



MATTHEW 16:1-20
MESSIAH ON A MISSION (PART 31)
“JESUS VERSUS THE ZEITGEIST”

INTRODUCTION

By proclaiming that one knows who Jesus is, one simultaneously confesses what Jesus' mission is to the world as Messiah. Matthew develops his Christology in multiple ways (i.e., Jesus as the Law, Jesus as Moses, Jesus as Wisdom, Jesus as King David etc.) confessing Jesus as Messiah is paramount to Matthew's gospel. The people in Matthew's audience needed to hear the affirmation that Jesus was God the Messiah; and Matthew calls on us through this text to make this confession ourselves.

What would it mean for us to all believe, preach, teach, and witness that Jesus is the Messiah in fresh ways in our own contexts? First, if we started preaching and witnessing this way, it would require us to explain what "Messiah" means, and that would be powerful. It would require us to provide historical and Biblical backdrop of a Jewish background for Jesus much more than we are accustomed to doing, since the very term "Messiah" only means something in the overarching story of God's promise and work in and for Israel.

Proclaiming Jesus as Lord - God's agent, God's Express Image, God's Blessed and Holy One, who has ALL authority remains an understandable and powerful affirmation in our time, where there are powers, politicians, movie stars, social media personalities, and institutions providing counterclaims to Jesus' authority. When we, by faith, say "Jesus is Lord" and that He has all power (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), in the face of the spirits and influences of the world, we are counter-culturally preaching against the Zeitgeist of our day.

“Jesus As Messiah” (Lord)
Always Opposes
The Counterclaims
Of The Zeitgeist”

Zeitgeist: the spirit of the time; the general trend of thought, feeling, or tastes characteristic of a particular period of time:

“Who Were The Sadducees?”

The Sadducees were a Jewish party that represented the wealthy and sophisticated classes. They were more politically minded than the Pharisees and denied the resurrection, angels, and spirits. They were located largely in Jerusalem and made the temple and its administration their primary interest. Though they too were a relatively small group, in Jesus 'day they exerted powerful political and religious influence.

(See Footnote: The Sadducees. Archeological Study Bible)

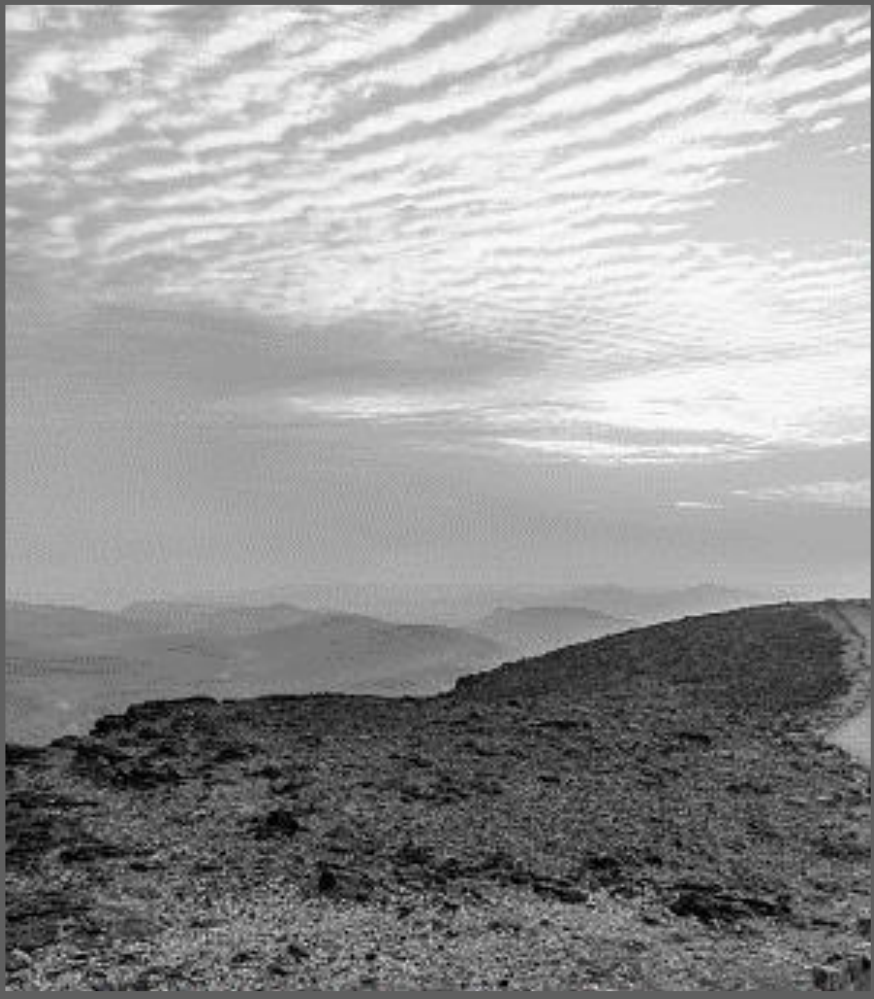
"Penny For Your Thoughts"

The Disciple's Problem: (16:5)

The minds of the disciples were occupied with material matters. When they unloaded the boat, they saw that the provision baskets were empty. They had forgotten to bring enough bread. Mark 8:14 says that they had only one loaf with them.

The Problem Jesus was thinking about: (16:6)

The Lord's attention was drawn to the discussion about the dilemma of His identity and unbelief. He was concerned with the spiritual aspect. He said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Each sect in its own way had leavened and corrupted the holy Bread of Scripture, the ritualists by what they had added to it and the rationalists by what they had taken away from it.



“Who Do You Say That I Am?”

This is the question that every believer is asked by Christ. "But whom do you say that I am?"

They are having a conversation about the Zeitgeist of the day concerning the identity of Jesus. Jesus then turns and asks Peter to distinguish himself from, or align himself with, the Zeitgeist. It is assumed that they are at "the Gates of Hell" when He asks this question.

- Zeitgeist insinuates Jesus as John The Baptist: (14:1-12)
- Zeitgeist insinuates Jesus as the Devil or Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24)
- Zeitgeist insinuates Jesus as Elijah (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:12)
- Zeitgeist insinuates Jesus as Jeremiah (Matthew 13:57; 21:11,46; 23:29-39)

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16)

Footnote 1: CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

The Sadducees

(MATTHEW 16, 22) The Sadducees were a religious and political sect during the Second Temple period, drawn primarily from the ruling priestly and aristocratic elements in Jewish society. This party controlled the temple worship, and many of its adherents were also members of the supreme Jewish legal council, called the Sanhedrin (Ac 23:6). Two separate accounts of the Sadducees' origin link the name of the sect to two different historical figures, both named Zadok.

The name Sadducee may be derived from Zadok, the high priest in the days of David and Solomon (2Sa 8:17; 1Ki 1:34). In Ezekiel's vision of restoration, the descendants of this Zadok are entrusted with oversight of the temple worship (Eze 40:46; 43:19; 44:15). Zadok's descendants did in fact constitute the temple hierarchy down to the second century B.C. According to rabbinic tradition, however, the sect of the Sadducees was founded by a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho (c. 200 B.C.), also named Zadok.

Footnote 1 (cont.): CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

The Sadducees

The Sadducees' major opponents were the Pharisees. Contrary to this rival faction, the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead (Mt 22:23–33; Ac 4:1–2; 23:6–8), the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of reward and punishment and the validity of the oral law (regulations passed down by rabbinic tradition). They accepted as binding only those laws based directly upon the written text of the Pentateuch. It is for this reason that Jesus defended the doctrine of the resurrection to them from the standpoint of Exodus 3:6 rather than from the prophets (Mt 22:32). The influence of the Sadducees virtually ceased with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, leaving postbiblical Judaism to develop along Pharisaic lines. Later rabbinic teaching contains numerous examples and anti-Sadducee propaganda.

Footnote 2:

Caesarea Philippi (*Caesar* or *Severed*) and (*Fond of Horses*)

It was said that Julius Caesar was born by being 'severed' from the womb, hence our use of the term caesarian birth. The name of this place instantly grabs our attention because it is associated with the conversation between Jesus and his disciples regarding His identity. This is where Simon Peter answered by revelation, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus responded by giving him the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:13-19).

(King, Dr. J., *Bible Land Journey*, 49)

Footnote 3:

Gates of Hell

This term could refer to the entire sanctuary where false gods were worshipped, or specifically to the grotto where the waters emerged from a "bottomless pit." According to some sources, living babies and children were sacrificed by throwing them into these waters. Others believe that demons will come through these "Gates of Hell" to torment the earth in the end time (Rev 9). It is probable that Panias was likened to the "Gates of Hell" because it represented all false doctrine, idolatry and political intrigue and oppression. Jesus was saying, "Nothing this world can throw at you will succeed. The Church will take on all comers and emerge victorious." "Give it your best shot, devil, you will not prevail." Nowhere else is the term "gates of hell" found in the Bible, but Jesus did use similar terminology in His letter to the angel of the church in Pergamos. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, where Satan's seat is" and "where Satan dwelleth."

(King, Dr. J., *Bible Land Journey*, 54-55)

Footnote 3(cont.):

These unique and unusual designations both refer to locations that share some common features. Both Banias and Pergamos were cultic centers containing temples to various deities. Pergamos had a massive temple to Zeus and Banias had a temple of Zeus. Perhaps more strikingly, Pergamos was the site of the first temple of Augustus, the first Roman emperor who was deified, while Banias also had a temple of Augustus. This worship of political figures must be considered a contender for the designations of Matthew 16:18 and Revelation 2:13. This recalls Paul's warning of "that man of sin...the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thes. 2:3-4).

(King, Dr. J., *Bible Land Journey*, 54-55)