



“What Time Is It?”

MATTHEW Chapter 16

Go for God! > ***(v1-4) It's Time to Discern the “Signs of the Times!”***

- **Mariners have a saying, “Red sky at night, sailor’s delight. Red sky in the morning, sailor’s warning.”** What’s the analogy? The identity of Jesus is as plain as the weather, but the religious leaders are unwilling to admit it. This is the fourth time the religious leaders have asked for a sign (Mt. 12:38; Jn. 2:12; 6:30).

- **Jesus called them a “*wicked and adulterous generation,*”** The word *wicked* speaks of evil or bad nature, whereas, *adulterous* speaks of spiritual adultery, which is the worshipping of a false god manufactured in their own mind or religious system.

- **What are the “*signs of the times?*”** God’s Prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, His birth, His birthplace, His time of arrival in history, His holy life, His miracles, His rejection, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension. Jesus Christ fulfilled over 300 prophecies as He walked this earth. There was at least one Pharisee who recognized the work of Christ, his name was Nicodemus, listen to **John 3:2** – ***“This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”***

- **Jesus says the only sign that will be given to them is the sign of Jonah, in Matthew 12:40-41** Jesus said, ***“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”***

> ***(v5-12) It's Time to Beware of False Doctrine!***

- **Pharisees were legalists and traditionalists,** whose emphasis upon ritual was hypocritical and spiritually deadening (Luke 12:1).

- **Sadducees were rationalists,** who did not believe in resurrection nor in the existence of spirit beings that cannot be explained naturally (Acts 23:8).

- Today we have what is called **“Religious Modernism,”** this began as a "loosely defined movement within the Roman Catholic church aimed at adapting Catholic belief to the intellectual, moral, and social needs of modern times. It developed spontaneously toward the end of the 19th century principally in Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, and the United States.

Proponents of the movement accepted the findings of modern science and supported the critical view of the Bible, thereby establishing a link with **liberal Protestantism.**"¹

- **Like Liberalism, Modernism questioned the authority of the Scriptures, preferring instead human reason.** "The Faith of Modernism", stressing that Christian doctrines were not timeless truths but merely reflections of the culture.

- **Modernism emerged advancing the Social Gospel, which championed the themes of love and justice in education, society, and political life.**

¹ "Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia", article on "Modernism" by John E. Booty.

- With statements of purpose, such as Modernist leader Walter Rauschenbusch's "*A Theology for the Social Gospel*" (1917), the emphasis was taken away from the Salvation of the immortal soul and given to the economic and social advancement of mankind.

- Listen to the description of the “last days church” in Revelation 3:14-22 - *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"*

(Listen to the testimony of one who fell into the “leaven” of this false teaching.)

- In 1 Timothy 4:1-11 we read - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.

- Did you know that in his bequest John Harvard (who gave the first large gift to the present Harvard University) said, *"Let every student be plainly instructed to consider well the main ends of his life and studies; to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all knowledge and learning. Let everyone seriously set himself by secret prayer to see Christ as Lord and Master."* What happened? “Modernism” happened.

> (v13-20) It's Time to Confess Christ!

(v13) Here we find mankind's greatest question, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"*

(v14-17) Peter gets the right answer, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Let be known that Peter did not conjure up this idea, it was revealed to him by Jesus' Father from heaven.

- C.S. Lewis, a great Christian philosopher writes, *'I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of thing Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of*

God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.'

(v18) Jesus establishes the foundation of the church by saying, "you are Peter," Peter in Greek is *Petros* which means a *small stone*, but "upon this rock," the Greek word for rock is *Petra* which means *a massive rock*, that massive rock is Jesus, who is the Christ!

- The church will be built on this *Petra* and not upon the *Petros* (Peter) and the *gates of Hades* will not prevail against it.

- To understand Hades read Luke 16:19-31 - *"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"*

- Gates are a symbol of authority, just as sin, death and devil are in authority here on earth. Notice that *the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church*, remember the word *church* is *ekklesia*, which means "a called out assembly." Christ has crashed the gates of Hades for believers; therefore sin, death, and the devil himself cannot hold us, defeat us, or destroy us. (Heb. 2:14-15)

(v19) Jesus gives Peter, the apostles, and all believers keys to the "kingdom of heaven." A key is an instrument for opening a door. He that is in possession of it has the power of access, and has a general care of a house. Hence, in the Bible, a key is used as a symbol of superintendence an emblem of power and authority.

- The phrase "to bind" and "to loose" was often used by the Jews. It meant to prohibit and to permit. To bind a thing was to forbid it; to loose it, to allow it to be done.

- When Jesus gave this power to the apostles, he meant that whatsoever they forbade in the church should have divine authority; whatever they permitted, or commanded, should also have divine authority-that is, should be bound or loosed in heaven, or meet the approbation of God.

- The apostles were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church:
(1) *by the teaching of Christ,*
(2) *by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.*

- **This does not refer to persons, but to things - "whatsoever," not whosoever.**

It refers to rites and ceremonies in the church. Such of the Jewish customs as they should forbid were to be forbidden, and such as they thought proper to permit were to be allowed. Such rites as they should appoint in the church were to have the force of divine authority.

- **Accordingly, they commanded the Gentile converts to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20); and, in general, they organized the church, and directed what was to be observed and what was to be avoided.**

- **The rules laid down by them in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, in connection with the teachings of the Saviour as recorded in the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), constitute the only law binding on Christians in regard to the order of the church, and the rites and ceremonies to be observed in it.** (from Barnes' Commentary)

> ***(v21-28) It's time to Follow Jesus!***

(v21-23) Here Christ foretells His death and resurrection, He did this five times to prepare the disciples (Mt. 17:12; 17:2-23; 20:18-19; 20:28). Peter is unwilling to accept this fact, at one moment Peter's confession takes him to the heights of heaven and the next moment he finds himself at the depths of hell, "*Get thee behind me Satan.*"

(v24-25) **Observe the cost of discipleship:**

(1) ***Denial of self*** – you are no longer the god of your life, He is! Romans 12:1-2 - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

(2) ***Take up the cross***, we are told in Galatians 5:24 - *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

(3) ***Follow Christ*** – Jesus said in John 10:27-28 - *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. In Matthew 4:19-20 - "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

- **There is a fifteen-hundred-year-old prayer, which still stirs our hearts. It is particularly inspiring and helpful to those who want to follow Christ.** It is called "St. Patrick's Breastplate." Here is part of it: Christ be with me, Christ in the front, Christ in the rear, Christ within me, Christ below me, Christ above me, Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left, Christ in the fort, Christ in the Chariot seat, Christ at the helm, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

(v26) **This verse is the day of reckoning.**

(v27-28) **God will reward you for everything you do for Him, in His name, in this life!** In Rev 22:12-13 - *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."*

Verse 28 leads into Chapter 17 and the *Mount of Transfiguration*.