

Matthew 16:1 ¶ The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

Matthew 16:2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.*

Matthew 16:3 And in the morning, *It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Matthew 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

This chapter opens with the Pharisees and Sadducees once again trying to discredit Jesus. David Guzik provides some interesting insight regarding the combined effort of these two groups to disprove Jesus: “Their working together showed a deep fear among the religious leaders. The Sadducees and Pharisees were long-standing enemies, and the fact that they came together against Jesus shows they regarded Him as a serious threat.”

This time they asked for a sign from heaven—implied, to prove that you are the Messiah. Jesus had already performed many miracles giving testimony to His identity. These men weren’t satisfied with those miracles; they wanted a sign from heaven, e.g., calling down fire from heaven like Elijah. Again, David Guzik provides some insight: “Tradition held that a sign done on earth could be a counterfeit from Satan, but signs done from heaven (coming in or from the sky) were assumed to be from God.”

Mark tells us that Jesus “sighed deeply in His spirit” before answering these men. I think that reflects His grief and justified frustration at their continued refusal to recognize Him. He identifies them as hypocrites—those presenting themselves as men of faith, yet were not—and emphasizes that truth as He continues to answer them.

With His answer the Lord notes their ability to know the weather based on their observation of the sky, yet they aren’t able to connect the prophecies of scripture to the miracles/signs He has shown them. They understand that a red sky in the evening is an indicator of fair weather and that a red, overcast morning sky portends bad weather for the day. His question implying that they cannot recognize “the signs of the times” infers that the prophecies about Him were just as recognizable.

Conclusion—They were a “wicked and adulterous generation.” The word “wicked” is a reference to the truth that they were immoral and the word “adulterous” to the fact that they were apostate, had forsaken the principles of their faith. They were more focused on manmade traditions than God’s law. The fact that they were asking for yet another sign testified to that truth; they didn’t want to believe Him.

Jesus declares that He would give them no other sign than that of the prophet Jonah. This scripture tells us that one of the reasons for the record of the prophet

Jonah was to testify of the Christ. Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish and restored once again to the land of the living, so too would He be in the grave for three days and three nights before resurrecting to new life.

Having said that, He left them.

I couldn't help but make a connection to all the people today who refuse to recognize the abundance of evidence testifying to God as our creator and the truth of His word. It's because we live in a world ruled by the evil one. Just as prophesied, as the time nears for Jesus to return and assume the throne of David to rule the world, the influence of the enemy will become greater and greater. The "signs of the times" are all around us, yet even many in the "Christian" world refuse to recognize those signs.

Matthew 16:5 ¶ And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matthew 16:7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have taken no bread.*

Matthew 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Matthew 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Matthew 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Matthew 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Matthew 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matthew notes that the disciples had forgotten to take some bread with them for their journey. Jesus spoke up warning the disciples to pay attention and "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." They immediately thought this remark was connected by His use of the word "leaven" to the fact that they had no bread. Jesus knew what they were discussing and attributed their response to having "little faith." Had he not already demonstrated through the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 that He could abundantly provide food for them? Mark provides a bit more insight.

*Mark 8:17–18 "And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? **perceive ye not yet, neither understand?** have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and **do ye not remember?**"*

Jesus had expected them to remember past teaching and experiences to understand that His remark was connected to their encounter with the

hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees. They should have understood that He was using the word “leaven” to picture the false teaching of those religious leaders. Just as a little leaven can permeate the whole loaf of bread so too can a little untruth (false doctrine) have great effect to the detriment of the body of believers. I like John Trapp’s wording: “...take heed of false doctrine; which is fitly called leaven, because it soureth, swelleth, spreadeth, corrupteth the whole lump, and all this secretly....”

“Then they understood” – At least they were teachable and when pointed in the right direction, were able to make application.

I liked this quote from the NIV Commentary: “The miracles Jesus performs, unlike the signs the Pharisees demand, do not compel faith; but those with faith will perceive their significance.”

Matthew 16:13 ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
Matthew 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
Matthew 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
Matthew 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
Matthew 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Upon reaching the coasts of Caesarea Philippi (located at the foot of Mt. Hermon), Jesus posed a question to His disciples—“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

I liked this observation from William Barclay: “Hard by Caesarea Philippi there rose a great hill, in which was a deep cavern; and that cavern was said to be the birthplace of the great god Pan, the god of nature. So much was Caesarea Philippi identified with that god that its original name was Panias, and to this day the place is known as Baniyas....Here indeed is a dramatic picture. Here is a homeless, penniless Galilaean carpenter, with twelve very ordinary men around him....He stands in an area littered with the temples of the Syrian gods....It is as if Jesus deliberately set himself against the background of the world's religions in all their history and their splendour, and demanded to be compared with them and to have the verdict given....”

The disciples noted that some thought He was John the Baptist (risen from the dead), some Elijah, and some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Jesus now gets to the point of His question—“But whom say ye that I am?” Peter quickly speaks up and declares, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter didn’t hesitate; he knows that Jesus is the Messiah promised by the “living God,” the God of Israel.

Jesus pronounces a blessing on Peter for his faith. He also notes that it was

through the revelation of God the Father in heaven that Peter was able to grasp that truth.

That is true for every believer. It is only by “grace...through faith” that anyone is saved. According to the Greek, grace is God’s divine influence upon our heart.

Another good quote from Barclay: “Christianity never consists in knowing about Jesus; it always consists in knowing Jesus. Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict. He did not ask only Peter, he asks every man: ‘You—what do you think of me?’”

By identifying Himself as the “Son of man,” Jesus was emphasizing His humanity. By attributing Peter’s revelation as coming from “my Father which is in heaven,” Jesus was declaring His divinity.

Matthew 16:18 **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.**

“thou art Peter” and “upon this rock” – I think the wording aids our understanding of what Jesus is saying. Yes, Peter means rock; but He didn’t say upon “you” I will build my church. The rock upon which Jesus will build His church is a reference to the truth declared by Peter—Jesus is the Son of the living God. Scripture is clear that Jesus is the cornerstone of the temple of earthly believers known as the church; and beautiful to note, He calls it “my” church.

*Ephesians 2:19–22 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”*

*1 Peter 2:5–6 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, **Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.**”*

*Acts 4:10–12 “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of **Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. **This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.** Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

I think it is also important to note the Jesus clearly states that He will build His church. Yes, He will use people; but it will be through the ministry of the God’s Holy Spirit that men and women will come to saving faith. As noted in connection with the previous verse, it is by God’s grace, His influence upon one’s heart, that one comes to saving faith.

Jesus goes on to declare that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it—"it" being the church. This is a bold statement of the fact that in the end, Satan and his forces of death and evil will be destroyed and the church will experience eternal life in the presence of the Savior.

Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Those who possess keys in scripture are those who are invested with power and/or authority to provide or deny access to something. Jesus is investing Peter with the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," the knowledge that allows one access to God's dwelling place. In chapter 18 we find that these keys are given to all of the disciples.

Matthew 18:15–18 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.... Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Regarding binding and loosing, I liked this quote from Guzik's commentary: "We should understand this as Jesus giving both the permission and the authority to the first-generation apostles to make the rules for the early church - and indirectly, the inspired writings that would guide all generations of Christians." (France)

It is interesting to me that Peter is first designated as the holder of the keys, and it was through Peter that the Lord affirmed that Gentiles were to be given access to the kingdom (Acts 10-11). It was through joint collaboration of the apostles that it was determined that Gentiles should not be held accountable to Jewish law. It was through the writings of the apostles that Christian doctrine was established.

Matthew 16:20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Why would Jesus give His disciples such a command? Because His time had not yet come, and He proceeds to explain that truth.

Matthew 16:21 ¶ From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Matthew 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

Matthew 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

At this time Jesus began to teach His disciples about His coming death, burial

and resurrection. He explained that in Jerusalem He would be persecuted by the elders, chief priests and scribes and would end up being killed; however, He would resurrect to life the third day after His death. Peter couldn't process that such a thing could happen to the Messiah, the Son of the living God; so he rebuked Jesus and refuted the possibility that He would die. Side note: It's amazing to me how the Jewish people have never recognized the prophecies of Isaiah 53. We have to so guard our propensity to see things from the perspective of what we want scripture to say rather than what it actually says.

After such praise from the Savior, Peter now receives a stinging retort—"Get thee behind me, Satan." In essence, Peter was denying the very thing that would result in his salvation. Jesus attributed such a statement as coming from the mouth of Satan. It offended Him because it spoke directly to the reason for His incarnation. Such a statement was typical of man who sees things from a temporal perspective, but not of God who sees things from an eternal perspective.

Why Jerusalem? Matthew tells us in the words of Jesus.

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee..."

Another good quote from Barclay: "It is quite possible for love to be so protecting that it seeks to protect those it loves from the adventure of the warfare of the soldier of Christ, and from the strenuousness of the pathway of the pilgrim of God. What really wounded Jesus' heart and what really made him speak as he did, was that the tempter spoke to him that day through the fond but mistaken love of Peter's hot heart."

Matthew 16:24 ¶ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Now the message gets harder and more personal. Jesus basically says, "If you are going to follow me, you are going to have to carry your own cross." The follower of Jesus needs to recognize that true life is found in being willing to die for your faith if necessary.

The hardest words for most of us I think, for me anyway, are "deny himself." To take up one's cross is to die to self. We live in a culture that promotes a focus on pleasing, promoting and profiting self. To deny self and take up the cross of Jesus is to try to live life in accordance with the truth of His word. Luke adds another important word—"take up his cross **daily**." For me it is often hourly. To make such choices is to go against the crowd, to be considered politically incorrect, to be termed intolerant, to be classified as radicals, to reject most forms

of entertainment, etc. Matthew sums it up this way:

Matthew 7:13–14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

The key is to keep one’s focus on the eternal rather than on the here and now.

Colossians 3:2 “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Matthew 6:19–21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

One who finds success in the eyes of the world has gained nothing if he/she hasn’t been redeemed spiritually. What does man have that God will accept as the price of redemption? The obvious answer—Nothing. Only in following Jesus can one be redeemed.

The day is coming when Jesus, the Son of man, will come in all the glory of His Father with His angels to reward every person according to his/her works. Those who follow Jesus will be judged on just that.

John 6:29 “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

In Jesus, we are righteous! There is no charge that can be held to our account.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Those who choose not to follow Jesus, however, will be judged by their works. To sin in one point of the law is to sin and will result in the verdict—“Guilty.”

James 2:10 “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

*Revelation 21:8 “But the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

Matthew 16:28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

These words of Jesus refer directly to the event recorded in the beginning of the next chapter—the transfiguration.