



Chapter 16

Christ Begins His Journey to the Cross

**By: Michael Fronczak
Bible Study Resource Center
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

Copyright © 2008

Theme: Jesus continues the conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees; Jesus calls for a confession from His disciples, and Peter speaks for the group; Jesus confronts them for the first time with the church. His death, and resurrection

The Identity of the Messiah Revealed. This section marks a major new emphasis in Matthew's narrative as Jesus' messianic identity is increasingly clarified.

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. In response to the Pharisees and Sadducees' demand for a sign, Jesus announces he will give no more signs (vv. 1–4) and warns his disciples about the spiritual “leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees (vv. 5–12). Jesus then asks his disciples about the identity of the Son of Man (vv. 13–14). Peter rightly confesses Jesus (vv. 15–16), and Jesus in turn makes a pronouncement about Peter (vv. 17–20).

Matthew 16:1

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

The Pharisees *with* the Sadducees—strange combination because the Pharisees were the extreme religionists; the Sadducees were the unitarians, the modernists. They did not believe in the supernatural, or the resurrection.

[Pharisees] A very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their origin, were, very probably, a pure and holy people. It is likely that they got the name of Pharisees, i.e. Separatists, (from *pharash*, to separate), from their separating themselves from the pollution of the Jewish national worship; and hence, the word in the Anglo-saxon version is, holy persons who stand apart, or by themselves: but, in process of time, like all religious sects and parties, they degenerated: they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to recur to first principles, and had only the form of godliness, when Jesus Christ preached in Judea; for he bore witness, that they did make the outside of the cup and platter clean—they observed the rules of their institution, but the spirit was gone. When the sect of the Pharisees arose cannot be distinctly ascertained; but it is supposed to have been some time after the Babylonish captivity.¹

[Sadducees] A sect who denied the existence of angels and spirits, consequently all Divine influence and inspiration, and also the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees of that time were the Materialists and Deists of the Jewish nation. The sect of the Sadducees were the followers of one Sadok, a disciple of Antigonus Sochaeus, who flourished about

¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

three centuries before Christ. There was a third sect among the Jews, called the Essenes or Essenians.²

The Pharisees and Sadducees were Jewish religious leaders of two different parties, and their views were diametrically opposed on many issues. The Pharisees carefully followed their religious rules and traditions, believing that this was the way to God. They also believed in the authority of all Scripture and in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees accepted only the books of Moses as Scripture and did not believe in life after death. In Jesus, however, these two groups had a common enemy, and they joined forces to try to kill him.

ESV Study Bible: The Pharisees and Sadducees were often bitter opponents, but they joined forces against Jesus, whom they saw as a threat to their leadership and power. They came to Jesus not out of need or genuine faith but to test him. They were seeking a sign or miracle to use against him.

[tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven] First of many times in Matthew that His enemies sought to trap Him.

[sign from heaven] Six times signs are asked for (Matthew 12:38; Matthew 16:1; Matthew 24:3; Luke 11:16; John 2:18; John 6:30). In each case signs are given.

[shew them a sign] (Clarke) These sects, however opposed among themselves, most cordially unite in their opposition to Christ and his truth. That the kingdom of Satan may not fall, all his subjects must fight against the doctrine and maxims of the kingdom of Christ.

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign *from heaven*. They tried to explain away Jesus' other miracles as sleight of hand, coincidence, or use of evil power, but they believed that only God could do a sign in the sky. This, they were sure, would be a feat beyond Jesus' power. Although Jesus could have easily impressed them, he refused. He knew that even a miracle in the sky would not convince them he was the Messiah because they had already decided not to believe in him.

[tempting—him] That is, *trying him* -feigning a desire to see evidence that he was the Messiah, but with a real desire to see him make the attempt to work a miracle and fail, that they might betray and ruin him.

Spurgeon: The King is again met by his foes. Two sects, which were violently opposed to each other, unite their forces against him. It is the way of the wicked to become friends when seeking the overthrow of the kingdom of heaven.

On this occasion they come not with a question, but with the old demand for a sign. This time it must be "a sign from heaven", possibly a marvel in the sky. What right had they to set him a test of such a sort as their fancy might suggest? What need for more signs when his miracles were so many? Were not all his miracles signs from heaven?

² Adam Clarke's Commentary

Did not this demand cast a slur on all that he had already done? Was it not a practical ignoring of all his previous works of power? Too often we also have fallen into the weakness of asking a new token of divine love, thus undervaluing former favors. If the evidence we have already received of our Lord's grace and power is not enough, when will our doubts be ended?

In this demand for a sign, our Lord's foes were tempting him. Did the temptation lie in urging him to seek his own glory by some ostentatious display of power, for which there would be no real need? Whatever it was, our Lord passed scathless through this ordeal, for there was no pride in him. Pharisees and Sadducees will tempt us also. From their wiles and smiles may the Lord deliver us! From the desire to stand well with men may we be happily freed by our love to Jesus!

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.*

Spurgeon: They could prognosticate the weather by certain signs, and our Lord Jesus mentions the weather-tokens of Palestine; yet they could not read the plainer and more plentiful warnings of the near future. Weather-signs are doubtful; but there were moral and spiritual tokens around them which could hardly be misunderstood if they would only consider them. Each country has its own sky warnings, and those of Palestine differ from those of England; but the signs of the times are the same in all lands. Our Lord singled out an instance of their supposed weather-wisdom: the same sign which, in the evening, was a token of fair weather, was, in the morning, a mark of foul weather. They were able to draw nice distinctions on the variable condition of "the face of the sky:" why could they not "discern the signs of the times?" They could have seen, if they had chosen to do so, that all the prophecies were one in declaring that the date of Messiah's appearing had arrived; and they could also have observed that every event was fulfilling those prophecies; but they were false at heart, and would not see, and yet cried out for a sign. Signs were all around them, and yet they repeated the parrot cry "Show us a sign." Most justly our Lord was indignant with them, and upbraided them, using the justly severe words, "O ye hypocrites!" Today the men who want more evidences of the supernatural deserve a similar denunciation.

Lord, do not allow any of us to be blind to the heavenly signs, — thy cross, thy resurrection, thy Word, thy Spirit, and thy work of grace, Teach us carefully to "discern" these things as being in very deed the abiding "signs of the times." Even in the growing coldness of the church, and the abounding iniquity of the world, let us see the tokens of thine Advent, and stand waiting and watching for thy long promised appearing.

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?

“...signs of the times”: The signs of the end, to know what time it is on God’s clock.

[lowring] Dark; cloudy; threatening a storm. They could discern details of the weather, but could not discern prophetic signs of the times or plain prophecy attested by miracles by their own Messiah. The many prophecies being fulfilled in John and Jesus constituted signs of the times of that day.

Shakespeare: *“Like a red morn that ever yet betokened, Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field, Sorrow to the shepherds, woe unto the birds, Gusts and foul flaws to herdmen and to herds.”*

From the Play: Venus and Adonis

“If fiery red his glowing globe descends,
High winds and furious tempests he portends:
But if his cheeks are swoll’n with livid blue,
He bodes wet weather, by his watery hue
If dusky spots are varied on his brow,
And streak’d with red a troubled color show,
That sullen mixture shall at once declare,
Wind, rain, and storms, and elemental war

DRYDEN.

Red sky at night, sailors delight.

When we see a red sky at night, this means that the setting sun is sending its light through a high concentration of dust particles. This usually indicates high pressure and stable air coming in from the west. Basically good weather will follow.

Red sky in morning, sailor’s warning.

A red sunrise reflects the dust particles of a system that has just passed from the west. This indicates that a storm system may be moving to the east. If the morning sky is a deep fiery red, it means a high water content in the atmosphere. So, rain is on its way.

McGee: In Matthew 12:38 the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign. At that time the Lord gave them the sign of Jonah. He is going to do that again, but first He calls their attention to the fact that, although they are very good at predicting the weather, they don’t seem to be able to recognize the signs of the times.

Actually, the religious rulers are trying to trap the Lord Jesus, and He is going to warn His own men to beware of them. Notice that this is the second time He calls them “O ye hypocrites.”³

Sign from Heaven. A triple wordplay: (1) the appearance of the sky (heaven), which foretells the weather; (2) a sign from God (Heaven); and (3) “signs of the times” (v. 3), where “times” evokes both weather seasons and where we stand in the flow of history.⁴

³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:90). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 16:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Yashanet.com: History reveals that there was a great deal of "Messianic fervor" among the Jews at this time in history. The Dead Sea Scrolls texts show this began at least 100 years before Yeshua's time. This "Messianic period" lasted until about the time of the second war with Rome, around 132 AD. The determination that this was a time that Messiah would appear was arrived at, through a proper study of the Tenakh.

Between the "timing," His teachings and the specific miracles He performed (always giving glory to God), Yeshua says there was enough evidence for the Pharisees and Saducees to see what was going on and who He was. Although this is true, this "evidence" is not easily seen when reading the Bible in a modern day, non-Jewish, out-of-context way. Much of the method of understanding that the Pharisees and Saducees had (or should have had), has been lost since shortly after that time. This began in the 2nd and 3rd centuries when "following the Messiah" changed from being a continuation of the faith of Israel with its Torah and Yeshua Messiah, to following a non-Jewish, anti-Torah Christian "Jesus." This subject is discussed in detail in our article,

People today will often point to "Old Testament" verses, saying they are "Messianic prophecies," (which they well may be), and then claim that Yeshua fulfilled these (which He may have), but they lack the means to prove the connection, as often the correlation is often at mystical (sod) level of interpretation.

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.

“...sign of the prophet Jonah”: Second time that Jesus has used the prophet Jonah as a “sign of the times” (12:40).

Some scholars believe that this has a double fulfillment. The first fulfillment is, indeed, as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man spend three days and three nights in the belly of the earth: this clearly refers to Jesus' resurrection. Some scholars believe that the second fulfillment refers to the nation Israel and will be a sign when they, as a prerequisite condition to the second coming of Jesus Christ, the remnant petitions for Him to save them and after the third day He comes and intervenes.

Wicked and adulterous generation—The Jewish people are represented in the Sacred Writings as married to the Most High; but, like a disloyal wife, forsaking their true husband, and uniting themselves to Satan and sin. Seeketh after a sign, σημειον επιζητει, seeketh sign upon sign, or, still another sign. Our blessed Lord had already wrought miracles sufficient to demonstrate both his Divine mission and his divinity; only one was farther necessary to take away the scandal of his cross and death, to fulfill the Scriptures, and to establish the Christian religion; and that was, his resurrection from the dead, which, he here states, was typified in the case of Jonah.⁵

⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

[A wicked and adulterous generation] Matthew 12:38-40. Mark adds, Mark 8:12 *that he sighed deeply in spirit*, he did not say this without feeling, he was greatly affected with their perverseness and obstinacy, Matthew 16:6-12. This account is recorded also in Mark 8:14-21.⁶

Many people, like these Jewish leaders, say they want to see a miracle so that they can believe. But Jesus knew that miracles never convince the skeptical. Jesus had been healing, raising people from the dead, and feeding thousands, and still people wanted him to prove himself. Do you doubt Christ because you haven't *seen* a miracle? Do you expect God to prove himself to you personally before you believe? Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We have all the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments, 2,000 years of church history, and the witness of thousands. With all this evidence, those who won't believe are either too proud or too stubborn. If you simply step forward in faith and believe, then you will begin to see the miracles that God can do with your life!⁷

McGee: Our Lord had provided them with many signs, but they would not accept them. For the second time He predicts the sign of Jonah ("Jonas" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Jonah*). Back in chapter 12 verse 40 He had said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." These Pharisees and Sadducees were not about to accept that as a sign.

In this chapter we will see three viewpoints concerning Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees consider Him an imposter and do not believe that He is the Messiah. The multitude thinks He is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. In this, they were complimentary, although they missed the mark completely. His disciples present the third viewpoint. They believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were asking for a sign. Jesus said that no sign would be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah. "And he left them, and departed." There is a note of finality in His action as He turns and walks away from them. Then He warns His disciples of the leaven of these religious rulers.⁸

Yashanet.com: A comparison is made here (and later in Matthew's gospel) between the generation of Yeshua's time and that of the time of Moses following Mount Sinai. (See also Matthew 23:30.) The Pharisees and Saducees had the witness of Torah for about 1300 years by the time Yeshua arrived. By this point, Yeshua had already performed many miracles, so there was no need for more.

⁶ Batnes' Notes

⁷ Life Application Notes

⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:90). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 16:5

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

[**And when his disciples were come to the other side**] That is, to the other side of the sea of Galilee. Mark says that he entered into a ship again, and departed to the other side. The conversation with the Pharisees and Sadducees had been on the east of the sea of Galilee. They crossed from that side again to the west.

Matthew 16:6

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

[**The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees**] Leaven is used in making bread. Its use is to pass through the flour, and cause it to ferment or to swell, and become light. It passes secretly, silently, but certainly. None can see its progress. So it was with the doctrines of the Pharisees. They were insinuating, artful, plausible. They *concealed* the real tendency of their doctrines, they instilled them secretly into the mind, and they pervaded all the faculties, like leaven.

Spurgeon: He used a parabolic expression, which they would readily have understood, had not their minds been already absorbed by their lack of bread. He saw that in them, too, there would soon be a desire for a sign, now that they needed bread; and he feared the influence of both the Ritualism of the Pharisee, and the Rationalism of the Sadducee upon his little church. Hence his double word, "Take heed, and beware." The warning is needed today as much as in our Lord's time: possibly it is even more required, and will be less regarded. "Pharisees and Sadducees" are both leavening the churches, and the spirit of the one is as bad as that of the other. Everywhere we see the one evil force, operating in two opposite ways, but rapidly leavening the meal of nominal Christendom. Lord, save thy people from this souring and corrupting influence!

Matthew 16:7

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

They think that Jesus brings up leaven because they had forgotten to bring bread.

[**They reasoned**] . The disciples did not understand him as referring to their doctrine, because the word *leaven* was not often used among the Jews to denote *doctrines*-no other instance of the use of the word occurring in the Scriptures. Besides, the Jews had many particular rules about the *leaven* which might be used in making bread. Many held that it

was not lawful to eat bread made by the Gentiles; and the disciples, perhaps, supposed that he was cautioning them not to procure a supply from the Pharisees and Sadducees.⁹

McGee: In Matthew 13 we learned that leaven is *always* a principle of evil and never a principle of good. The Lord says to beware of the leaven. If you are cautioned to beware of something, it will not be welcome or good. The disciples missed the understanding of the leaven at first, thinking it was bread.¹⁰

ESV Study Bible: We brought no bread. The disciples are so preoccupied with their physical needs that they fail to understand that Jesus' reference to leaven is figurative, intended as a spiritual lesson. Following Jesus' rebuke, they finally **understood**.

Spurgeon: Their thoughts ran along the low material level from leaven to bread. Did they imagine that he forbade their borrowing leaven from the Pharisees when they began to make a batch of bread? How could they have found any meaning in the literal sense of leaven as applied to Sadducees? They were earthbound by anxiety, or they could not have blundered so foolishly. When a number of hungry men are together, is it not very natural that they should look at everything with hungry eyes? Yes, it is natural; and it is not natural to men to be spiritual. We need to pray that we may not reason among ourselves after the same groveling fashion, when we come into a little need.

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?

Jesus realizes that they are misunderstanding the whole thing.

[O ye of little faith] There are degrees in faith, as well as in the other graces of the Spirit. Little faith may be the seed of great faith, and therefore is not to be despised. But many who should be strong in faith have but a small measure of it, because they either give way to sin, or are not careful to improve what God has already given.

Matthew 16:9

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

⁹ Barnes' Notes

¹⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:91). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 16:10

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

Do ye not yet understand—the five loaves—neither the seven—See the notes on Matthew 14:14, etc. How astonishing is it that these men should have any fear of lacking bread, after having seen the two miracles which our blessed Lord alludes to above! Though men quickly perceive their bodily wants, and are querulous enough till they get them supplied, yet they as quickly forget the mercy which they had received; and thus God gets few returns of gratitude for his kindnesses. To make men, therefore, deeply sensible of his favors, he is induced to suffer them often to be in want, and then to supply them in such a way as to prove that their supply has come immediately from the hand of their bountiful Father.¹¹

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?

Spurgeon: At bottom it was unbelief which clouded their understanding. Jesus may well say to doubters, "Ye do not understand." Truly, nothing more effectually blunts spiritual perception than an overpowering anxiety for the bread which perisheth. When a doctrine is not understood, it may not always be the fault of the teacher. Very plain speaking is frequently misunderstood when the mind is absorbed in pressing needs. It was sad to see apostles taking our Lord literally, and failing to see the obvious parable of his words. How could "the leaven of the Pharisee" be a term used concerning bread?

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.

Why is this here? Partly to alert you as to what leaven *really* means back in Matthew 13.

[Then understood they] After this explanation, they immediately saw that he referred to their doctrines. Erroneous doctrines are like leaven in the following respects:

- (1.) They are, at first, slight and unimportant in appearance.
- (2.) They are insinuated into the soul unawares and silently, and are difficult of detection.
- (3.) They act gradually.
- (4.) They act most certainly.
- (5.) They will pervade all the soul, and bring in all the faculties under their control.
- (6.) Leaven corrupts by puffing up – a pride issue

¹¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

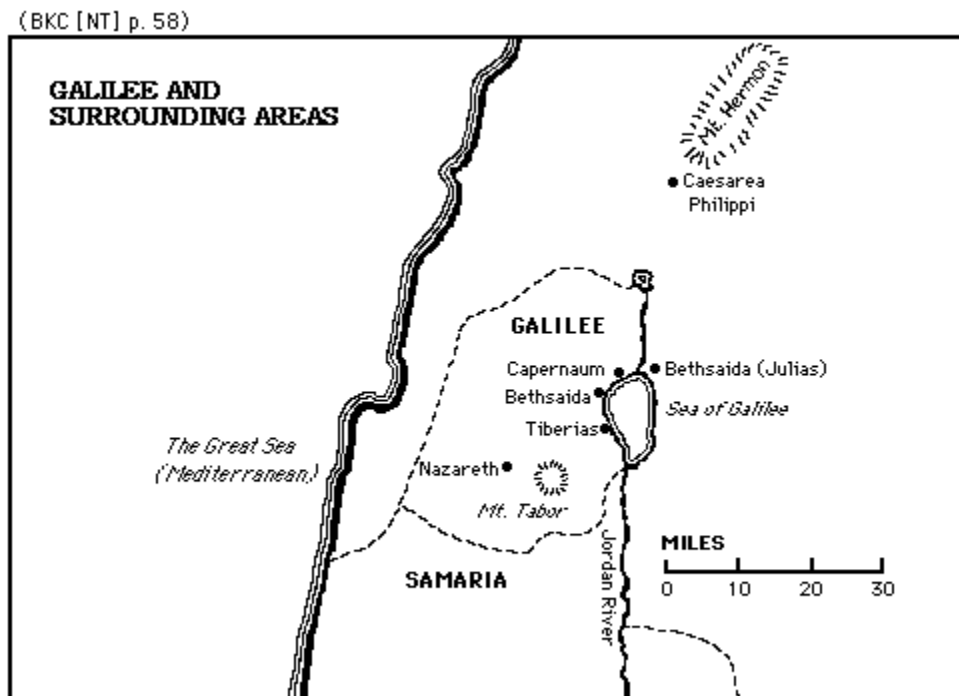
Yeast is put into bread to make it rise, and it takes only a little to affect a whole batch of dough. Jesus used yeast as an example of how a small amount of evil can affect a large group of people. The wrong teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees were leading many people astray. Beware of the tendency to say, “How can this little wrong possibly affect anyone?”

McGee: If it were a matter of material bread, the disciples should have remembered the two miracles of His—providing food for the five thousand and the four thousand—but it was not a matter of material bread. Leaven, according to our Lord’s interpretation, is false *doctrine*. It is that which is evil. When people speak about the “leaven of the gospel,” they are using a contradiction of terms. Leaven is never a picture of the gospel. Leaven always is symbolic of evil. If you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as an authority, this ought to clarify once and for all what leaven represents.¹²

Matthew 16:13

¹³When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, *Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

Caesarea Philippi: Near the headwaters of the Jordan River.



[coasts of Caesarea Philippi] Parts. Not the sea coast, but a city about 25 miles north of Capernaum, originally called Paneas because of a temple erected there to Pan, god of

¹²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:91). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

flocks and all material substance. Herod the Great rebuilt it and also built a temple dedicated to Caesar. Philip, tetrarch of Iturea (Luke 3:1), enlarge it and named it Caesarea in honor of Tiberias Caesar, adding "Philippi" after himself to distinguish it from Caesarea on the sea coast. The ancient name was Dan (Genesis 14:14) or Laish (Judges 18:7).¹³

[Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?] Christ inquires of public opinion to test the opinion of the disciples (Matthew 16:15; Luke 9:18).

Twelve Modern Statements About Christ: (Dake)

1. Christian Science: Jesus was the offspring of Mary's self-conscious communion with God; Christ is incorporeal, spiritual; the divine idea of God; Mary's conception of him was spiritual; Jesus Christ is not God.
2. Unity: Jesus is the I in man, the self, the divine idea. Reveal yourself to yourself by affirming, I am the Christ.
3. Spiritualism: Christ is not the Son of God. Any just and perfect being is Christ; nothing more than a medium of a high order; not divine except in the sense that we are all divine.
4. Jehovah's Witnesses or Russellism: Jesus Christ was a man—neither more nor less; none other than the archangel Michael; God created him; is dead—forever dead; suffered everlasting destruction; not resurrected physically.
5. Theosophy: Christ is less an external Savior than a living presence in the human spirit; in time all men become Christ.
6. Rosicrucianism: The Son (Christ) is the highest Initiate of the sun period; not the only begotten Son of God.
7. Baha'ism: Jesus Christ is only one of many manifestations of God; one of many Messiahs; His sufferings were no more than those of other prophets.
8. Mormonism: Jesus is both the Father and the Son.
9. Unitarianism: The dogma we deny is the exclusive divinity of Jesus Christ; our birth was as divine as that of Jesus.
10. Modernism: A man so good his deluded followers took him to be a god.
11. Christadelphianism: Jesus Christ is not divine.
12. Seventh Day Adventism: In his humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature.¹⁴

Caesarea Philippi—A city, in the tribe of Naphtali, near to Mount Libanus, in the province of Iturea. Its ancient name was Dan, Genesis 14:14; afterwards it was called Lais, Judges 18:7. But Philip the tetrarch, having rebuilt and beautified it, gave it the name of Caesarea, in honor of Tiberius Caesar, the reigning emperor: but to distinguish it from another Caesarea, which was on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and to perpetuate the fame of him who rebuilt it, it was called Caesarea Philippi, or Caesarea of Philip.

When Jesus came—Ελθων δε ο Ιησους—when Jesus was coming. Not, when Jesus came, or was come, for Mark expressly mentions that it happened εν τη οδω, in the way to Caesarea Philippi, Mark 8:27, and he is Matthew's best interpreter.—WAKEFIELD.

¹³ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

¹⁴ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Whom do men say—He asked his disciples this question, not because he was ignorant what the people thought and spoke of him; but to have the opportunity, in getting an express declaration of their faith from themselves, to confirm and strengthen them in it: but see on Luke 9:20. Some, John the Baptist, etc. By this and other passages we learn, that the Pharisaic doctrine of the Metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, was pretty general; for it was upon this ground that they believed that the soul of the Baptist, or of Elijah, Jeremiah, or some of the prophets, had come to a new life in the body of Jesus.

McGee: If you look on a map, you will find three Caesareas. Caesarea Philippi is located to the north of the Sea of Galilee. The Lord Jesus is in the north, and He is in a position from which He is going to turn and begin a movement directly toward Jerusalem and the cross. Before He begins that journey, there are two things that must be clear in the minds of His disciples: (1) who He is, and (2) what He is going to do. My friend, these are the two things that all of us have to be clear on in order to be Christians. We have to know who He is, and we have to know what He did. We need to know these things in order that we might exercise faith and be saved.

Note our Lord's first question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" This is a question which He is still asking, and it is a question that is still being answered in our day. He still is the most controversial Person who has ever lived on the topside of this earth. Now we will hear the viewpoint of the multitudes, the crowds that followed Him. I believe that if you or I asked this question on a street corner of our own towns, we would probably get similar answers because folk are still confused about Him.¹⁵

Caesarea Philippi It lay at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near the sources of the Jordan, in the territory of Dan, and at the northeast extremity of Palestine. It was originally called *Panium* (from a cavern in its neighborhood dedicated to the god *Pan*) and *Paneas*. Philip, the tetrarch, the only good son of Herod the Great, in whose dominions Paneas lay, having beautified and enlarged it, changed its name to *Caesarea*, in honor of the Roman emperor, and added *Philippi* after his own name, to distinguish it from the other *Caesarea* (Ac 10:1) on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea. [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 15.10.3; 18.2.1]. This quiet and distant retreat Jesus appears to have sought with the view of talking over with the Twelve the fruit of His past labors, and breaking to them for the first time the sad intelligence of His approaching death.¹⁶

Spurgeon: Our Lord knew well enough what the people thought of him; but he asked his disciples the question that he might instruct them after the Socratic method by drawing out their own minds. Our Lord was about to inform them as to his death, and it was well that they should have very clear ideas as to who he was. He begins by asking,

¹⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:91). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁶ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 16:13). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Human opinions about heavenly, things count for little; yet it is as well to know them, that we may be prepared to withstand them

Matthew 16:14

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

[Elias] Greek forms of Elijah and Jeremiah. Elijah was prophesied in Mal 4:5,6. Jeremiah: Jer 11:19; thought he might fulfill Isa 53:7. Moses prophesied to return; Deut 18:18.

McGee: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist." John the Baptist was a great man, and the people recognized him as such. In our day there are many folk who say that Jesus was a great teacher.

Some said regarding Jesus that He was "Elias." (The name *Elias* was the Greek form of "Elijah.") Elijah was certainly a great person, and there are those in our day who say that Jesus was a great person.

"And others, Jeremias." (Again, the Greek form is used.) Jeremiah was the weeping prophet, and the people saw our Lord weep. The crowds gave Him the credit for being a great prophet.

"Or one of the prophets." I suppose there was a variety of viewpoints as to which prophet Jesus was.

These, then, were the viewpoints of the average persons of that day.

A young preacher friend of mine, an extrovert, heard me speak of this; so he went out on the street corners and asked the question concerning Jesus Christ of folk who passed by. He got all sorts of viewpoints. Some said that He was the greatest teacher this world has ever seen. One person said that He was a founder of religion. Another felt that He was a *good* man. Another put Him in a class with other men who were famous in history—just "one of the prophets," you see.¹⁷

One thing is clear: We can never make a true decision about Jesus Christ by taking a poll of the people. (But some people *do* get their "spiritual knowledge" this way!) The important thing is not what others say, but what do you and I personally say? The decisions of the crowd (wrong or right) can never substitute for personal decisions.¹⁸

Yasshanet.com: It is interesting to note that three deceased individuals are noted here (even more if you count "one of the prophets"). There were (and still are) beliefs in Judaism regarding resurrection, as well as the idea of the "spirit" of someone resting on

¹⁷McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:91). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁸Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Mt 16:13). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

another. (i.e., Elijah's spirit onto Elias, Moses' spirit onto the elders.) A point being made here, and in the following verse, is that the people, though they knew Yeshua was a significant person, did not (yet) have the clear understanding that He was the promised Messiah.

ESV Study Bible: John the Baptist . . . Elijah . . . Jeremiah . . . one of the prophets.

The responses are in line with the popular messianic expectations held in Israel, arising from a strand of OT predictions about a great prophet who was to come (cf. Deut. 18:15–18; Mal. 4:5).

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.

[Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God] Such confession from the heart brings and confirms the new birth (1 John 5:1).

The Christ. The Messiah, the Anointed of God. Matthew 11:14.

[Son] Expresses His relationship to the Father. He is a separate and distinct person from the Father.

Fourteen Testimonies of Sonship: (Dake)

God declared Jesus to be "My beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). Jesus said, "I am the Son of God" (John 10:36). Demons (Matthew 8:29; Luke 4:41); Gabriel (Luke 1:32-35); disciples (Matthew 14:33); the centurion (Matthew 27:54); Peter (Matthew 16:16; John 6:69); John the Baptist (John 1:34); Martha (John 11:27); Mark (Mark 1:1); the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-38); Nathaniel (John 1:49); Paul (Acts 9:20; Galatians 2:20); and John (John 20:31) all called Jesus "The Son of God." John called Him "the only begotten Son" and "the Son of the Father" (John 1:18; John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:9; 2 John 1:3). Satan, Pharisees, and others also understood Him to claim Sonship (Matthew 4:3-6; Matthew 27:40-43; John 19:7). "The Son of God" is used 47 times; "only begotten Son" 5 times; "My Son" 8 times; "the Son" 34 times; and "His Son" 24 times.

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God—Every word here is emphatic—a most concise, and yet comprehensive, confession of faith. The Christ, or Messiah, points out his divinity, and shows his office; the Son—designates his person: on this account it is that both are joined together so frequently in the new covenant. Of the living God *Του Θεου, του ζωντος*, literally, of God the Living One.

Living—a character applied to the Supreme Being, not only to distinguish him from the dead idols of paganism, but also to point him out as the source of life, present, spiritual,

and eternal. Probably there is an allusion here to the great name יהוה *Yeve*, or *Yehovah*, which properly signifies being or existence.

[living God] Living, in contrast to lifeless gods.

Fourteen Living Things (Dake)

1. God. It is used 31 times; 15 in the Old Testament and 16 in the New Testament (Deut. 5:26; Daniel 6:20,26; Matthew 16:16; etc.)
2. Christ (Hebrews 7:25; Rev. 1:18)
3. Word (1 Peter 1:23)
4. Creatures (animals, Genesis 1:21-28; Genesis 2:19)
5. Creatures (cherubim, Ezekiel 1)
6. Soul (Genesis 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:45)
7. Substance (Genesis 7:4,23)
8. Bread (John 6:51)
9. Sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)
10. Way (Hebrews 10:20; cp. John 14:6)
11. Stones (1 Peter 2:4-5)
12. Fountains (Rev. 7:17)
13. Hope (1 Peter 1:3)
14. Waters (John 4:10-11; John 7:37-39)

McGee: The time has come for the disciples to make a decision and render a confession. Simon Peter was evidently the spokesman for the group. He said, “Thou art the Christ,” which meant the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One who was predicted in the Old Testament, and the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment. Also—“the Son of the living God.” Up to this point, that was the best confession and the highest tribute that could be made to Him. This is who Jesus is!¹⁹

He does not say, “Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and people, are all perplexed; and shall we, unlettered fishermen, presume to decide?” But feeling the light of his Master’s glory shining in his soul, he breaks forth—not in a tame, prosaic acknowledgment, “*I believe that Thou art,*” &c.—but in the language of adoration—such as one uses in worship, “THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!” He first owns Him the promised *Messiah* (see on Mt 1:16); then he rises higher, echoing the voice from heaven—“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”; and in the important addition—“Son of the LIVING GOD”—he recognizes the essential and eternal life of God as in this His Son—though doubtless without that distinct perception afterwards vouchsafed.²⁰

Peter means by his answer that Jesus is the One who would fulfill the messianic hope of the O.T. He does not completely understand the nature of Jesus’ messiahship, but the truth is beginning to dawn, as Matthew makes clear by the expression “the Son of the

¹⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:92). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁰Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 16:16). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

living God.” This is Peter’s astonishing insight. To avow that Jesus was the Messiah was not startling. But to affirm that Jesus, the Messiah, was the Son of God—deity in human flesh—was an insight of momentous illumination.

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.

“Christ” is Greek for Meshiach in Hebrew, the anointed one.

[Simon Barjona] [Barjona] Aramaic for "son of Jonah".

Son of Jonah or Son of the Dove. The Dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus answered-Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona is the same as Simon *son of Jona*. Bar is a Syriac word, signifying *son*. The father of Peter, therefore, was Jona, or Jonas, John 1:42, 21:16,17.

[flesh and blood] Meaning a mortal in contrast with the Spirit Being, the Father (cp. 1 Cor. 15:50; Galatians 1:16; Ephes. 6:12; Hebrews 2:14).

For flesh and blood. This phrase commonly signifies man, (see Galatians 1:16, Ephesians 6:12; and it has been commonly supposed that he meant to say that *man* had not revealed it. But Jesus seems rather to have referred to himself.

[revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven] Revelations are always by "Spirit" and not by flesh and blood. See notes on Revelation.

Clarke: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona—Or Simon, son of Jonah; so Bar-jonah should be translated, and so it is rendered by our Lord, John 1:42. Flesh and blood—i.e. MAN;—no human being hath revealed this; and though the text is literal enough, yet every body should know that this is a Hebrew periphrasis for man; and the literal translation of it here, and in Galatians 1:16, has misled thousands, who suppose that flesh and blood signify carnal reason, as it is termed, or the unregenerate principle in man. Is it not evident, from our Lord’s observation, that it requires an express revelation of God in a man’s soul, to give him a saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ; and that not even the miracles of our Lord, wrought before the eyes, will effect this? The darkness must be removed from the heart by the Holy Spirit, before a man can become wise unto salvation.²¹

McGee: Only the Holy Spirit can make Christ known to any person. No man today can call Jesus “Lord” but by the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and reveal them to us. Jesus said, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee”; that is, “You didn’t learn it by being with Me.” I hear folk say, “Well, if I could have

²¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

been with Jesus for three years [the apostles had been with Him about two and one half years now], then I would really know who He is.” Would you? My friend, you can know Him just as well today because the Spirit of God has to make Him real to you.²²

Yashanet.com: Peter was given insight that others did not yet have. In chapter 13, Yeshua had said that there were those who would receive special understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, that others did not (yet) have. Peter's revelation is one of those moments. Obviously, this was a "benefit" of following the Messiah directly. The twelve "apostles" (as they are usually called) do seem to merit a special place in the Kingdom (Revelation 21:14). The revelation Peter received is the gift of prophecy, mentioned earlier in this study. (See notes to verse 18 below.)

ESV Study Bible: Jesus answered him. Although Peter spoke for the group, Jesus' reply is directed at Peter himself. Blessed (Gk. *makarios*). Jesus is not *conferring* blessing so much as *acknowledging* Peter's condition of being privileged to benefit from God's personal revelation. Simon Bar-Jonah (Aramaic for “Simon son of Jonah”). Simon has a natural father, Jonah, but his ability to confess Jesus (16:16) came not from any flesh and blood source but from my Father who is in heaven.

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.

Petros: Part of a rock, that which is hewn out of a rock, a stone. Petra: the rock out of which a stone is hewn (Mt 7:24, 25). Pun between Peter (the stone) and Petra (the rock). Who is the Rock? 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 2:4-7. Peter was not infallible; Paul in Gal 2:11-16 has to dress him down. Idea of Peter being the first pope is not Biblical.

[also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...]

The word "also" proves Christ to be a separate person from the Father. In Matthew 16:17 the Father had given a revelation and in Matthew 16:18 Jesus also gave one. See The Trinity.

[Peter] Greek: *Petros* (GSN-4074), and Aramaic, Kephias (GSN-2784) (John 1:42), a fragment of a rock.

[this rock] Referring to Christ, the speaker, as in John 2:19; John 6:53,58. This is what? Not petros (GSN-4074), but petra (GSN-4073), an immovable stone, Christ Himself, the only foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11; Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22). Peter was only one of the builders (Ephes. 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5; 1 Peter 5:1-8).

²²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:92). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter] The word *Peter*, in Greek, means a rock. It was given to Simon by Christ when he called him to be a disciple, John 1:42. *Cephas* is a Syriac word, meaning the same as Peter—a rock, or stone. The meaning of this phrase may be thus expressed: "Thou, in saying that I am the Son of God, hast called me by a name expressive of my true character. I, also, have given to thee a name expressive of your character. I have called you *Peter*, a rock, denoting firmness, solidity; and your confession has shown that the name is appropriate. I see that you are worthy of the name, and will be a distinguished support of my religion."²³

[build] Greek: *oikodomeo* (GSN-3618), build, build up, edify; used of building the body of Christ, the church (Ephes. 1:20-23; Ephes. 2:20-22; Ephes. 4:13; Ephes. 5:25-32; 1 Cor. 3:9; 1 Cor. 12:13-31; Col. 1:18,24; 1 Peter 2).

[my church] Only one church, the body of Christ made up of all born-again believers (1 Cor. 12:13; Ephes. 2:20-22; Ephes. 4:13; Acts 15:13-18).

The rock on which Jesus would build his church has been identified as: (1) Jesus himself (his work of salvation by dying for us on the cross); (2) Peter (the first great leader in the church at Jerusalem); (3) the confession of faith that Peter gave and that all subsequent true believers would give. It seems most likely that the rock refers to Peter as the leader of the church (for his function, not necessarily his character). Just as Peter had revealed the true identity of Christ, so Jesus revealed Peter's identity and role.

Later, Peter reminds Christians that they are the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-6). All believers are joined into this church by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, the same faith that Peter expressed here (see also Ephes. 2:20-21). Jesus praised Peter for his confession of faith. It is faith like Peter's that is the foundation of Christ's kingdom.²⁴

Community, Greek *ekklêsia*, which means "called-out ones," and is used in the Septuagint to translate Hebrew *kahal*, "assembly, congregation, community." The usual English translation of *ekklêsia* is "church"; and from it comes the word "ecclesiastical," meaning, "having to do with the church." The *JNT* sometimes uses "Messianic community" or "congregation" to render *ekklêsia*. What is being spoken about is a spiritual community of people based on trust in God and his son the Messiah Yeshua. This can be all people throughout history who so commit themselves, or a group of such people at a particular time and place, such as the Messianic community in Corinth or Jerusalem. The phrase, "the *ekklêsia* that meets in their house" (Ro 16:5), refers to a particular congregation. Unlike "church," *ekklêsia* never refers either to an institution or to a building.²⁵

McGee: Let us look at this verse carefully. On what rock did Jesus build His church? There are those who say that it was built on Simon Peter. Well, obviously it was not,

²³ Barnes' Notes

²⁴ Life Application Notes

²⁵ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 16:18). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

because there is a play upon words here. In the original Greek it is, “Thou art *Petros* [a little piece of rock], and upon this *petra* [bedrock] I will build my church.” There are others who hold that Christ is building His church upon the confession that Simon Peter made. I don’t agree with that at all.

Who is the Rock? The Rock is Christ. The church is built upon Christ. We have Simon Peter’s own explanation of this. In 1 Peter 2:4, referring to Christ, he writes, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” And he remembers Isaiah 28:16, “... Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded” (1 Pet. 2:6). The church is built upon Christ; He is the foundation. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the stone, and He says on this rock He *will build* His church. The church was still future when the Lord made this statement. And please don’t tell me there was a church in the Old Testament because the church did not come into existence until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There could not have been a church until all of these things had taken place. “I will build my church”—this was future.

The “gates of hell” refers to death. The word used for *hell* is the Greek word *hades*, the *sheol* of the Old Testament, which refers to the unseen world and means “death.” The gates of *death* shall not prevail against Christ’s church. One of these days the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. That shout will be like the voice of an archangel and like a trumpet because the *dead* in Christ are to be raised. The gates of *death* shall not prevail against His church.²⁶

Yashanet.com: As mentioned earlier, the word "church" is not in Scripture, and represents a theology based on the concept that God replaced Israel's faith with a new one ("the Church"), and that Torah is no longer the standard to live by. Yeshua is saying that the type of revelation that Peter received, (that comes by humility and submission to Torah), is the essence of what "faith" in Him is all about.

ESV Study Bible: you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. This is one of the most controversial and debated passages in all of Scripture. Roman Catholics have appealed to this passage to defend the idea that Peter was the first pope. The key question concerns Peter's relationship to “this rock.” In Greek, “Peter” is *Petros* (“stone”), which is related to *petra* (“rock”). The other NT name of Peter, Cephas (cf. John 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12), is the Aramaic equivalent: *kepha* ‘ means “rock,” and translates in Greek as *Kēphas*. “This rock” has been variously interpreted as referring to (1) Peter himself; (2) Peter's confession; or (3) Christ and his teachings. For several reasons, the first option is the strongest. Jesus' entire pronouncement is directed toward Peter, and the connecting word “and” (Gk. *kai*) most naturally identifies the rock with Peter himself. But even if “this rock” refers to Peter, the question remains as to what that means. Protestants generally have thought that it refers to Peter *in his role of confessing Jesus as the Messiah*, and that the other disciples would share in that role as they made a similar confession (see Eph. 2:20, where the church is built on all the apostles; cf. Rev. 21:14). Jesus' statement did not mean that Peter would have greater authority than the other

²⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:92). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

apostles (indeed, Paul corrects him publicly in Gal. 2:11–14), nor did it mean that he would be infallible in his teaching (Jesus rebukes him in Matt. 16:23), nor did it imply anything about a special office for Peter or successors to such an office. Certainly in the first half of Acts Peter appears as the spokesman and leader of the Jerusalem church, but he is still “sent” by other apostles to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and he has to give an account of his actions to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1–18). Peter is presented as having only one voice at the Jerusalem Council, and James has the decisive final word (Acts 15:7–21). And, though Peter certainly has a central role in the establishment of the church, he disappears from the Acts narrative after Acts 16. “Church” (Gk. *ekklēsia*) is used only here and in Matt. 18:17 in the Gospels. Jesus points ahead to the time when his disciples, his family of faith (12:48–50), will be called “my church.” Jesus will build his church, and though it is founded on the apostles and the prophets, “Christ Jesus himself [is] the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). Some scholars object that Jesus could not have foreseen the later emergence of the “church” at this time, but the use of Greek *ekklēsia* to refer to God’s “called out” people has substantial background in the Septuagint (e.g., Deut. 9:10; 31:30; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Kings 8:14). Jesus is predicting that he will build a community of believers who follow him. This “called out” community would soon become known as “the church,” a separate community of believers, as described in the book of Acts. **gates of hell** (Gk. *hadēs*, “Hades”; cf. “gates of Sheol” [Isa. 38:10]; “gates of death” [Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18]). “Gates” were essential for a city’s security and power. Hades, or Sheol, is the realm of the dead. Death will not overpower the church.

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.

Were these given only to Peter? No, given to all disciples in Mt 18.

[thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven] Not to Peter only, for the same power is promised all believers (Matthew 17:20; Matthew 18:18; Matthew 21:22; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:22-24; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 10:19; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 5:32; 1 Cor. 12).

[keys of the kingdom of heaven] Keys are a symbol of authority (Isaiah 22:22; Rev. 3:7). Here they mean authority and power to do the works of Christ (Matthew 18:18; Matthew 16:15-20; John 14:12-15). Whatever He bound and loosed is the true idea.

The keys of the kingdom—By the kingdom of heaven, we may consider the true Church, that house of God, to be meant; and by the keys, the power of admitting into that house, or of preventing any improper person from coming in. In other words, the doctrine of salvation, and the full declaration of the way in which God will save sinners; and who they are that shall be finally excluded from heaven; and on what account. When the Jews made a man a doctor of the law, they put into his hand the key of the closet in the temple where the sacred books were kept, and also tablets to write upon; signifying, by this, that

they gave him authority to teach, and to explain the Scriptures to the people.—Martin. This prophetic declaration of our Lord was literally fulfilled to Peter, as he was made the first instrument of opening, i.e. preaching the doctrines of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, Acts 2:41; and to the Gentiles, Acts 10:44-47; 11:1; 15:7.²⁷

[And I will give unto thee] 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 and administration of a house. Hence, in the Bible, a *key* is used as a symbol of superintendence, an emblem of power and authority. See Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 1:18, 3:7. The kingdom of heaven here means, doubtless, the church on earth, Matthew 3:2. When he says, therefore, he will give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he means that he will make him the instrument of opening the door of faith to the world—the first to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. This was done, Acts 2:14-36, 10:1. The "power of the keys" was given to Peter alone *solely for this reason*; the power of "binding and loosing" on earth was given to the other apostles with him. See Matthew 18:18. The only pre-eminence, then, that Peter had, was the honour of first opening the doors of the gospel to the world.²⁸

[bind on earth shall be bound in heaven]

Binding: (Dake)

1. Men with chains (Matthew 12:29; Matthew 14:3; Matthew 22:13; Mark 5:3; Acts 9:2,14,21)
2. Tares in bundles (Matthew 13:30)
3. Men by Satan's power (Luke 13:16)
4. Men with obligations (Acts 20:22)
5. Men in marriage bonds (Romans 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:27,39)
6. Satan and angels in chains (Rev. 9:14; Rev. 20:2)
7. Animals in chains (Matthew 21:2)
8. Men by God's power (Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18)

[loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven]

Loosing (Dake)

1. Infirmities (Luke 13:12-16; Mark 7:35)
2. Satan and angels from chains (Rev. 9:14; Rev. 20:3,7)
3. Men from chains and prison (Acts 16:26; Acts 22:30; Acts 24:26)
4. Men from sin (Rev. 1:5)
5. Men from bonds of death (Acts 2:24)
6. Marriage bonds (1 Cor. 7:27)
7. Satanic powers (1 John 3:8)
8. Animals (Mark 11:2-4)
9. Earth from bondage and the curse (2 Peter 3:10-13; Romans 8:21)
10. Men by God's power (Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18).

²⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²⁸ Barnes' Notes

One can see from these examples of binding and loosing that it means more than declaring something lawful or unlawful by preaching. It also means to confirm the truth by power as Christ and the apostles did. See Matthew 18:18, refs.

[Whatsoever thou shalt bind] 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*. Thus they said about gathering wood on the sabbath day. "The school of Shammei binds it"-i, e. forbids it; "the school of Hillel looses it"-i. e. allows it. When Jesus gave this power to the apostles, he meant that whatsoever they *forbid* 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*. They were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church,

- (1.) by the teaching of Christ, and
- (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 forbid circumcision and the eating of things offered to idols, and strangled, and blood, Acts 15:20. They founded the church, and ordained its rites, as of Divine authority.²⁹

McGee: What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Were they given only to Simon Peter? No, Jesus gives them to those who make the same confession made by Peter, those who know Christ as Savior. If you are a child of God, you have the keys as well as any person has the keys. The keys were the badge of authority of the office of the scribes who interpreted the Scriptures to the people (see Neh. 8:2–8). Every Christian today has the Scriptures and, therefore, the keys. If we withhold the Word, we "bind on earth"; if we give the Word, we "loose on earth." No man or individual church has the keys—to the exclusion of all other believers. We have a responsibility today to give out the gospel because it is the only thing that can save people. This is a tremendous revelation. Who is sufficient for these things? You and I have a responsibility that is awesome indeed!³⁰

Yashanet.com: The important reference here is to the Kingdom, which as we mentioned in the notes to chapter 13, is the main message of Scripture. This is another verse that has been misused through history, (mostly by Catholicism) though not due to the reasons cited by its critics (Protestantism).

As the text shows, the concept of "keys" is directly tied to "binding and loosing." The issue at hand (as with all of the text of the "New Testament") must be understood within the context of Judaism.

Yeshua is passing along a degree of authority to his immediate disciples regarding matters of *halakha*, which is best translated as "the way we walk out our faith." (Hence Catholicism has the basic concept correct, but neglects Torah as the final authority.)

²⁹ Barnes' Notes

³⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:93). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Scripture does not give us all the minute details of how we are to carry out all of God's commandments. Decisions have to be made as to how Torah is applied both by individuals and communities, as circumstances do change in people's lives and through the course of history.

Torah is eternal and resolutions must be made in accordance with it. The idea of a "governing authority" that makes rulings for the body of believers is biblical. We can see this with the 70 elders of Moses' time and the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. As mentioned in the last chapter, by giving this authority to His disciples, Yeshua is allowing for "traditions" to be established. He had no problem with traditions based in Torah.

Matthew 16:20

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

Why to keep a secret? His time had not yet come (Dan 9:25).

[Then charged] That is, he then commanded them. Mark Mark 8:30 and Luke Luke 9:21 (Greek) that he *strictly* or *severely* charged them. He laid emphasis on it, as a matter of much importance. The reason of this seems to be that his time had not fully come; he was not willing to rouse the Jewish malice, and to endanger his life, by having it proclaimed that he was the Messiah. The word Jesus is wanting in many manuscripts, and should probably be omitted. "Then he charged them strictly to tell no man that he was the Christ or Messiah."

Jesus warned the disciples not to publicize Peter's confession because they did not yet fully understand the kind of Messiah he had come to be—not a military commander but a suffering servant. They needed to come to a full understanding of Jesus and their mission as disciples before they could proclaim it to others in a way that would not cause a rebellion. They would have a difficult time understanding what Jesus came to do until his earthly mission was complete.

Spurgeon: As yet they were to be silent as to our Lord's highest claims, for fear the people should in rash zeal set him up as king by force of arms. It was dangerous to tell such an ill-instructed multitude what they would be sure to misunderstand and misuse. The command to tell no man must have sounded very strangely in the disciples' ears. It was no business of theirs to discover the reason of their Lord's orders; it was enough for them to do as he bade them. We are under no such embargo, and therefore we will tell to all that our Lord is the Savior, the Anointed of God, or, as he has himself worded it, "Jesus the Christ."

Matthew 16:21

From that time forth began Jesus to show 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.

This begins the third period of His ministry—the rejection of the Messiah—which is announced four times from here on (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22; Matthew 20:17,28). In each announcement a new feature is added.

[From that time forth began Jesus] Before this time our Lord had only spoken of his death in a vague and obscure manner, see Matthew 12:40, because he would not afflict his disciples with this matter sooner than necessity required; but now, as the time of his crucifixion drew nigh, he spoke of his sufferings and death in the most express and clear terms. Three sorts of persons, our Lord intimates, should be the cause of his death and passion: the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes. Pious Quesnel takes occasion to observe from this, that Christ is generally persecuted by these three descriptions of men: rich men, who have their portion in this life; ambitious and covetous ecclesiastics, who seek their portion in this life; and conceited scholars, who set up their wisdom against the wisdom of God, being more intent on criticising words than in providing for the salvation of their souls. The spirit of Christianity always enables a man to bear the ills of life with patience; to receive death with joy; and to expect, by faith, the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come.³¹

[From that time forth] This was the first intimation that he gave that he was to die in this cruel manner. He had taken much pains to convince them that he was the Messiah; he saw by the confession of Peter that *they* were convinced; and he *then* began to prepare their minds for the awful event which was before him. Had he declared this when he first called them, they would never have followed him. Their minds were not prepared for it. They expected a temporal, triumphant prince, as the Messiah. He *first*, therefore, convinced them that *he* was the Christ; and then, with great prudence, began to correct their apprehensions of the proper character of the Messiah.³²

The phrase “From that time on” marks a turning point. In Matthew 4:17 it signaled Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom of heaven. Here it points to his new emphasis on his death and resurrection. The disciples still didn’t grasp Jesus’ true purpose because of their preconceived notions about what the Messiah should be. This is the first of three times that Jesus predicted his death (see Matthew 17:22-23; Matthew 20:18 for others).

McGee: For the first time the Lord Jesus announces to His disciples His death and resurrection. The time was approximately six months before He was actually crucified. Why did He wait so long to make such an important announcement? Obviously, His disciples were not prepared for it, even at this time, judging from their reaction. He repeated five times the fact that He was going to Jerusalem to die (Matt. 17:12; 17:22–23;

³¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³² Barnes’ Notes

20:18–19; 20:28). In spite of this intensive instruction, the disciples failed to grasp the significance of it all until after His resurrection.

This is what the Lord Jesus did for you and me. This is the gospel: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and raised again. You must know who He is. You must know what He did for you. If you know these two things, and by faith believe and receive them, you are saved. This had never been revealed before except to Nicodemus at the beginning of our Lord's ministry in John 3:1–16.³³

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.

[took him, and began to rebuke him] Took Him aside or called Him to order by a rebuke.

[Then Peter took him] This may mean, either to interrupt him, or to take him aside, or *to take him by the hand*, as a friend. This latter is probably the true meaning. Peter was strongly attached to him. He could not bear to think of his death. He expected, moreover, that he would be the triumphant Messiah. He could not hear, therefore, that his death was so near. In his ardour, and confidence, and strong attachment, he seized him by the hand as a friend, and said, "Be it *far* from thee." This phrase might have been translated, "God be merciful to thee; this shall not be unto thee." It expressed Peter's strong desire that it *might* not be. The word *rebuke* here means to *admonish*, or *earnestly to entreat*, as in Luke 17:3. It does not mean that Peter assumed *authority* over Christ; but that he *earnestly expressed his wish that it might not be so*. Even this was improper. He should have been submissive, and not have interfered.³⁴

Peter, Jesus' friend and devoted follower who had just eloquently proclaimed Jesus' true identity, sought to protect him from the suffering he prophesied. But if Jesus hadn't suffered and died, Peter (and we) would have died in his sins. Great temptations can come from those who love us and seek to protect us. Be cautious of advice from a friend who says, "Surely God doesn't want you to face this." Often our most difficult temptations come from those who are only trying to protect us from discomfort.

In essence Peter said, "You are the Messiah; You are the Son of God. You must not, You *cannot* go to the cross!" The cross was not in the thinking of the apostles at all, as you can see.

Yeshua teaches his *talmidim* what must happen to him as Messiah and is completely misunderstood, both here and on two later occasions (17:22–23, 20:17–19&N), so different is his scenario from that popularly expected. Even at the Last Supper (Yn 14:28)

³³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:93). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³⁴Barnes' Notes

and after his resurrection (Ac 1:6–7) they did not comprehend God’s plan for the Messiah.³⁵

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.

[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] An example of the law of double reference. In such cases a human being is addressed, but an invisible person is also referred to. Part of what is said applies to each and this is determined by what is applicable to either. Other examples of this law are Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 14:4-27; Ezekiel 28:11-19.

The Law of Double Reference

Here we have the first occurrence of the law of double reference (cp. Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Matthew 16:22-23; Mark 5:7-16; Luke 4:33-35,41). In these and many other passages a visible creature is addressed, but certain statements also refer to an invisible person using the visible creature as a tool. Thus, two persons are involved in the same passage. The principle of interpretation in such passages is to associate only such statements with each individual as could refer to him. The statements of Genesis 3:14 could apply only to the serpent and not to Satan. The first part of Genesis 3:15 could apply to both the seed of the serpent and Satan. The last part of Genesis 3:15 could only refer to Satan and Christ. A simple example of this law is the case of Christ addressing Peter as Satan. When Peter declared that he would never permit anyone to crucify his Lord on the cross, Christ rebuked him saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan" (Matthew 16:22-23). Both Satan and Peter were addressed in the same statement, and both were involved in the rebuke. Peter, for the moment, was unknowingly being used as a tool of Satan in an effort to keep Christ from going to the cross. Satan was the primary one addressed, and so it is in Genesis 3:15. A literal serpent is addressed, but the primary reference is to Satan. We have other examples in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:11-17 where the kings of Babylon and Tyre are addressed, but the statements mainly apply to Satan—the invisible king of Babylon and Tyre. There are some statements in these passages which could not possibly refer to an earthly man.³⁶

Get thee behind me, Satan—Υπαγε οπισω μου σατανα. Get behind me, thou adversary. This is the proper translation of the Hebrew word שָׂטָן *Satan*, from which the Greek word is taken. Our blessed Lord certainly never designed that men should believe he called Peter, DEVIL, because he, through erring affection, had wished him to avoid that death which he predicted to himself. This translation, which is literal, takes away that harshness which before appeared in our Lord’s words.³⁷

³⁵ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 16:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

³⁶ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

³⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

[Get thee behind me, Satan] The word Satan means, literally, an adversary, or one that opposes us in the accomplishment of our designs. It is applied to the devil commonly, as the *opposer* or *adversary* of man. But there is no evidence that the Lord Jesus meant to apply this term to Peter, as signifying that he was Satan or the devil, or that he used the term in anger. He may have used it in the *general* sense which the word bore, as an adversary or opposer; and the meaning may be, that such sentiments as Peter expressed then were *opposed* to him and his plans. His interference was improper. His views and feelings stood in the way of the accomplishment of the Saviour's designs. There was, undoubtedly, a *rebuke* in this language; for the conduct of Peter was improper; but the idea which is commonly attached to it, and which, perhaps, our translation conveys, implies a more severe and harsh rebuke than the Saviour intended, and than the language which he used would express.³⁸

Thou art an offense unto me (Clarke) Σκανδαλον μου ει—Thou art a stumbling-block in my way, to impede me in the accomplishment of the great design.

Thou savourest not (Clarke) That is, dost not relish, ου φρονεις, or, thou dost not understand or discern the things of God—thou art wholly taken up with the vain thought that my kingdom is of this world. He who opposes the doctrine of the atonement is an adversary and offense to Christ, though he be as sincere in his profession as Peter himself was. Let us beware of false friendships. Carnal relatives, when listened to, may prove the ruin of those whom, through their mistaken tenderness, they wish to save. When a man is intent on saving his own soul, his adversaries are often those of his own household.

In his desert temptations, Jesus heard the message that he could achieve greatness without dying (Matthew 4:6). Here he heard the same message from Peter. Peter had just recognized Jesus as Messiah; here, however, he forsook God's perspective and evaluated the situation from a human one. Satan is always trying to get us to leave God out of the picture. Jesus rebuked Peter for this attitude.

McGee: It is satanic for anyone to deny the facts of the gospel which are that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead. It is satanic when a man in the pulpit will deny these truths. The substitutionary death of Christ is the only thing that can save us, my friend. Later on Peter wrote this: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Pet. 2:24). My, what a transformation had taken place in the mind of Peter!

Our Lord said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Imagine this: Here is Peter by whom the Spirit of God could say that Jesus was the Son of God, and yet he could in the next moment let Satan deceive him!³⁹

³⁸ Barnes' Notes

³⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:93). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yashanet.com: Peter allowed himself to stray away from the light of God's revelation, and fell back to his own understanding (i.e., Proverbs 3:5). God's ways are not our ways, and in this case Yeshua makes it clear that regarding understanding the mystical revelations of the Kingdom, there are but two sides to the story - God's and Satan's

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.

Not a premise for salvation! That is what comes out of our salvation.

Will come after me (Clarke) i.e. to be my disciple. This discourse was intended to show Peter and the rest of the disciples the nature of his kingdom; and that the honor that cometh from the world was not to be expected by those who followed Christ.

The principles of the Christian life are:

- First. To have a sincere desire to belong to Christ—If any man be WILLING to be my disciple, etc.
- Secondly. To renounce self-dependence, and selfish pursuits—Let him deny HIMSELF.
- Thirdly. To embrace the condition which God has appointed, and bear the troubles and difficulties he may meet with in walking the Christian road—Let him take up HIS CROSS.
- Fourthly. To imitate Jesus, and do and suffer all in his spirit—Let him FOLLOW ME.

When Jesus used this picture of his followers taking up their crosses to follow him, the disciples knew what he meant. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution, and condemned criminals had to carry their crosses through the streets to the execution site. Following Jesus, therefore, meant a true commitment, the risk of death, and no turning back (see Matthew 10:39).

McGee: Many people interpret this verse, “Let him deny himself ice cream” or “Let him deny himself some luxury down here.” What this verse says is “Let him deny *himself!*” You already know that the hardest person in the world to deny is yourself. To deny myself dessert is hard enough, but to deny *myself* is difficult indeed. To deny myself is to put self out of the picture and to put Christ in the place of self.

“And take up his cross, and follow me.” We are not to take up Christ’s cross but our own cross. There is a cross for you and a cross for me—that is, if we are going to *follow Him*.⁴⁰

⁴⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:93). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 16:25

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

The possibility of losing their lives was very real for the disciples as well as for Jesus. Real discipleship implies real commitment—pledging our whole existence to his service. If we try to save our physical life from death, pain, or discomfort, we may risk losing our true eternal life. If we protect ourselves from pain, we begin to die spiritually and emotionally. Our lives turn inward, and we lose our intended purpose. When we give our lives in service to Christ, however, we discover the real purpose of living.

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?

[For what is a man profited] . To gain the whole world means to possess it as our own—all its riches, honours, and pleasures. *To lose his own soul* means to be cast away, to be shut out from heaven, to be sent to hell. Two things are implied by Christ in these questions:

1. That they who are striving to gain the world, and are unwilling to give it up for the sake of religion, will lose their souls; and
2. That if the soul is lost, nothing can be given in exchange for it, or it can never after be saved. There is no redemption in hell.

When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life were all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. How we live this brief span, however, determines our eternal state. What we accumulate on earth has no value in purchasing eternal life. Even the highest social or civic honors cannot earn us entrance into heaven. Evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective, and you will find your values and decisions changing.

Spurgeon: If he loses his real life, how can he profit, even if the world be his? The true gain or loss is a gain or loss of life. All external things are trifles compared with that life. Even now, "What is a man profited?" He has no real life in Christ, and what is all else that he may possess? What but a painted pageantry with which he is amusing his soul upon the brink of hell? As to the world to come, there is no question. To lose eternal life is overwhelming loss indeed.

Nothing can be compared with eternal life. The soul's value cannot be estimated by ordinary reckonings. Worlds on worlds were a poor price. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" Barter is out of the question. His soul is so a man's sole inheritance that if he has lost it he has lost all.

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.

[glory of his Father] Sufferings are generally mentioned preceding the glory (Matthew 16:21-27; Romans 8:18; Col. 3:4; 1 Peter 1:11). Christ will come the next time in glory, not in sufferings (Daniel 7:13-14; Zech. 14; Matthew 24:29-31; Matthew 25:31-46; Rev. 19:11-21).

[then he shall reward every man according to his works] This refers to the judgment of the nations at the second coming (Matthew 25:31-46). The righteous dead will be judged before this (1 Cor. 3:11-15; Romans 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10) and the wicked 1,000 years after this (Rev. 20).

[works] According to his works, not according to the age in which he lived.

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father—This seems to refer to Daniel 7:13, 14. “Behold, one like the Son of man came—to the ancient of Days—and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve him.” This was the glorious Mediatorial kingdom which Jesus Christ was now about to set up, by the destruction of the Jewish nation and polity, and the diffusion of his Gospel through the whole world. If the words be taken in this sense, the angels or messengers may signify the apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry, preaching the Gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is very likely that the words do not apply to the final judgment, to which they are generally referred; but to the wonderful display of God’s grace and power after the day of pentecost.⁴¹

[reward] The word *reward* means recompense, or do justice to. He will deal with them according to their character. The righteous he will reward in heaven, with glory and happiness. The wicked he will send to hell, as a *reward* or recompense for their evil works. This fact, *that he will come to judgment*, he gives as a reason why we should be willing to deny ourselves and follow him. Even though now it should be attended with contempt and suffering, yet *then* he will *reward* his followers for all their shame and sorrows, and receive them to his kingdom. He adds, Mark 8:38, that if we are ashamed of him here, he will be ashamed of us there. That is, if we reject and disown him here, he will reject and disown us there.⁴²

Jesus Christ has been given the authority to judge all the earth (Romans 14:9-11; Phil. 2:9-11). Although his judgment is already working in our lives, there is a future, final judgment when Christ returns (Matthew 25:31-46) and everyone’s life is reviewed and evaluated. This will not be confined to unbelievers; Christians too will face a judgment. Their eternal destiny is secure, but Jesus will look at how they handled gifts, opportunities, and responsibilities in order to determine their heavenly rewards. At the time of judgment, God will deliver the righteous and condemn the wicked. We should not

⁴¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

⁴² Barnes’ Notes

judge others' salvation; that is God's work. We can however judge their fruit, we should be fruit inspectors.

Spurgeon: There will come a day when Christ, from the judgment-seat, will make it appear who was wise in his way of life; for then shall the reward or the punishment throw its light on the past conduct of men. He who was himself despised shall be the Rewarder of those who laid down their lives for the sake of his cause. In that day the crucified "Son of man shall come in glory": that glory will be seen to be "the glory of his Father"; that divine glory will be illustrated by hosts of attendant angels. In all the pomp of heaven he shall distribute the rewards of the last assize. The righteous shall through divine grace have their works taken as evidence of their love to God; and the wicked shall with justice have their doom appointed according to their works, because those works will be the evidence that they had not the faith which produces good works.

Lord, by thy good Spirit, keep me ever in mind of that great day of days, which will make eternity bright with immeasurable bliss, or dark with unutterable woe! May I look at everything in the blaze of light which surrounds thy judgment-seat!

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.

This verse belongs with chapter 17 because the account of the transfiguration of Jesus explains what He meant when He made this statement.

Not saved by works. Here He is talking to His disciples, instructing them to make their salvation fruitful. Some teach that this means that the Kingdom of God would come during the disciples' lifetime. It didn't. *This verse refers to Chapter 17.*

[in his kingdom] The answer is before us in Matthew 17! Peter, James and John, who were standing there, are going to have a very unique experience (Cf. Lk 9:27).

[some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom] Referring to disciples seeing Him transfigured, as He will be in the kingdom when it is set up at the second coming Matthew 17:1-8; 2 Peter 1:16-18.

[till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom]

Four "Till's" of Great Events

1. Till the second coming (Matthew 10:23)
2. Till the transfiguration (Matthew 16:28)
3. Till Israel conversion (Matthew 23:39)
4. Till all signs of Christ's second coming are fulfilled (Matthew 24:34)

Because all the disciples died *before* Christ's return, many believe that Jesus' words were fulfilled at the transfiguration when Peter, James, and John saw his glory (Matthew 17:1-3). Others say this statement refers to Pentecost (Acts 2) and the beginning of Christ's

church. In either case, certain disciples were eyewitnesses to the power and glory of Christ's kingdom.

Yashanet.com: This is another deeply mystical verse, as it is obvious that all those present have since died, and Yeshua has not yet come into His kingdom. Here is another example of how one must go beyond the literal text (the p'shat) and look into the mystical (sod) level to understand what is being said. Yeshua's statement ties into what was said in the previous verses in this chapter. Those who completely surrender themselves to God and seek to be conformed to His image, through Torah and prayer, can (to a degree) experience the Kingdom of God in the present time.

We know that Peter, James, and John received a direct revelation of a "transfigured" Yeshua (indicative of the Kingdom) in Matthew 17. John was given a vision of the coming of Yeshua and subsequent Kingdom (in the book of Revelation).

ESV Study Bible: Some of the Twelve who were standing there with Jesus in Caesarea Philippi would live to see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. This predicted event has been variously interpreted as referring to: (1) Jesus' transfiguration (17:1–8); (2) his resurrection; (3) the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost; (4) the spread of the kingdom through the preaching of the early church; (5) the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in a.d. 70; or (6) the second coming and final establishment of the kingdom. The immediate context seems to indicate the first view, the transfiguration, which immediately follows (see also Mark 9:2–10; Luke 9:28–36). There, "some" of Jesus' disciples "saw" what Jesus will be like when he comes in the power of his kingdom. This interpretation is also supported by 2 Pet. 1:16–18, where Peter equates Jesus' "glory" with his transfiguration, of which Peter was an eyewitness. At the same time, interpretations (2), (3), and (4) are also quite possible, for they are all instances where Jesus "came" in the powerful advance of his kingdom, which was partially but not yet fully realized. Some interpreters think that Jesus is more generally speaking of many or all of the events in views (2) through (4). View (5) is less persuasive because the judgment on Jerusalem does not reflect the positive growth of the kingdom. View (6) is unacceptable, for it would imply that Jesus was mistaken about the timing of his return.

Spurgeon: So near was that reign which would repay the losses of the saints for Christ's sake, that before certain of them were dead the Lord would have held a rehearsal of it in his judgment of Israel, by the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and would have set up his kingdom, of which the judgment-seat is an index and an instrument. We have here a difficult passage, and this appears to be the simplest way of reading it in its connection. Our Lord seems to say, "Through suffering and death I pass to a throne; and by that fact it shall be seen that loss and death are often the way to true gain and real life. That kingdom of mine is not far away and unreal: some of you will see me in the exercise of my royal power before you die.

Yet it has been thought that it means that some would never really taste of death, or know the fullness of its terrible meaning, till the judgment day. This is true, but it can scarcely be the teaching in this place.

CHART: PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

The Pharisees and Sadducees were the two major religious groups in Israel at the time of Christ. The Pharisees were more religiously minded, while the Sadducees were more politically minded. Although the groups disliked and distrusted each other, they became allies in their common hatred for Jesus.

Positive Characteristics

PHARISEES

- Were committed to obeying all of God's commands
- Were admired by the common people for their apparent piety
- Believed in a bodily resurrection and eternal life
- Believed in angels and demons

SADDUCEES

- Believed strongly in the Mosaic law and in Levitical purity
- Were more practically minded than the Pharisees

Negative Characteristics

PHARISEES

- Behaved as though their own religious rules were just as important as God's rules for living
- Their piety was often hypocritical and their efforts often forced others to try to live up to standards they themselves could not live up to
- Believed that salvation came from perfect obedience to the law and was not based on forgiveness of sins
- Became so obsessed with obeying their legal interpretations in every detail that they completely ignored God's message of mercy and grace
- Were more concerned with appearing to be good than obeying God

SADDUCEES

- Relied on logic while placing little importance on faith
- Did not believe all the Old Testament was God's Word
- Did not believe in a

bodily resurrection or
eternal life

- Did not believe in
angels or demons
- Were often willing to
compromise their values
with the Romans and
others in order to
maintain their status and
influential positions