

Matthew 16

Through Jesus God Redeems

Section 1: 16:1-12

Jesus once again runs into the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were continually trying to trap and discredit Jesus with questions and accusations. This time they demand a sign from heaven. Jesus had been performing many signs and wonders throughout His ministry. As we see in the Pharisees and Sadducees, some people will not be convinced of truth no matter what you show them.

Jesus becomes very pointed with them and says that *“an evil and adulterous generation demands a sign (CSB).”* God has given us everything we need to believe in the gospel. We have no standing to “ask” or “demand” more evidence from Him. Romans 1:20 states: *“²⁰ For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse (CSB).”*

Then Jesus gives a very strange sign/prophecy. He said I will only give you the sign of Jonah. What is the sign of Jonah? Jonah was a prophet that tried to run from God. Then he was swallowed by a big fish! Jonah cries out to the Lord in prayer. He speaks of being taken down to Sheol. Which means “place of the dead”. Jonah was in the belly of the fish 3 days and I believe he died during that time. Then the Lord resurrected Jonah when the fish vomited him up onto dry land. After being resurrected, Jonah went into Nineveh and proclaimed the Word of the Lord and the people repented! When Jesus points them to the prophet Jonah, He was proclaiming that He would die for 3 days, be resurrected, proclaim the gospel and His people would be saved.

After Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees, He then warns the disciples about them. But the disciples totally miss it. They are clueless. Jesus then spends a little time rebuking the disciples and explains to them that they should be aware of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. While the Pharisees and Sadducees claimed to be followers of God and teachers of His Word, they were actually wolves in sheep’s clothing. Not everyone who claims God is actually His. If you remember Matthew 7:21-23: *²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ ²³ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’ (CSB)*

How should we respond to this warning? We should seek to apply 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22: *¹⁹ Don’t stifle the Spirit. ²⁰ Don’t despise prophecies, ²¹ but test all things. Hold on to what is good. ²² Stay away from every kind of evil. (CSB)*

Application

In this section Jesus gives two rebukes, a prophecy and a warning. Jesus doesn’t waste time. He is extremely intentional with everything and everyone. We have to admit it is way too easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle of life and forget our calling. We need to work hard to stay focused and alert because our enemy never sleeps.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you require things of God before you’re willing to be obedient to His Word? For example, do you ever say, “God if you do this, then I will...”
- ❖ God has clearly revealed Himself to us. How important is it to accept God as He has clearly revealed Himself in Scripture?
- ❖ How vital is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

- ❖ We have to be aware of false teaching. Why? What impact could false teaching have on our faith and relationship with our heavenly Father?

Section 2: 16:13-20 - Peter's Confession of the Messiah

Have you ever heard a confession that just blew your mind? Confessions can be positive or negative. In this passage we also hear that people are making all kinds of guesses about who Jesus might be, but it's the confession of Peter that drives this passage: *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (CSB)*

Jesus was assumed to be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other great prophets. As great as those men may be...there is no comparison equal to Jesus. No one could ever be compared to Jesus. Why? Because only Jesus can claim to be God. No other human could ever claim any aspect of being God or even like God. Jesus doesn't seem to be overly concerned with what others think of Him, but He seems extremely concerned with who the disciples believe He is.

Jesus' response to Peter's confession is layered with so many amazing truths. We are going to focus on 5.

1. Flesh and blood (humans) cannot reveal God. Only God can reveal God. Why? Because only God can understand God. We could never describe God on our own because we are too limited. We need God to reveal Himself to us and that is exactly what God did through Jesus. Hebrews 1:3 says: *³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (CSB)*
2. Jesus uses word play with Peter's name. Peter's given name was Simon but Jesus gave Him the name Peter and I believe it was for this moment. Peter means stone. But the word rock in "on this rock I will build my church" means a large mass of rock. What is the mass of rock that Jesus is referring to? The confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That is the "rock" the church is built upon. Peter could never hold up the church, but Jesus is more than able to build up and support the church. Peter understands this reference and expands upon it in 1 Peter 2:6-8: *⁶ For it stands in Scripture: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame. ⁷ So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected— this one has become the cornerstone, ⁸ and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this. (CSB)*
3. Jesus alone will build the church: *"I will build my church".* Why? Because the church is His. We belong to Jesus. Jesus does not belong to us. We work for Him. He does not work for us. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9: *⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building (CSB).*" We do not carry the burden of building the church. We carry the burden of sharing the gospel with all people. Jesus will take care of saving them and building the church. Therefore, as a church we are to be found faithfully sharing the gospel and leave the results to God.
4. Not only is Jesus the rock the church is built upon but the gates of Hades will **NEVER** overcome Him. The church, through Jesus, is unstoppable. Nothing can destroy it. Now it's important to notice the exact wording in this phrase. Jesus uses the word Hades. Hades was not the same word as Hell. Hades was a generic word meaning the place of the dead. It is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol. Righteous and unrighteous are spoken of as going to Sheol (place of the dead). This helps us understand that Jesus is saying that death has no power over His people. Death does not stop the redeemed. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57: *⁵⁴ When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and*

the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! (CSB)

5. Now we come to one of the more difficult passages to understand: *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven (CSB).”* First, we have to ask ourselves, “what are the keys”? The keys are referring to the Word of God. Concerning the Word of God, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (CSB).”* The church is not the source of truth or what is acceptable or unacceptable to God. The Word of God determines what is righteous and unrighteous. The church can speak with boldness and confidence when we speak according to the Word of God. It is only speaking the Word of God we can have confidence that we are in agreement with Heaven. Understanding the “keys” is important because we cannot loosen or bind without them. So, Jesus expects His church to use His Word to accomplish His mission. And secondly, who is the “you”? The church is the “you” mentioned in verse 19. You, the church, will receive the keys of heaven. You, the church, will loosen and bind. Peter was not the subject of this section. It was the church.

Application

Having a right view of Jesus is vital. It is an absolute must. You can only see Jesus as the Son of God. You cannot view Him as any less and be walking in the truth. As believers that understand who Jesus truly is...we have a responsibility. To use the Word of God. We must read, meditate and act upon the truths of Scripture. Not just as individuals but as a church as well.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Have you confessed and truly believed that Jesus is the Son of the living God? Why is that confession vital?
- ❖ Why is it important to understand that only God can reveal God?
- ❖ Why is it important that we understand that the church is built upon Christ and not us?
- ❖ How does it impact your faith to know that death no longer has victory over your life?
- ❖ How are you living out the Word of God as individual? How can we as a church live out the Word of God?

Section 3: 16:21-28 - His Death and Resurrection Predicted

Jesus takes a moment and clearly explains to His disciples that He is planning on going to Jerusalem to die and be resurrected on the third day. This greatly troubles the disciples, so much so, that Peter pulls Him aside to rebuke Him for such thoughts.

Jesus’ response to Peter seems to be extremely harsh. He puts Peter as an equal to Satan in his thinking. And that is a reality we need to seriously consider. When we are more focused on human concerns rather than God’s concerns, we are thinking as Satan would think. Selfishness should have no place in our lives. God should ALWAYS come first.

After Jesus rebukes Peter, He gives us some basic expectations for believers. Verses 24-28 remind us that being a Christians is not for the half-hearted. The call of the gospel is to be ALL IN. We must be willing to lose our lives for God’s glory. This world has zero value compared to eternity. Therefore, we need to prioritize the world to come in our daily lives.

Application

I believe that worldly distractions and individual selfishness are among the greatest enemies of the believer. That means we have to battle an external and internal force daily. Remember two things: (1) Satan has designed the world to distract us from the call God has on our lives (*Ephesians 2:1-2*) and (2) that our hearts are desperately wicked and will always seek to make us selfish (*Jeremiah 17:9*). That is why we must trust and obey the Word of God.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Sometimes God's will doesn't seem to make logical sense. How easy is it for you to question God?
- ❖ Jesus expects believers to be ALL IN. Are you all in? Why or why not? What maybe holding you back from being all in?
- ❖ How does Jeremiah 17:9 and Ephesians 2:1-2 impact our view on the following statement: "I need God more than anything the world has to offer or anything my heart tells me I want."