

# The Gospel of Matthew 16 - 17

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Updated 8/26/2024 Printed 9/3/2024

## Introduction:

1. In these chapters Matthew will show how Jesus handled His critics and how He warned against their teaching.
2. But His own disciples were being convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and Peter gave voice to his own view. Jesus predicted great responsibility ahead for Peter. At the same time, Jesus made it clear there would be suffering ahead for Himself and His followers.
3. Jesus will take three of His men to a mountain retreat and they will see Jesus temporarily appear in glory accompanied by the Moses and Elijah.
4. After coming back to the main crowd, Jesus heals a boy and teaches His men more about faith.
5. Finally Jesus uses the appearance of tax collectors for further identify Himself.

## CRITICS DEMAND A SIGN

**(16:1) One day the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, demanding that He show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove His authority.**

- The **signs** that **Jesus** did on earth did not satisfy these critics from Jerusalem. They totally ignored His healing of a wide range of the sick. They wanted a sign from **heaven**. **Jesus** did not intend to comply. Matthew had already summarized how the *crowd* viewed Jesus:

**The *crowd* was amazed! Those who hadn't been able to speak were talking, the crippled were made well, the lame were walking, and the blind could see again! And they praised the God of Israel.**

(Matthew 15:31 NLT)

(2) He replied, "You know the saying, 'Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; (3) red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.' You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don't know how to interpret the signs of the times!

- Rather than appeal to Scripture, Jesus quoted a popular saying. The critics knew how to **interpret the weather signs**, but were unable **to interpret the signs of the times**.

(4) Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. " Then Jesus left them and went away.

- Jesus labeled His critics as an **evil and adulterous generation**, then referred again (Matthew 12:39-40) to **the sign of Jonah**. He then **left** them standing.

### **THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES**

(5) Later, after they crossed to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring any bread.

- I wonder who was responsible for bringing the **bread**?

(6) "Watch out!" Jesus warned them. "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (7) At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn't brought any bread.

- Left on their own, **Pharisees and Sadducees** were mutual enemies. Their desperation is easily seen in them joining forces to do away with **Jesus**. This was a true coalition.
- The minds of the disciples were focused on **bread** and they thought **Jesus** was warning them about buying some contaminated **bread**.

(8) Jesus knew what they were saying, so He said, "You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread? (9) Don't you understand even yet? Don't you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up? (10) Or the 4,000 I fed

**with seven loaves, and the large baskets of leftovers you picked up?**

- Food was not a problem for **Jesus** and it shouldn't have been for His men. He had taught them using two magnificent miracles.

**(11) Why can't you understand that I'm not talking about bread? So again I say, 'Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'" (12) Then at last they understood that He wasn't speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

- Jesus had used the disciples concern with **bread** to spring to a discussion warning of the **teachings** of the **Pharisees and Sadducees**.

### **PETER CONFESSES JESUS AS THE CHRIST**

**(13) When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"**

- Now their party of **disciples** moved inland, away from the Lake.

**(14) "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."**

- There were different opinions. Herod had suggested that He was **John the Baptist**. Matthew 14:2. Others had suggested that He might be **Elijah** or **Jeremiah**.

**(15) Then He asked them, "But who do you say I am?"**

- Now Jesus put the question directly to His men.

**(16) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."**

- **Peter** was the leader of the group and often the first to speak up.
- His response was perfect. Jesus was the **Messiah** of Israel and the **Son of God**.

**(17) Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because My Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.**

- Note the interplay of words: In verse 16 Peter calls Jesus the **Son** of the living God. Here in verse 17, Jesus calls **Simon** Peter the **son of John**.
- How had the Father revealed this to Peter? Peter first heard of **Jesus** from his brother Andrew (John 1:41), but Peter had not said that Jesus was the Messiah.

Peter wasn't inspired at this point in his spiritual journey. Peter had watched **Jesus** heal, cast out demons and raise the dead. He had seen His compassion for the poor, the lost and His control of the weather. The **Father** had revealed the Personhood of **Jesus** over time. Now Peter was convinced.

**(18) Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.**

- Now another play on words: **Peter** was a **rock** (*petros*) and upon this **rock** (*petra*). Jesus uses two Greek words for stone. *Petros* means a small stone while *petra* means a massive stone. Jesus is saying, "Blessed are you little stone. Upon the massive stone of your confession, I will build My church."
- This is the first use of the word **church** in the ministry of Jesus. Now we know that Jesus intends to build a *called-out assembly*. It will withstand anything that Satan or his angels can bring against it.
- Prior to this plan for building an assembly, the crowds had been incidental, coming to be healed or to see others be healed. There wasn't any teaching they all believed about Jesus. That will change in the near future.

**(19) And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven,**

**and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."**

- The coming **Kingdom** of **Heaven** has been the message of John the Baptist and then Jesus. Now Jesus plans to confer the **keys** to open the **Kingdom on** Peter.
  - Peter used them at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 to grant entrance to the Jews and
  - in Acts chapter 10 to usher the Gentiles into the Kingdom.
- The preaching of Peter would synchronize with the desires of **heaven** because he will then be inspired with the Holy Spirit.

**(20) Then He sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah.**

- Peter and the others were just grasping the real meaning of Jesus being the **Messiah**. For them to spread this truth without understanding it's implication would interfere with the plan of Heaven that Jesus was to die at Passover time. Evidence of their weak grasp of His **Messiahship** can be easily seen in verse 22.

## **JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

**(21) From then on Jesus began to tell His disciples plainly that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and that He would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day He would be raised from the dead.**

- Now **Jesus** spells out the plan of action.
  - He is to go to **Jerusalem**,
  - **suffer at the hands** of the national officials,
  - **be killed** and
  - then **arise** from the **dead** on the **third day**.

**(22) But Peter took Him aside and began to reprimand Him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to You!"**

- Aggressive **Peter** contested the plan. How can he call Jesus **Lord** and then argue with His design for our salvation?

**(23) Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from Me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to Me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."**

- Jesus name **Peter** again: this time **Satan**! He was a **trap** to Jesus. He did not grasp **God's point of view**.

## **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS**

**(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If any of you wants to be My follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow Me."**

- Following Jesus will not be a life of leisure and fun, but of turning from ones **selfish ways**.

**(25) If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake, you will save it. (26) And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?**

- Trying to save ones self from discomfort will lead to simply **losing life**.
- Trying to **gain** wealth will mean that the **soul** is lost. That's a worthless trade.

**(27) For the Son of Man will come with His angels in the glory of His Father and will judge all people according to their deeds.**

- There will be a resurrection of all humanity and Jesus will be the **Judge**. Our **deeds** must include obedience to Jesus when we were able to make the choice.

**(28) And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom."**

- Jesus did not say that **all standing here** will see the **Son of Man** coming in **His Kingdom** because there will be two exceptions. Judas would die before the **Kingdom** opened and Jesus would also die. This was a precise prediction.

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### **THE TRANSFIGURATION**

**(17:1) Six days later Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. (2) As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed so that His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light.**

- **Jesus** selected three of the four men on team one (See the chart in the Matthew 10 lesson, page 4). The four men ascended **a high mountain**.
- **Jesus** was **transformed**. His **face** was bright. *The Message* paraphrase says "Sunlight poured from His face. His clothes were filled with light."

**(3) Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus.**

- Somehow Matthew knew their names. This is a characteristic of heavenly social life - no name tags required. **Moses** was the great writer of the Law and **Elijah** was the dominant person among the oral (non-writing) prophets.

**(4) Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here! If You want, I'll make three shelters as memorials -- one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."**

- **Peter**, always quick to speak, was wrong again. He ask for permission to build **three memorials**. This would demonstrate an equality of the **Jesus**, **Moses** and **Elijah**.

**(5) But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy. Listen to Him."**

- God from heaven quickly intervened. **"Listen to My dearly loved Son who brings Me great joy."** These are the same words as the Father spoke at the baptism of Jesus with three words added: **Listen to Him.**

**(6) The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground. (7) Then Jesus came over and touched them. "Get up," He said. "Don't be afraid."**

- Peter, James and John were **terrified**. **Jesus touched** His men and this may have helped them sense reality. He said **"Don't be afraid"** like He did on storm-tossed Galilee.

**(8) And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.**

- Such a powerful and vivid lesson! **Burton Coffman** writes:

This is the message humanity needs. He is the *only* Saviour, the *only* Mediator, the *only* Authority in heaven or upon earth. He is the *only* means of access to God (John 14:6), the *only* hope of the world, the *only* Judge of the world, and the *only* Atonement for man's sin.

**(9) As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."**

- **Jesus** repeats His warning of Matthew 16:20, but this time applied to the transfiguration event. Peter recounts the event in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:16-19.

**For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw His majestic splendor with our own eyes when He received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to Him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me**



great joy." We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place -- until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

(2 Peter 1:16-19 NLT)

**(10) Then His disciples asked Him, "Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes? "**

- The religious teachers of Israel taught that **Elijah** had to come before the **Messiah**. The disciples were testing out what they had heard. Malachi 4:5-6.

**(11) Jesus replied, "Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. (12) But I tell you, Elijah has already come, but he wasn't recognized, and they chose to abuse him. And in the same way they will also make the Son of Man suffer." (13) Then the disciples realized He was talking about John the Baptist.**

- **Jesus** set their definitions straight. **Elijah** *had* come. **John the Baptist** had filled that role, but **John** was not recognized as a prophet by the leaders and they **abused him**. So that discussion was settled.

## **JESUS HEALS A BOY WITH A DEMON**

**(14) At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, (15) "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. (16) So I brought him to Your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."**

- According the Mark account (Mark 9:14), the crowd waiting included both His **disciples** and His critics. A **man** begged for Jesus to heal his demon-possessed **son**. He was

sometimes out of control. The **disciples** of **Jesus** could not **heal him**.

(17) Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to Me." (18) Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well.

- **Jesus** must not have directed His remarks to His disciples but to others in the crowd. Some were slow to accept the clear evidence that **Jesus** was the Messiah.
- **Jesus** rebuked the **demon** and the **boy** was instantly **well**.

### THE DISCIPLES' FAILURE DISCUSSED

(19) Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?" (20) "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible. "

- When the group got to a **private** place, they asked why they were not successful in **casting** out the **demon**. The answer was that they needed more **faith**.



(21) [But this kind of demon won't leave except by prayer and fasting.]

- Some manuscripts add **fasting** at this location. .

### JESUS AGAIN FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

(22) After they gathered again in Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of His enemies. (23) He will be killed, but on the third day He

**will be raised from the dead." And the disciples were filled with grief.**

- Again, **Jesus** spells out His near future for His men. Their response was being **filled with grief**.

## **PAYING THE TEMPLE TAX**

**(24) On their arrival in Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax came to Peter and asked him, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?"**

- The writer Matthew was well acquainted with **tax collectors** who worked for the Roman government, having been one himself, but these men were **collecting** for the **Temple tax** so they were clearly Jews working for the **Temple** in Jerusalem. This probably the tax discussed in Exodus:

**Then the LORD said to Moses, "Whenever you take a census of the people of Israel, each man who is counted must pay a ransom for himself to the LORD. Then no plague will strike the people as you count them. Each person who is counted must give a small piece of silver as a sacred offering to the LORD. (This payment is half a shekel, based on the sanctuary shekel, which equals twenty gerahs.) All who have reached their twentieth birthday must give this sacred offering to the LORD. When this offering is given to the LORD to purify your lives, making you right with Him, the rich must not give more than the specified amount, and the poor must not give less. Receive this ransom money from the Israelites, and use it for the care of the Tabernacle. It will bring the Israelites to the LORD's attention, and it will purify your lives." (Exodus 30:11-16 NLT)**

- The **tax collectors** addressed **Peter** because he was the leader of the disciples.

**(25) "Yes, He does," Peter replied. Then he went into the house. But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered? "**

- As was so common for **Peter**, he had the wrong answer.
- Jesus quickly set the record straight with a penetrating question: **Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?**

**(26) "They tax the people they have conquered," Peter replied. "Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free!"**

- Peter got this answer right, but didn't see how it applied.
- **J.W. McGarvey** says:

[The argument is this: If the sons of kings are free from the payment of tribute, I, the Son of God, am free from God's tribute." ]

**(27) However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin. Take it and pay the tax for both of us."**

- Peter was a professional fisherman from the Sea of Galilee. The professionals fished with nets. Jesus told Peter to throw in a line -- amateur equipment.
- The **coin** was in the **mouth** of the **fish** because it was too large to swallow. Peter owed his tax and Jesus paid the tax to avoid **offense**.