

## **THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 10/25-26/2021 *Matthew Chapter 16***

**PLEASE NOTE WE WILL CONTINUE TO NEED A PASSCODE TO JOIN THE STUDY!**

**MONDAY 7 PM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

**THE MONDAY NIGHT STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN CLASSROOM HS107, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!**

**MEETING ID# - 87858644763 Passcode: 087484**

Join Zoom Meeting -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87858644763?pwd=b25tUzhkaTE0UzIrSnpkVmZEWGJVQT09>

**Meeting ID: 878 5864 4763 - Passcode: 087484**

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,87858644763# US (San Jose) +13462487799,,87858644763# US (Houston)

**Dial by your location**

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose); +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston); +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma); +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C); +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago); +1 929 436 2866 US (New York);

**Meeting ID: 878 5864 4763**

**Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87858644763>**

**TUESDAY 7 AM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada).**

**THE TUESDAY MORNING STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN THE FAMILY ROOM, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!**

**MEETING ID# - 85309150746 - Passcode: 715340**

Join Zoom Meeting -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85309150746?pwd=Tk5oVjN0TzdpWjE3UC9Oam05a21uQT09>

**Meeting ID: 853 0915 0746 - Passcode: 715340**

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,85309150746# US (San Jose) +12532158782,,85309150746# US (Tacoma)

**Dial by your location**

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose); +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma); +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston); +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C); +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago); +1 929 436 2866 US (New York);

**Meeting ID: 853 0915 0746**

**Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85309150746>**

Phil Twente [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) cell 714 425 9221 For Audio & notes from previous studies - [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com)

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The Gospel According to Matthew! *Matthew Chapter 16***

**The Pharisees and Sadducees Seek a Sign – (vs. 1-4); The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees – (vs. 5-20); Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection – (vs. 21-23); Take Up the Cross and Follow Him – (vs. 24-27)**

#### **The Pharisees and Sadducees Demand Signs**

***Mat 16:1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.***

- **The Pharisees believed that it was possible for Satanic powers to show signs on the earth** because you are dealing in Satan's realm here on the earth. But they believe that a sign from heaven could only be wrought by God. Now He had just fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. He had

fed the 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish, and you say, what do you mean asking for a sign?

Notice they were just testing Him.

**Mat 16:2** *He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red';*

**Mat 16:3** *and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.*

- **They could tell the weather;** evening time, red sky means good day tomorrow. In the morning, red sky means going to have a storm.
- **Hypocrites! Now they came to judge Him.** They ended up being judged. You *hypocrites!*
- **You can discern the face of the sky; but you cannot discern the signs of the times?** There were plenty of signs. There was plenty of evidence. The timing was right for the Messiah. It had been now just about 483 years from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The time for the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, is here.

**Mat 16:4** *A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.*

- **Thus, He not only calls them hypocrites.** He calls them *a wicked and adulterous generation!* That is all He had to say to them. Earlier in (**Mat 12:40**) *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* In a sense, Jesus was saying, You are looking for a sign from heaven, but the only sign you are going to get is from hell. The Son of Man is going to rise out of hell (Hades)! That resurrection of Jesus Christ will constitute the greatest sign of all! His death and resurrection! He is going to come out of the grave, and that coming out of the grave will be the sign! That is the one sign Jesus promised. (**Joh 2:19**) *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* Jesus departed. He had no more to say to them.
- **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, the correct one! They believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God. Messiahship and Deity!

**The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

**Mat 16:5** *Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.*

**Mat 16:6** *Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed (keep taking heed) and beware (do this and keep doing this) of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

- **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.

**Mat 16:7** *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."*

- **Jesus was always saying things they did not understand.** This is one of those cases where Jesus said, "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees.*" They said, What does He mean by that? What's He talking about? Someone said, Did you bring the bread? No, didn't you? No. That is it. He is getting after us.

**Mat 16:8** *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

- **Now remember last week He was saying to that woman, O woman, great is your faith!** Now to His disciples, He says, *O you of little faith!*

**Mat 16:9** *Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets (kophinos) you took up?*

**Mat 16:10** *Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets (spuris) you took up?*

**Mat 16:11** *How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven (a little bit of ritualism, which corrupts) of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

- **In Luke, Jesus said, (Luk 12:1c) "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is**

**hypocrisy.** These men were great in putting on an outward religious show. Jesus once described them as, outside, they were like whitewashed sepulchers. They look very whitewashed, clean, and taken care of. But, He said, inside you are full of dead men's bones. It was all outward, there was nothing really within their hearts. Going back to the Sermon on the Mount in (*Mat 5:21-22a*) *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'* [22] *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.* He was showing that their interpretation of the law was all outward, and yet God was interested in what was going on in the heart.

- **Last week, Jesus was saying, (*Mat 15:11, 18*)** *Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. [18] But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.* When Jesus is saying, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," He was warning them against this hypocrisy. It corrupts good doctrine and will lead you away from the teaching of the Scriptures.
- **One of the first problems that arose in the early church was that of hypocrisy.** When Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions and brought only a part of the price and laid it at the apostles' feet. His sin was not holding back a part of the money! His sin was *hypocrisy!* He was pretending to give everything, when he was holding back. There was swift judgment from God against that sin.

***Mat 16:12* Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine (the teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

- **Hypocrisy has probably done more damage to the church through its history than any other sin!** Jesus is warning them, be careful of this business of hypocrisy. That of putting on an act. Putting on a pretense. Pretending to be very religious, very holy, and very righteous, when inside it is not there! Beware of *hypocrisy* and the practices of *hypocrisy!* How aware am I of this warning? How does my life reflect that warning?

***\*Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ***

***Mat 16:13* When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"**

- **Now Jesus has left the area of the Galilee at this point,** coming with His disciples up into what is called the coast of Caesarea Philippi. This is the area that was ruled by Philip, another of Herod's sons.
- **Caesarea Philippi was purely Gentile country.** Philip had built a great temple unto Caesar and name the city after him. But this was also the center of Baal worship, with many temples in that area. Also, there was the worship of the god, Pan. There, one of three sources, is where the waters come out from the springs, forming the Jordan river. Just above these springs, there is a cave in the sight of this great rock, which was the center of the worship to the god, Pan. Thus, the name of it was called "Panos." Because the Arabs cannot pronounce "p's," but they say "Baniyas," to the present day, that area is called "Baniyas," because of the worship of the god, Pan by the Greeks. You have there an amalgamation of worship, including, Baal; the worship of the Caesar. Later, they built another temple to Nero, which is in the center of this area of Pagan worship.
- **The Lord Jesus is in the north of Israel.** 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, which 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.
- **"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"** Note our Lord's first question. 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 this earth. We will hear the viewpoint of the multitudes, the crowds that followed Him, which if this question were asked today, we would probably get similar answers because folk are still confused about Him. This shapes the context for His second question.



**Mat 16:14** So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

- **Some say that you are John the Baptist.** This is what Herod thought when he heard of Jesus, he thought that maybe He was John the Baptist come back from the dead.
- **Some say, Elijah.** Because of the prophecy of Malachi, they were expecting Elijah to come as a forerunner to the Messiah. Malachi promised that Elijah would come and turn the hearts of the children to their fathers before the coming of that great, notable day of the Lord. So maybe You are the forerunner of the Messiah. Some were thinking that.
- **Others said, Jeremiah.** In one of the books of the apocrypha, the second Maccabees, there is the idea, a traditional legend, that when the Babylonians were coming to destroy Israel, that Jeremiah took the Ark of the Covenant and hid it in a cave over in the area of Mount Nebo. In second Maccabees, it tells about how that Jeremiah was going to come and retrieve the Ark of the Covenant from the cave and bring it to Jerusalem before the Messiah came. Again, a forerunner of the Messiah. So, others are saying You are Jeremiah.

**Mat 16:15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

- **The time has come for the disciples to make a decision and render a confession,** not just what others thought about Jesus, but what they believed about Him. Simon Peter was evidently the spokesman for the group. He said, "You are 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!
- **One of the most important questions for every believer, which is placed before all who hear of Jesus.** It really is we, not Jesus, who are being judged by our answer! We live out our answer to this question every day by our witness, in what we believe and do. If we really know Jesus is who He says He is, it will affect the way that we live. What does my life reflect right now, even though being surrounded by so many worldly influences?

**Mat 16:16** Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- **The word "Christ" is also "Messiah," the word is "the Anointed One."** Peter ascribes two things to Him – Messiahship and Deity! You are the Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah of Israel. And You are the Son of the living God! A king in taking office was always anointed with oil. You remember that Samuel came down to the house of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king. Finally, when David was brought in, the Lord said that is the one! Samuel took the cruse of oil and poured it over David's head. That was the sign, the anointing was the sign of the kingship. Thus, the Messiah was known as the Anointed One, that is, the anointing to be king would be upon Him. So, Peter said, You are the Anointed One, the Messiah, *the Christ, the Son of the living God!* This is a great passage to sit alone with the Lord and spend time with Him, in your answer to His question!

**Mat 16:17** Jesus answered and said to him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah** (Peter's birth name), **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

- **Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.** Peter, you have had a spiritual revelation, not by human reasoning. "*Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, but my Father which is in heaven.*" No man knows the Son, Jesus said, except him to whom the Father reveals. I am certain that Peter, when he said that, did not realize that it was a spiritual revelation.
- **Sometimes, we make a mistake in thinking that God,** when He communicates to us, only communicates in some kind of spectacular, supernatural way. There has to be some kind of vibrations and sensations and you go into some kind of a trance. Your eyes are rolled back and suddenly you hear these voices that seem to have an echoing effect and all. Gooood is speaaaaaaking, and you have that some kind of a far-out kind of experience!
- **But when Elijah heard the Lord, it was the still, small voice!** (1Ki 19:12) *and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.* Just that inner prompting. Many times, we have been inspired by the Spirit without even recognizing it, without realizing it, because it did not come in some kind of a spooky way. But God works in very natural ways to reveal His purposes and His plan and His heart unto men. When Jesus said this was a revelation, I am sure that Peter thought, Aha, you hear that fellows? I have spiritual revelations!
- **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 has not revealed it to you. You didn't learn it by being with Me, but by the Holy Spirit. We can know Him just as well today, as the disciples, because the Spirit of God, through His grace, has to make Him real to you.

**Mat 16:18** *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

- **The word "Peter" means "rock, a little stone."** I say to you that you are Peter, the Greek root word is "*pet.*" But upon this rock I will build my church. "Cephas" also is "rock," that's Aramaic; but "Peter" is the Greek for "rock." There are two words here in Greek. I say unto you that you are "Petros" (masculine gender), a little stone. And upon this "petra" (feminine gender), "great rock," I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- **Jesus is not saying, Peter, you are the rock upon which the church (body of Christ) is going to be built.** That is an interpretation that has been made. That that Peter is the rock upon which the church was built, that God gave to Peter the keys to the kingdom. And that he went to Rome and established the church, passing down in apostolic succession the keys to the kingdom so that the Pope today possesses the keys to the kingdom and can open to men and close to men the kingdom of God because he has this apostolic succession from Peter as the one who was given the keys. In the Vatican these great keys, signs, and all, which "We are the ones that can open and close to men." But two Greek words, "Petros," you are little stone; but upon this "petra" I will build my church. What is the "*petra*" or the rock upon which the church is built?
- **Peter and Paul certainly knew that the church is built on Jesus Christ.** Peter said, (*1Pe 2:7*) *Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE."* Paul said, (*1Co 3:11*) *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* (*Eph 2:20*) *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*
- **The confession of Peter that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That is the foundation of the church.** The fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, that is what the church is built on. If Peter were the rock upon which the church was built, then the trouble is in trouble in a hurry because before we get to the end of the chapter, Jesus is going to say to Peter, "*Get behind Me, Satan. You offend Me!*"
- **Jesus said, I will build My church.** I like that. Many pastors think of their flock as their own church and they are trying to build His church. That will only lead to frustration and failure. It is a glorious day when it is recognized that Jesus said He would build His church. He did not call any man to build His church. Pastors are only called as Jesus called Peter to feed the flock of God. The building of the church is His responsibility!
- **The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** What was meant by that? A couple of possibilities. First, the gates of hell did not prevail against Jesus! He broke the gates of hell. He was buried, but yet it was not possible that He could be held by death. The gates of hell could not prevail against Him! He rose from the dead.
- **But, primarily, the Lord is declaring that He was going to build His church and the powers of hell could not prevail against the church.** The powers of hell will not prevail upon the earth until the church is taken out of the way. Then, shall that son of perdition be revealed. When in the book of Revelation and in the book of Daniel, the antichrist makes war against the saints and prevails against them, and overcomes them, it precludes them being the church because the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The strategies of the dark side will not prevail against the church!



**Mat 16:19** *And I will give you (singular) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you (plural – to every believer) loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

- **Keys of the kingdom of heaven.** When Jesus says, *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,* He means that He will make Peter the instrument of opening the door of faith by declaring the truth

that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God and I believe that. Peter will do that to the world, the first to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. It is interesting that Peter is the one that opened the door to the Jews to the message of the Gospel. He was the one that preached the Gospel to them on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 were converted. It was also Peter that opened the doors to the Gentiles when he went to the house of Cornelius at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

- ***Whatever you bind on earth will be*** (will already have been) ***bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be*** (will already have been) ***loosed in heaven.***" The Lord has given to His church tremendous powers; the powers to bind the forces of darkness, the power to loose (release) the things of the Spirit. As Christians, we should be binding the forces of darkness and the powers of darkness through prayer. Oftentimes we are letting things go by that we should not let go by. We could stop them through prayer! We can bind the forces of darkness through prayer. I believe that we can loose the power of God's Holy Spirit through prayer.
- **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!

***Mat 16:20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.***

- ***Then He commanded His disciples.*** They were recognizing that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He said, Do not tell that to man! The time will come when they will broadcast it and should broadcast it but not yet.

***\*Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection***

***Mat 16:21 From that time Jesus began*** (present tense and continuing) ***to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*** (Mat 4:17) *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Mat 26:16) *So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.*

- ***From that time, from this recognition, now that He is indeed the Messiah,*** the Son of the living God. *Jesus began to show to His disciples, how that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.* Do not tell any man. Why? Because the people were all expecting the Messiah to set up immediately an earthly kingdom. They were looking really for a leader to lead them in rebellion against Rome, starting a whole insurrection against the Roman government. So, now that they recognize, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus is saying, Look guys, do not get the wrong ideas. Do not look for the immediate establishment of the kingdom as far as reigning over the earth. Do not go out and broadcast the fact that I am the Messiah. I do not want any kind of a movement that would try to take me into a rebellion against the Roman government. But I am going to have to go to Jerusalem. I am going to ***suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*** He began to tell them of His death, of the cross.
- **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 *Joh 3:1-16. You must be born again!*

***Mat 16:22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"***

- ***Then Peter took him, grabbed hold of Him, and he began to rebuke Him.*** Imagine Peter rebuking the Lord! Probably built up following the Lord's complement, that he had spiritual revelations, Peter is now going to take leadership of the disciples. The cross was not in the thinking of the apostles at all, as you can see.
- ***Be it far from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*** Peter now was acting out of emotions and unfilled expectations. We notice the words, *rebuke* and *Lord*, don't go together! Jesus is saying things that are so foreign to his old concept of the Messiah. They are in conflict with Peter's vision of his future. He had been arguing with the other disciples who was going to be the greatest when Jesus

established the kingdom. For Jesus now to be talking about going to Jerusalem, being put to death, and suffering many things at the hands of the elders, Lord, he says, shame on You! Do not talk like that! This is not going to happen to You. He would have had Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. How much do we recognize ourselves in Peter's actions? Do we ever rebuke or question the Lord like Peter has just done? How often do we let our fear hinder what the Lord has for us to do? In our culture we want to avoid pain and suffering at all costs

**Mat 16:23** *But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful (to savor, entertain, have sentiment) of the things of God, but the things of men."* (Mat 4:10a) Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan!"

- **Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me.** When Jesus was tempted by Satan, after the third temptation, Jesus said the same thing, the same word in the original language, "Away with you!" Or Get behind Me, Satan! Get out of here. *For you are an offense to Me!*
- **For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."** Here in one moment, Peter has the exhilaration of being informed that he has divine revelations. That is exciting! God speaks to you. But now in the next moment, he is being told that he does not have any discernment. It offends Me that you cannot tell the difference between those things that come from God and those things that come from men!
- **One of the most difficult things in our Christian experience is discerning what is from God and what is from man.** Is this a revelation of God, or is this something out of my own imagination? That often times, the inability of discerning what is the voice of God and what is the voice of my own spirit or my own heart. When we fear and strongly decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, we savor and relish more of the things of man than of the things of God! How continual prayer is indeed needed!
- **Be careful not to bail out whenever in pain in following Jesus!** Whenever during our Christian walk, we are experiencing difficulties and we hear words saying get out of this situation, you do not have to endure what you are going through. You deserve better! You do not have to suffer at all, you can be sure this is from the devil and not from God! These words can frequently come from loved ones, thinking they are looking out for us, but are actually being led by the evil one. These words to quit and not endure any suffering in our Christian walk are always the often-used voice of the enemy! We need to test those words, "*You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men!*" It is so important that we recognize that!

**\*Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus -- Description of discipleship**

**Mat 16:24** *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone (how strong is my desire?) desires to come after Me, let him deny himself (I, me, my!), and take up his cross (prelude to death of self and commitment to His calling), and follow Me.*

- **If any man will come after me, he has to deny himself.** This is not self-denial. Denying self and self-denial are two different things! Self-denial is to produce something that is attached to you. Self-denial is for self, one way or another. Denial of self is entirely different! Jesus is talking about going to the *cross*, about the difficulty in really following Him. There is part of me that does not like that! I am not a fan of crucifixion! But what He is saying is, do you really want to come after Me? Do you, really want to come after Me? My Kingdom is not of this world. Then what you need to do is deny yourself! I want to have my own way. Take up your cross! That is really denying yourself! That is the place of execution.
- **Then, and it is a present imperative, be constantly, following Me, moment by moment, day by day.** You may go AWOL for a brief moment, but the idea is that the life style is continually denying self by taking up your cross and constantly following after Me! Your cross is not difficulties in life. Your cross is putting you, the old man, to death! The denial of self. It is a means of execution. How eager am I in desiring to come after Him? How much of my life is being lived under the "I, me, my" will, rather than denying myself, in order to follow Him?
- **Peter's thought was of himself, of the greatness that he was going to be given** when Jesus received and established the kingdom. But Jesus said, If you are going to come after Me, you are going to have to deny yourself. That is the first requirement, and it is difficult! It is hard for us to deny ourselves! One of the strongest instincts of man is that of self-preservation. Satan, when offering to God his evaluation of man, said, (**Job 2:4b**) *Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.*

Self-preservation.

- **Jesus is saying you are going to have to deny yourself.** That self-life. That self-centeredness, where everything is all about me, myself, and I! One of the greatest problems that we all experience in our Christian walk is the self-life, which is opposed to the life of the Spirit. Paul speaks of the conflict that we have. (*Gal 5:17*) *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. I have to battle against the self-life, that wanting to have my way, that insisting on doing it my way!* You offended me! I am hurt over what you said! This thing of asserting my rights and all. But I have to deny that, to come after Jesus. I cannot be looking for great things for myself. I have to deny this self-life. *Deny himself.*
- **The second thing is, to take up His cross!** What does Jesus mean by that? We must deny myself, even to the point of death! When Jesus took up the cross, it was the full commitment of Himself to the will of the Father, even to death! It goes along with denying yourself. You *deny* yourself. Then you turn your will over to the will of the Father. You remember in the garden, as Jesus was praying just before He was arrested, tried, and crucified, being in great agony, His sweat as it was turned into great drops of blood falling to the ground. His prayer was, Father, if it is possible, let this cup, or the cross, pass from Me; nevertheless, not what I will but Your will be done. His going to the cross was a total submission to the will of the Father! My will is let it pass from Me. I do not want to do it. I do not want the humiliation and the suffering and all of that cross. I do not want it. Nevertheless, not what I want but Father, what You want. The cross was the full submission of Himself to the will of the Father.
- **The cross in your life is the full submission of yourself unto God's will!** Take up your cross, that is the submitting of yourself, denying self, denying your own desires, your own wishes, your own wants, dying to self! Yielding yourself to the full subjection to the Father's will.
- **Then Jesus said, follow me!** He set the example. Peter said, (*1Pe 2:21*) *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.* We do this because we love Him, not just because it is a verse in the Bible! We love Him! We love His fellowship! We do not know how we could get through another day without Him. We want to follow Him. We want to discover the life that He has planned for us! It is the greatest life a person can live! There is no greater life than to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him! Everything else is to drive off a cliff whether in this life or in the life to come! What a beautiful, strong passage of Scripture!
- **There are a couple of important things about following Him.** Number one, you got to keep your eyes on Him. It is difficult to follow someone if you are not watching where they are going. You have to keep your eyes on Him. Secondly, to successfully follow Him, you have to stick as closely to Him as you can. Peter, from the garden, sought to follow Jesus afar off. We read, And Peter followed afar off! What do we read next? He was denying the Lord. Many people are endeavoring to follow Jesus afar off. Oh yes, I believe! Oh yes, I want the Lord to save me and all. But I do not want to be known as a religious fanatic. It will not work! You got to stick close. **Follow Me!** A true disciple of Christ is one that does follow Him in duty, and shall follow Him to glory.
- **For whosoever will seek to save his life.** This was quite relevant to them and pertinent to them, because they are going to be facing martyrdom for Jesus Christ. As they are facing martyrdom, there was always the possibility for escaping the martyrdom. The reason Rome turned against the Christians so viciously is that the Christians would not declare that Caesar is Lord. They just would not say that! They would say Jesus is Lord! As they were ready to be executed, the executioner would say, Declare that Caesar is Lord! Christians would not do that. So, they were put to death.
- **The refusal of the Christian to acknowledge the lordship of Caesar,** caused them to upon Christians as insurrectionists. That is why the horrible persecution of the church in which some estimates are six million Christians were martyred by Rome under this great persecutions. World population at time, has been estimated at three hundred million, less than 5% of today's population, which would equate to more than one hundred million being killed!
- **There is the story of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna.** The executioner was very sympathetic. He said, Old man, it will not hurt, just say Caesar is Lord and you can escape. You are just too old to go through suffering and death! Just say Caesar is Lord. Polycarp responded that for eighty-six years I have served Jesus and never once has He let me down! I am not going to let Him down! The executioner said, Oh man, the fire will be hot, being burned at the stake. Polycarp said, the fires may

be hot, but they will not be nearly as hot as the fires for those who reject Jesus. He refused to say Caesar is Lord! If you would seek to save your life, under those kind of conditions, Caesar is Lord, he who *desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

***Mat 16:25 For (assigning a reason) whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.***

- ***Deny yourself, take up the cross, follow Jesus.*** If you seek to save your life, if you seek to find life apart from Jesus, you are going to lose it. The real life is in Jesus Christ! (***1Jn 5:12***) *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* Losing your life in Christ, and in the things of Christ and in the things and in the works of God, there is where you really find what living is all about! That is real living, by losing your life in Christ! This is such an important truth for the Christian. All your problems revolve around the self-life and this wanting my way! You are not doing things to please me! This self-life is the big problem in all our lives. It is our problem. That is why we have so much misery and strife because of the self-life and the asserting of myself and my self-life, my wish, my desire. You do not do it my way.
- ***How far that is from what we are to be in Christ!*** Denying self and taking up the cross. Losing our lives for His sake. But when you do, you really discover then what real living is and what real life is all about! That life in Christ unparalleled by anything else! Those who live this way before Jesus are the only ones who are really, genuinely happy. Completely surrendering our lives to Jesus, living not for self but for others, never takes away from our lives, but, unbelievably adds to it! There is no comparison with the life we once had to the life that we have now. One is existence. It is existence, but the other is life. We have been made for a relationship with God! We have been made for a difference in the Kingdom of God. No one will ever be satisfied until we are engaged in that!

***Mat 16:26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world (cosmos, universe), and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?***

- ***Here, Jesus is giving us God's estimate of the value of a human soul!*** It is worth more than the whole world! If Jesus had taken the offer of Satan to have the whole world and the glory of them but would bow to Satan in order to receive it, He would have been the loser in the deal. And you that are bowing to Satan for the bubbles that he is offering to you, man, you are the loser. You are the loser. If you gained the whole world and lost your own soul, you're the loser. Why? Because the soul is eternal. The world is temporal. The world's not going to last forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away. So, the value of the soul is because of its being eternal. What will it profit you if you gained the whole world but lost your soul?
- ***What will a man give in exchange for his soul?*** How many people are exchanging their souls for pleasure, for fame, for popularity, for worldly riches? They are bowing down to Satan. They are corrupting their own morals and their own moral standards, for only, a few dollars, a moment's glory! It tragic that they are selling out so cheaply!
- ***God values your soul so much!*** He sent His only begotten Son to redeem your soul from destruction! One soul! Just one soul! That is the value God puts on it. Conversely, Satan does not value your soul, but wants to destroy it! He offers you just trinkets! Unfortunately, he has a lot of takers. Deny yourself, take up the cross, follow Me, Jesus said. You seek to save your life, you will lose it. Lose your life for My sake, you will find it. But what would it profit you if you gained the whole world but lost your own soul, or what would you give in exchange for your soul?

***Mat 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward (not salvation-that is a free gift) each according to his works. (Eph 2:10) For we are His workmanship (poiema, His poetic product), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.***

- ***For the Son of Man will come. Death is not the end!*** The importance of having and keeping an eternal perspective! We are never thinking of death as the end. It is really the beginning! You are making a grave mistake if you think death is the end. Death is not the end! It is the end of your physical existence, the body, but the body is not you. The Bible teaches the real you is spirit. The body is just the instrument that God has created in which your spirit lives. It is the medium by which your body can express itself. But it is not you. When your spirit leaves the body, that is physical death. But that is not the end. The spirit goes on living, forever! We are created in the image of the eternal God
- ***In the glory of His Father with His angels.*** Jesus has been telling His disciples that, "I'm going to

go to Jerusalem. I am going to suffer at the hands of the elders and the high priests and so forth. I am going to be crucified, but I am going to be rising again on the third day. They did not hear that part. They only heard the word, crucified! They got so upset by that, they did not hear the rest. They did not even remember the rest until after He rose from the dead.

- **But now, I am going to come, when He comes in the glory of His Father.** This coming is not in the glory of the Father. It is glory for the Father by His death. But He is going to come in the glory of the Father in His second coming. Then shall they see the sign of the Son of Man coming in clouds with great glory. But those who have denied themselves and taken up their cross, and identified themselves with Jesus, will *then He will reward each according to his works*, when He *comes in the glory of His Father with His holy angels*.
- (2Co 5:10) *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* Five crowns are mentioned in the Bible: Of Rejoicing; Righteousness; Life (twice); Glory; Incorruptible Crown. The rewards stand for the good things I have done! Faith that works! It is the love of Christ that constrains me! :

### Summary

- **Mat 16:15** *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"* **A most important question for every believer, which is placed before all who hear of Jesus.** It is really not Jesus, but us, who are being judged by our answer! We live out our answer to this question every day by our witness, in what we believe and do. If we really know Jesus is who He says He is, it will affect the way that we live. What does my life reflect right now? This is a great passage to sit alone with the Lord and spend time with Him, in your answer to His question!
- **Mat 16:24** *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself (I, myself and me!), and take up his cross (prelude to death of self and commitment to His calling), and follow Me.* How eager am I in desiring to come after Him? How much of my life is being lived under the "I, me, my" will, rather than denying myself, in order to follow Him? The real life is in Jesus Christ! (1Jn 5:12) *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* Losing your life in Christ, and in the things of Christ and in the things and in the works of God, there is where you really find what living is all about!

### Closing Song:

#### I SURRENDER Hillsong Worship (4:08)

Here I am Down on my knees again Surrendering all Surrendering all And find me here  
Lord as You draw me near Desperate for You Desperate for You I surrender  
Drench my soul As mercy and grace unfold I hunger and thirst I hunger and thirst  
With arms stretched wide I know You hear my cry Speak to me now Speak to me now  
I surrender I surrender I wanna know You more I wanna know You more  
I surrender I surrender I wanna know You more I wanna know You more  
Like a rushing wind Jesus breathe within Lord have Your way Lord have Your way in me  
Like a mighty storm Stir within my soul Lord have Your way Lord have Your way in me  
Like a rushing wind Jesus breathe within Lord have Your way Lord have Your way in me  
Like a mighty storm Stir within my soul Lord have Your way Lord have Your way in me  
Lord have Your way Lord have Your way in me  
I surrender I surrender I wanna know You more I wanna know You more

### Closing Prayer:

Assignment for next week: Read *Matthew Chapter 17*