECTIO™

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

TIM GRAY

Nihil obstat: Derek Barr, Censor Deputatus

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Writers: Aurora Cerulli, Ashley Crane, Kate Flannery, Kris Gray, Woodeene Koenig-Bricker,
Paul McCusker

Media/Print Production: Steve Flanigan, Jon Ervin, Brenda Kraft, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory,
Ted Mast, John Schmidt

Graphic Design: Justin Deister, Jane Myers, Devin Schadt

Augustine Institute

6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

AugustineInstitute.org

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SESSION 5

PETER AND THE KEYS: THE PRIMACY OF THE CHURCH

OPENING PRAYER



“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” —1 Peter 5:1-5

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the many ways in which you provide for us. Thank you for the shepherds you have appointed to tend your flock, the Church. Please bless and strengthen our Holy Father, the successor of St. Peter, our bishop, and all our clergy. Help us each to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another, and to faithfully carry out the tasks you have appointed for us, just as St. Peter did. We pray this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Peter, pray for us.

INTRODUCTION

In last week’s session, Peter declared Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and Jesus declared that Simon would now be called Peter, and that on the rock of Peter Jesus would build his Church. St. Ambrose, fourth-century bishop of Milan, said, “Where Peter is, there is the Church. And where the Church is, no death is there, but life eternal.” Since its birth, the Church’s identity has been intrinsically linked to Peter and his successors.

In this session we will delve deeper into the pivotal conversation between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 16. Not only does Jesus change Peter’s name, but he also gives Peter a new responsibility that entails the revival of an ancient office of a former Kingdom. As we look to the past to understand this gift, we’ll hope to understand the authority Jesus is placing in Peter and the future of the Church.



CONNECT

1. What items do you have on your key chain right now? What are the functions of keys in your daily life?

2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the expectations of others? What helped you move forward and fulfill your responsibilities?

3. If you had a private audience with the Pope, the successor to Peter, what would you say?



WATCH VIDEO

The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.

I. "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church"

A. Tells us that Peter is the rock

B. Tells us that Jesus is the builder

1. Builder like Solomon: known for wisdom, builds Temple on rock

2. Old Covenant had a physical temple on a physical rock; New Covenant has a new kind of temple built on a new kind of rock



DISCUSS

1. According to Dr. Gray, what kind of authority is Jesus giving to Peter by handing him the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16:19?

2. What was the first-century understanding of the phrase “binding and loosing”? How does this apply to us today?

3. When Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, he is taking another step in reestablishing the Davidic kingdom. What kingdom office does Jesus give Peter? What light does this shed on the role of the Popes?

4. Why does Jesus warn his disciples not to reveal that he is the long-awaited Messiah?

5. When Jesus rebukes Peter in Matthew 16, he says, “Get behind me, Satan.” What does the word *satan* mean in Hebrew? What is Jesus telling Peter? Are there times in your life when Jesus might have reproached you with the same words?

“The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the ‘rock’ of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. ‘The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.’ This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.”—CCC 881

MEMORY VERSE

“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.”

—Matthew 16:19



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, in your mercy and grace you have made us citizens of your kingdom and members of the family of God. Please help us to take up our cross daily and follow after you, that in being conformed to you in obedience and suffering we may also share in your glory. Amen.

St. Peter, pray for us.



Christ giving Saint Peter the Keys to Heaven Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

FOR FURTHER READING

Matthew Bunson, *The Pope Encyclopedia: An A to Z of the Holy See* (Three Rivers Press, 1995)



COMMIT – DAY 1

HA AL BAYYIT: OVER THE HOUSE

It is no small thing to be responsible for a household, whether it contains only one person or a family of ten. Who is in charge in your household, or who is in charge over various areas of your household? What are some of the responsibilities of that person?

The responsibilities involved in taking care of a family are multiplied many times over when that family is a whole nation of families. The kingdom of Israel was not just a political entity, but a family unit, albeit a very large one. The family members could trace their lineage back to Jacob, who was renamed *Israel* by God in Genesis 32. But they identified themselves as more than just the sons and daughters of Jacob.

Read David’s prayer at the coronation of his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13. To whom does Israel belong? Based on this reading, how would a first-century Jew understand the phrase “the kingdom of God”?

Even in a small family the duties and responsibilities must be divided among the members in order to keep things running smoothly, but typically one or two persons manage the division of labor. In a large household, and especially on the level of a kingdom, such management would be a full-time job. In the kingdoms of the ancient Near East, this position was given a particular name, that of the *ha al bayyit* in Hebrew, meaning “the one over the house.” The position to be “over the house” was not just a job, but also an important office in the kingdom.

To get a better picture of the office of *ha al bayyit* in the ancient world, look up the following passages. Who is named in each of these verses? What authority is given to them?

Genesis 41:41 _____

Numbers 12:7 _____

Luke 12:42 _____

Now read the story of Joseph in Genesis 39–41. Joseph was *ha al bayyit* over Potiphar’s house and, later, over Pharaoh’s entire kingdom. Make note of his duties and authority as they are described in the text.



I am Joseph Your Brother, drawings by Gustave Doré
© ruskpp / Shutterstock.com

Just as Joseph was set over Pharaoh’s house and all the land of Egypt, Jesus sets Peter over the household of his kingdom, the Church. In light of the ancient office of *ha al bayyit*, what kind of authority does Jesus give to Peter in Matthew 16?

What parallels do you see between the story of Joseph and the office of Peter and his successors, the Popes?



Antique engraving, “Christ Giving the Keys of Paradise to St. Peter” © Bocman1973 / Shutterstock.com



COMMIT – DAY 2

HA AL BAYYIT IN THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM

Every kingdom has ministers and officials to aid the king in his rule. In the Davidic kingdom of ancient Israel, the head of the royal court, second only to the king himself, was the prime minister. As Dr. Gray explains in the video teaching, the title of the Davidic prime minister was *ha al bayyit*, meaning “the one over the house” of the king.

The office of prime minister included many important duties, but one stands out above the rest. In 2 Kings 15 we read an account of Azariah, king of Judah, and his son, Jotham, who serves as his father’s *ha al bayyit*. Read 2 Kings 15:1-7. What happens to Azariah? What does Jotham do while he is “over the household”?

Based on this passage, what is the ultimate duty of the prime minister?

The prime minister assisted the Davidic king, but if the king was unable to rule, the prime minister ruled in his stead until the king could return.

The Jews were expecting the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. The Old Testament prophets made it very clear that the Messiah would be a king of the line of David, and that he would reestablish David’s kingdom. The gospels clearly demonstrate that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. As such, we should expect to see important elements of the Davidic kingdom present in the kingdom of Christ the King. Dr. Gray points out that Jesus is building a new kind of temple on a new kind of foundation stone, but the new is by no means unrelated to the old. The kingdom that Jesus comes to reestablish is the Davidic kingdom of Israel’s history—expanded and perfected. It’s not surprising, then, that some offices in the old kingdom are present in the new, including the office of the prime minister.

The prophet Isaiah recounts the story of one prime minister of the kingdom of Judah who had to be replaced because of his wicked deeds. Read Isaiah 22:15-23. What are the symbols of the authority of *ha al bayyit* in the Davidic kingdom?

What kind of relationship was the prime minister to have with the citizens of the kingdom?

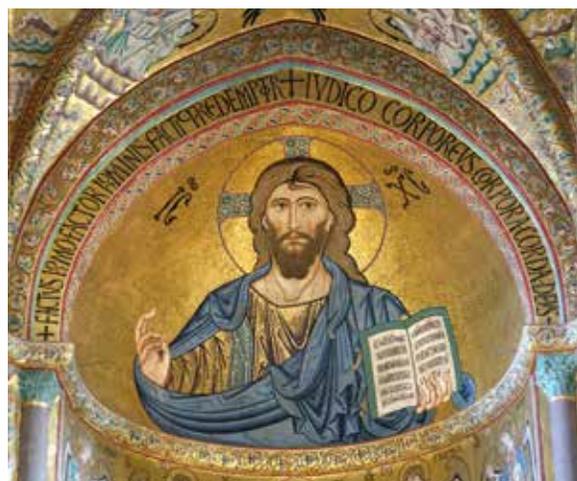
How is his authority described?

After Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah, the new Davidic king—Jesus gives Peter the keys of the Kingdom of God. In doing so, Jesus is using the language of the Davidic kingdom to appoint Peter as his prime minister over the household of the Church.

But if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, why is it necessary for him to appoint a prime minister? Although human kings need administrative help, surely the God-King is capable of ruling on his own? It is the events awaiting Jesus in Jerusalem that make the appointment of a prime minister so urgent.

Read John 13:33–14:4. For what is Jesus preparing his disciples?

Remember Azariah and Jotham?
 Why will Peter’s office be so important after Jesus’ ascension?



Mosaic of Christ Pantocrator © VLADJ55 / Shutterstock.com

The early Church understood that the Apostles each held an office that was to be filled after they died. Read Acts 1:15-26. According to Acts 1:20, how does Peter refer to the place of Judas?

How do the Apostles replace Judas' position according to Acts 1:26?

How does Isaiah 22:19 refer to the place of the prime minister?

Just as Judas' apostolic office was filled after he died, so too would the office of the other Apostles be filled after their deaths, including that of the head Apostle Peter. The apostolic office held by Peter, however, also included the role of prime minister over the Church. The office of the prime minister was not a one-time role given to Peter to get the Church started, but an office that was to be filled by another when Peter died. St. Linus became the new prime minister of the kingdom after Peter's martyrdom and, after him, St. Cletus, and then St. Clement I, and so on through the centuries to our current Pope.

Review the symbols and description of the prime minister's authority that you listed above. Nearly two millennia after Peter, and close to 2,700 years after Shebna and Eliakim, which parts of Isaiah 22 still apply to the successors of St. Peter?

Papal coat of arms often incorporate the symbol of the keys, along with other symbols important to the particular Holy Father.



Pope John Paul Second of II coat of arms © Atlaspix / shutterstock.com

Jesus gave Peter and his successors authority over his kingdom as prime minister, as symbolized by the keys. What authority has God given you? If you had to design your own coat of arms with symbols of your authority and the role God is calling you to fulfill, what would it look like? Create your coat of arms in the space provided.



COMMIT – DAY 3

BINDING, LOOSING, AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Jesus gives Peter the keys of the kingdom with very specific words: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). After first giving this authority to Peter, indicating his preeminence among the Apostles, Jesus later extends this authority to the rest of his Apostles: “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” (Matthew 18:18).

In the section on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “The words *bind* and *loose* mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God*” (CCC 1445 emphasis included in original.)

The authority to “loose” has at its heart the power to forgive sins, since it is reconciliation with God that brings communion with God and with the Church. During his years of ministry, Jesus healed many from sickness and various ailments. However, there was one healing that stands out from the rest—one in which Jesus used particular words to reveal what was at the heart of his mission. Look at this event in Matthew 9:1-8.

Who is in need of healing? _____

In Matthew 9:2, what words does Jesus say to the man? _____

Why were the scribes and Pharisees bothered by Jesus’ words (see Matthew 9:3)?

Look up St. Luke’s version of this story. What extra detail is given to explain why the scribes and Pharisees don’t like Jesus’ words in Luke 5:21?

Before healing the paralytic, Jesus responds to the scribes’ and Pharisees’ concerns about his possible blasphemy with the following: “But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Rise, take up your bed...” (Matthew 9:6). The physical healing of the paralytic is a sign of the spiritual healing of the soul. Just as a paralyzed man cannot walk, a spiritually paralyzed man cannot “walk with God.”

Jesus does not simply heal the paralytic to show that he has the authority over the man's physical ailment. Jesus clarifies that this healing is a sign of his authority to forgive sins. Jesus also specifically says that the Son of man has authority "on earth" to forgive sins. Jesus' words not only identify his divinity (he is the Son of God and therefore can forgive sins both from heaven and while he is "on the earth"), but these words also anticipate the day when Jesus will give the power to forgive sins to his Apostles, who will exercise that power here "on earth" for the salvation of souls.

St. John records for us Jesus' gift of the forgiveness of sins to his Apostles. Read John 20:19-23. On what day does this take place? (Review the earlier part of the chapter if necessary.)

What are Jesus' first words to the Apostles? Why?

Jesus then shows them his hands and feet. Why?

What does Jesus give the Apostles before giving them the gift of the forgiveness of sins?

Having breathed the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, Jesus goes on to say, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). The authority that God the Father had given to his Son, Jesus is now giving to his Apostles in preparation for when he must return to the Father in heaven. The Apostles, and the bishops who were to follow in their offices, would now bestow the forgiveness that Jesus won for us on the Cross.

As the Church teaches in the *Catechism*,

"Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation, bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'" —CCC 1461

We are not able to go back in time to hear Jesus say “Your sins are forgiven” as he did to the paralytic (Matthew 9:2). Nor can we hear him say, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again” as he did to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11). Yet, each time we go to the Sacrament of Confession and confess our sins, Christ does speak to us through the priest, in the words of absolution, words that bring forgiveness and peace:

“God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

This gift of loosing the sins of men, which Jesus won for us on the Cross and which he gives to his Church, is one that we should receive regularly. Through it our communion with God is restored if we have sinned. By frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation we better recognize our sins so as to avoid them in the future and remain close to Our Lord.

How often do you take advantage of the fruits and gifts of the Sacrament of Confession? What often stops you from going to Confession (pride, fear, embarrassment)?

In our preparation for Confession, it’s good to recall the words of St. Josemarie Escriva: “At the time of your examination [of sins] beware of the devil that ties your tongue,” then pray for humility to make a good and honest confession. St. Augustine’s words are also appropriate: “In failing to confess, Lord, I would only hide You from myself, not myself from You.” Enter the confessional trusting Jesus to speak to you and give you his forgiveness and peace.

COMMIT – DAY 4

PETER’S UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS AS SUFFERING MESSIAH



After receiving the keys of the kingdom from Jesus, Peter’s vision of both King and kingdom still needs some work. He has expressed the revelation of the Father that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” but he later invokes the Father to support his own vision of what kind of king Jesus should be.

Go back to Matthew 16:21-23. What does Jesus say that Peter finds so shocking?

Why do you think Peter reacts the way he does?

Jesus refers to Peter as *satan*, which means “adversary.” Jesus established Peter as his prime minister, but now suggests Peter is working against him. Look up Ezra 4:1-5 to shed some light on this conversation.

Who are the adversaries of the people of Judah and Benjamin?

How do they react when the Jews refuse to let them help rebuild the Temple?

In this passage, the people of Judah and Benjamin are returning to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity and begin to rebuild the Temple. Their neighbors offer to help. Although they claim to worship the God of Israel, they also bring with them a number of pagan influences. They act as adversary, *satan*, to the Jews and thwart the rebuilding of the Temple.

What similarities are there between the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin in Ezra 4 and Peter's rebuke of Jesus in Matthew 16? _____

Peter's reaction that Jesus, as both King and God, should not suffer and die is understandable from a human point of view. Who among us wouldn't respond in that way? And the severity of Jesus' response – "get behind me, Satan" – echoes the words of Jesus directly to Satan in Matthew 4:1-11. What parallels might be found between Jesus rebuking Satan and his rebuking Peter? Is it possible that Peter's offer to save Jesus from the Cross served as a form of temptation? Why or why not?

After Christ's passion, with the clarity of hindsight and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter will boldly proclaim the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death.

"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." —1 Peter 2:21-24

Although Peter opposed Jesus' suffering in Matthew 16, he later leads the Apostles in understanding and proclaiming this mystery.

In preaching on the suffering of Christ, Peter appeals to the prophets and what they foretold about the Messiah.

"The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory." —1 Peter 1:10-11

Within the book of Isaiah are four passages referred to as the Songs of the Suffering Servant. In his preaching, how does Peter show these prophecies being fulfilled in Christ? Spend some time reading and reflecting on how each of the following chapters apply to Jesus, the suffering Messiah.

Isaiah 42:1-7—God's servant who brings justice to the nations _____

Isaiah 49:1-6—For the Lord formed me as his servant from the womb _____

Isaiah 50:4-9—Salvation through the suffering of God’s servant

Isaiah 52:13-53:12—The suffering of God’s servant will be the salvation of many

St. Ignatius of Loyola said:

“If God gives you an abundant harvest of trials, it is a sign of great holiness which He desires you to attain. Do you want to become a great saint? Ask God to send you many sufferings. The flame of Divine Love never rises higher than when fed with the wood of the Cross, which the infinite charity of the Savior used to finish His sacrifice. All the pleasures of the world are nothing compared with the sweetness found in the gall and vinegar offered to Jesus Christ. That is, hard and painful things endured for Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ.”

If we unite our suffering with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross, suffering will help us grow in holiness. The next time we face suffering, how can we unite it with the suffering of Jesus?

COMMIT – DAY 5

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Delivering the Keys of the Kingdom to Saint Peter, Pietro Perugino, c.1481-1483, Sistine Chapel



Delivering the Keys of the Kingdom to Saint Peter / Scala / Art Resource, NY

Along the side walls and just below the windows of the Sistine Chapel are two narrative cycles of frescoes. They run from the altar to the entrance of the chapel. Along the left wall are scenes from the life of Moses, the giver of the Old Law; along the right wall are scenes from the life of Christ, the giver of grace and the New Law. In the fifteenth century, Pope Sixtus IV commissioned Pietro Perugino to paint part of these cycles of frescoes, including the painting (above) entitled “*Delivering the Keys of the Kingdom to Saint Peter.*”

The two central figures, Jesus and Peter, are presented in the foreground. Jesus, dressed in a flowing blue robe, hands the keys of the kingdom to Peter (Matthew 16:19). Peter appears with the expected curly beard and wear robes of blue and yellow.

What is Peter’s posture in receiving the keys?

St. James tells us,

“*Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above...*” —James 1:17

St. Peter is called to a specific role as head of the Apostles and given the gift of the Keys of the Kingdom to lead the Church. God gives us the gifts needed for each of us to accomplish our vocation and His will in our lives. As St. Paul says,

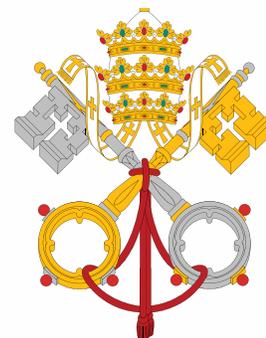
“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...”—Romans 12:6

What gifts has God given you? How are you called to use these gifts?

How is Peter’s posture a model for receiving the gifts God bestows in each of our lives?

Take a close look at the keys. What color are they?

The two colors used for the keys signify two aspects of the authority given to Peter. The gold key alludes to the power in the kingdom of the heavens; the silver key indicates the spiritual authority of the papacy on earth. The two keys, crossed one over the other, have been seen in many papal coats of arms and have been the official insignia of the Holy See since the fourteenth century.



Vatican City coat of arms flag
© cobalt88 / shutterstock.com

The Apostles, and other individuals from the Renaissance time period when the fresco was created, stand next to Jesus and Peter. Take a closer look. How are the Apostles distinguished from the other individuals?

Among the Apostles (other than Peter), Judas can clearly be identified. How?

Rather than placing the event in the location of Caesarea Philippi as recorded in the gospels, Perugino places the action of Jesus giving the keys to Peter on a large piazza. Perugino then uses linear perspective and foreshortening to create the depth of the picture, directing our gaze from Jesus and Peter to the large domed temple at the opposite end of the piazza. This octagonal temple with its gold dome represents Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Why do you think Solomon's Temple stands as the backdrop for Jesus giving the keys to Peter?

As we know from Scripture (see 1 Kings 6:2), Solomon's Temple was not octagonal in shape. We also know that the temple built by Herod the Great was not octagonal. By the fifteenth century (when this fresco was painted), Solomon's Temple and the temple built by Herod the Great had been destroyed. What did Jesus predict regarding the Temple in Matthew 24:1-2? And what did he intend to build (see Matthew 16:18)?

By the end of the seventh century the Muslim Dome of the Rock replaced the Temple on the 31-acre Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It had a golden dome— and was octagonal. Perugino uses the image of what now stands on the Temple Mount to represent the Temple that is replaced by the Church with Jesus' words to Peter in the painting's foreground.

In the middle ground of the fresco, Perugino recounts two biblical scenes. On the right, Jesus departs the Temple area as the Jews attempt to stone him for applying the sacred name of God - "I AM" - for himself (John 8:58-59; Exodus 3:14). On the left, Jesus responds to the Pharisees, who tried to trap him with a question about paying taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22), to which Jesus responds, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The right scene shows a rejection of Jesus as the Son of God. The left shows an attempt to put the heavenly king, Jesus, under the temporal authority of an earthly king. In both these encounters Jesus is triumphant, escaping the stoning and side-stepping a trick question - the triumphal arches behind each scene are a reminder of this triumph.

Once again these background scenes portraying rejections of Jesus provide a stark contrast to the foreground action of Jesus' giving Peter the keys of kingdom after Peter's great confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Perugino provides us with a masterful image of the event of Matthew 16, and of the sure foundation of the Church built on Peter that is able to triumph over the challenges that she, like her Lord, must face.

