

## Matthew ch 16 vs 13-28

Last week we spent the majority of our time, or placed the primary emphasis of our study on the sign of the prophet Jonah. The Pharisees and the Sadducees had requested a sign from Jesus proving indisputably that He was in fact the Son of God. They were tempting Him to prove Himself, even as Satan had a couple of years earlier, by performing some type of spectacular marvel, as if He hadn't performed hundreds if not thousands of spectacular marvels by this time in His ministry. But they wanted to see a sign from heaven, and Jesus rebuked these religious theologians for their lack of spiritual discernment. He did so by basically taking their own line of reasoning in regards to the heavens and saying, speaking of the heavens *you hypocrites, how is it that you can discern the face of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times?*

The very fact that they asked for a sign bore witness against them in their ability to discern the times and what was happening right in front of their face. Because as we took note of last week had they been up on their scriptures they would've known that the messiah was on the scene at that very moment because the scriptures state that very plainly. (And I showed you where that was at last week) So these guys with the doctorates in theology were only showing their own ignorance of the scriptures in seeking to make the Lord prove Himself. and They were violating the scriptures because they were tempting the Lord and the bible says plainly, you shall not tempt or test the Lord you God and that's exactly what they were doing. and So Jesus refused their request for a sign right then and there calling them wicked, and adulterous, why, because they claimed to be God followers, when in reality they walked contrary to Him, in rejecting His only begotten Son. And Jesus said, *"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."*

Anytime someone who claims to know God, and yet walks contrary to God, God considers that spiritual adultery, and we spoke about that last week as well. and So as I said Jesus refused to do a magic show for them, but He did guarantee them 1 piece of indisputable, irrefutable evidence of Him being everything that He said that He is, and that proof would be found in the sign of the prophet Jonah. That's the only evidence that He submits, as to Him being all that He said, and what was the sign of the prophet Jonah? It was that of His death, burial, and resurrection. That even as Jonah was swallowed up by the great fish, and taken down into the deep, and then 3 days later being brought back up alive. So He would be killed, taken down into the heart of the earth, and then 3 days later He would resurrect from the dead, defeating death, never to die again. That's the one thing that He lays all His credentials on as to Him being the only begotten Son of God, and the Savior of the world.

He could've said "hey, look around, you see all these thousands of people that I've healed, they're My proof." He could've said, "No one but the Messiah could feed 10-20,000 people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, and then again with 7 loaves and a few fish. Now go read your bible and figure it out yourself," but He didn't; He basically said I don't care if you never recognize any miracle that I've ever done or ever will do. (Though He would testify later that the works themselves were sufficient proof in and of themselves.)

But He said, I'm going to give you a sign that's so humanly impossible, (As if everything else He's been doing isn't.) But listen close because I'm prophesying here, I'm going to give you a sign that's so humanly impossible (speaking of the fact that He would be put to death by means of the cross, lay in the tomb not 2, not 4, but 3 days, and on that 3<sup>rd</sup> day He would resurrect Himself from the dead.) And if it doesn't happen feel free to throw out everything I've ever said, discredit Me completely and consider Me a heretic. But if it does happen, let that stand as undeniable indisputable, irrefutable evidence that I am the Messiah of God, God incarnate sent to suffer and die, and atone for the sin of the world by the shedding of My blood.

That's exactly what He did, He delivered His promise of irrefutable evidence, and there were over 500 eyewitnesses at one collective time to the risen Christ. So now you have a choice, what do you do with Jesus Christ? Do you accept Him for who He says He is, or do you reject Him, that's the single most important decision you'll ever make in your entire life. Why, because the ramifications are eternal. That's the one question that you will stand before God to give an account for, what did you do with My Son Jesus Christ? If you accepted Him, you will be granted eternal life, if you rejected Him, you will be sentenced to eternal isolation in outer darkness where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies, in separation from God. And God's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, that's why He gave His only begotten Son, so that whosoever would believe on Him would not perish but have everlasting life. God sends no one to hell people; He provided the means of escape. So I implore you today as though God were pleading through me, be reconciled to Christ.

Don't play games with God, it's not worth it, just come clean before Him, admit you're a sinner and receive Jesus Christ or if you know the Lord and you've been out there insulting the Spirit of Grace by the way you've been living. Knowing that the things you do when you think no one is watching, or the way you've been living outside these 4 walls is deeply grieving the heart of God repent today, and get right with Him. Be careful that you don't allow yourself to be one who slips into the routine of drawing near to God with your mouth, and honoring Him with your lips, while your heart continues to drift farther and farther from Him.

God doesn't want your lip service, He wants your heart. We also received Jesus' warning last week to beware of legalism on the one hand, knowing that God doesn't want a legal relationship of does and don'ts with us, He wants a loving relationship, that stems from the heart. But then there's the liberalism on the other hand that can again lead to a lifestyle that insults the Spirit of grace doing what we want when we want because after all we're under grace and I'll just ask God to forgive me and then everything will be peachy again. Be careful, because I'd have to question the position of that frame of heart, that's doesn't sound like the heart that's desperately in love with Jesus Christ that would never do anything to intentionally wound Him or grieve Him, knowing the price He paid to purchase my salvation.

So we need to be careful to strike the balance, loving God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our soul, worshipping Him in Spirit and in truth. Allowing Him to shape us and mold us daily into His image that we might lead lives that are pleasing to Him, bringing glory and honor to Him.

Vs13

Now the region of Caesarea Philippi is about 25-30 miles N E of the Sea of Galilee, and It's no longer in the region or the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, where Jesus was when He heard of J. B. beheading, but now He's moved up into the region of Herod Philip as you may've guessed. And this region is again primarily gentile so He would be able to get a little bit of solitude with His disciples which is exactly what He wanted. Because it was time to start securing their position concerning whom He was and what was going to soon transpire in His life. But I find it interesting that He chose the area of Caesarea Philippi to begin to deal with them in this manner because Caesarea Philippi was a place that was completely saturated with paganism. There was no fewer than 14 pagan temples of worship in this area, it was literally littered with the temples of Syrian gods, Greek gods looked down on this place, there was a white marble temple built there for the practice of Caesar worship. There is a place in Caesarea Philippi that was said to have been the birthplace of the ancient god Pan, and there was a huge shrine there that was dedicated to him.

So Caesarea Philippi was basically the symbol, which represented the pagan gods of the ancient world, and it's against this backdrop that Jesus will assert His authority. It's as if Jesus deliberately set Himself against the background of the worlds religions, in all their splendor, and demanded to be compared to them, with the verdict given in His favor. Again it fascinates me because you can just see it, (don't think that it's a coincidence that Jesus brought them to this place to ask them this question).

Here He stands, these 12 guys kind of before Him, all these temples dedicated to these pagan gods with in eyeshot behind Him. The shrine dedicated to pan probably not to far off, if He's not standing right beside it, and he says to them with all this stuff right behind Him, "who do men say that I, the Son of man am?" In other words here stands the Lord Jesus Christ, here's this statue dedicated to all the gods of the ancient world, "who am I" Jesus puts them on the spot, (this is just a tremendous scene that we have here.)

Vs14

So this is the pulse of the people, this is the buzz in the midst of the multitudes. Some say J.B., others say that maybe you're Elijah, or Jeremiah, or maybe one of the other prophets. and I would say that no doubt we some of each of their attributes in Jesus, but it would be more accurate to say that we see some of Jesus' attributes in each of them. But some say J.B., Herod Antipas thought that, J.B. was a straight shooter as we've said before, he didn't mix words, but rather he spoke the truth uncompromised in a very straight forward convicting and challenging way. We could no doubt say the same thing about Jesus. "Some say you're Elijah", Elijah was a miracle worker of the OT, he was the one that prophesied no rain until he said there would be. He's the one that when the woman was about out of flour because of the famine he said hey go and make me some bread and if you do the Lord will see to it that you don't run out all the days of this famine.

It was Elijah who stretched out over the boy 3times pleading with God to bring his soul back to him after he had died so that the boy might return to his mother, and the boy was given his life back. So Elijah was a miracle worker, by the power and the Spirit of God. And Mal 4:5 says, "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*" So they were expecting to see Elijah before the messiah came.

Now that was fulfilled in J.B. who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and the people couldn't see it. But here's this miracle worker; maybe He's Elijah. But then there's Jeremiah, he was always pleading with the nation and being rejected, he's considered by many as the weeping prophet because his heart broke over the spiritual condition of the nation. And here's Jesus a man that was aquatinted with grief and sorrow, one who was meek and lowly of heart, one who shed tears over the wretched spiritual condition of the nation, so maybe He's Jeremiah. Or another prophet, that was the pulse of the people, they associated Him with God, but they were blind to the reality of who He was. There was some confusion there, but a right confession, of who he is, is essential to salvation and so now Jesus personalizes it.

## Vs15

Now it's very important right now that whatever thoughts are going through your mind, distracting you from this moment be discarded. Because this is what it all comes down to, remember a few minutes ago I told you that the single most important decision you'll ever make is whether or not you receive or reject Jesus Christ And that decision will be determined by the conclusion that you draw from this question that Jesus is asking you today. "Who do you say that I am?" and All eternity pivots, or revolves around this one question, the door to eternal life swings on the hinges of this question that we all have to face. Who do you say that Jesus is? Was He just another good teacher like many of the great teachers that this world has seen no different than say, Buddha or Confucius, or maybe Mohammed, was He a prophet, maybe the founder of religion, or simply a great man? Your decision concerning who Jesus is will seal your eternal destiny, so I encourage you to weigh out the facts, consider the evidence, reason through the sign of the prophet Jonah.

I believe that at this point you could've probably cut the tension with a knife, they weren't expecting Jesus to spring this on them, they were just giving a general report of what the people thought about Him. Maybe even somewhat facetiously, some say J.B. others say Elijah, or Jeremiah, or maybe one of the other prophets. and Then Jesus just hits them with this question that just pierces them right to the heart, who do you say that I am? In other words, what do you guys think, you've heard My teaching, you've seen the things I've done, do you agree with them, what's your evaluation of Me? And I could all but guarantee you that a hush came over them as Jesus scanned the 12 looking each of them right in the eye with that look of I'm as serious as a heart attack, and I want the absolute truth from the pit of your heart. Who do you say that I am?

## Vs16

Peter taking the position of the spokesman for the group as he often did, again no doubt looking Jesus right in the face said, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And I'm certain the others were nodding in full agreement. Peter says here with full conviction, with out even the slightest bit of uncertainty, You are the Christ, You are the Messiah, You are the anointed One of God, sent to Redeem us from our sin. And in contrast to all the idols and lifeless images around them he says, You are the Son of the *living* God. Acknowledging, and pointing Him out as the Source of all life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

Vs17

This phrase Simon Bar-Jonah, is to say Simon son of Jonah, or Simon son of John. So Peter pipes up and says You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, and so Jesus responds to Peter and says in essence, you're right Peter, I am the Christ, I am the Messiah. And He gives Peter a little tool to aid in His discernment, He says what just happened to you Peter, wasn't a result of your own natural reasoning, My Father in Heaven has revealed this to you. The bible says that "*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*" In other words, this flesh and blood can't intellectually grasp spiritual truths. The only way to understand spiritual principals is by the Holy Spirit revealing them to you. When John said, "*you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things,*" he wasn't saying we don't need to be taught in the scriptures by a pastor/teacher and that we don't need to gather corporately. That would be contradictory to other scripture, what he was saying is that it's the Holy Spirit that reveals spiritual truth's to your heart.

So when I'm standing here teaching God's word and we come across something that maybe you've kind of struggled with in your understanding of, and then as we're going over it something clicks and you go, oh, now I get it! It's not because I'm some type of master articulator of the word of God; it's because the Holy Spirit has chosen to reveal to you that truth. If the Holy Spirit wasn't revealing that truth to you I could stand here and try to explain it all day long and you'd never get it, but as the Spirit reveals a spiritual truth to you, then your understanding is opened and you get it.

That's what has just happened here with Peter, He's been granted understanding opened by the Holy Spirit, to a spiritual truth. That Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus acknowledged that, He said all right Peter, you've just had a divine revelation. The Holy Spirit has just enlightened you as to who I am, and I want us to notice the natural way by which the supernatural just happened.

Jesus asked the question, who do you say that I am? And after a moment of silence, Peter being more or less the impulsive one of the group spoke up and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I'm quite certain that Peter didn't know that what he had just said was a divine revelation straight from the throne of God, because Jesus had to tell Him it was. In his mind he was answering the question that Jesus asked, but God so often speaks to us and through us in such natural ways that I believe we rarely even know it.

We expect some ostentatious supernatural phenomena to occur whenever God speaks. We think that whenever God is going to speak to us or through us that we're supposed to slip into this trance like meditative state, and hear the prelude of the angelic hosts, get all warm and fuzzy and our hair will be standing on it's end. And then we'll hear some deep resounding voice with a tremolo in it or something and that's how God will speak to us. But that's not what we see in the scriptures, rather God often moves in supernatural ways through practical means. Or He will give a supernatural revelation; in a very natural setting such as He just did with Peter. But because we're so dull in our spiritual sensibilities, we're usually not even aware or attuned to the fact that it's God who is speaking to us, or leading us, or whatever.

So I'd encourage you to keep your spiritual antennas up and be looking for the leading of God, or be listening for the voice of God in practical, natural ways. Don't be deceived into thinking that if you don't start sweating, or you don't get all tingly that it's not God because that's just not true. God can speak to you in practical ways, now I'm not going to lie to you and say that I find it easy to always discern OK God is this coming from you or am I cooking this up on my own. As a matter of fact I find it extremely difficult most of the time, because if the supernatural, came in a supernatural way, then I'd have no problem with discernment. But because the supernatural so often comes in such natural ways it's often times hard to distinguish the 2. Is this my own inspiration, or is this thought inspired by or originating from God? So Peter expresses his convictions to the Lord, and Jesus says right on Peter, you've heard the voice of God. So don't you know that Peter's topped out here.

Vs18

Now there's a bit of controversy attached to this vs and I'm not going to dwell on it extensively, but the big debate is what is it that Jesus is in reference to when He says upon this rock I will build My church? What is the rock, Catholicism asserts that the church was built on Peter, and they say that Peter was the 1<sup>st</sup> pope and all of that. But there is problems with this view. Because 1<sup>st</sup> of all Jesus used a little play on words here in this statement, He said you are Petros, which means little pebble, and upon this Petra, which means massive cliff or huge mass of stone, I will build My church. So the Lord used 2 distinctly different words when He made the statement. 2ndly if Peter was the rock upon which the church was built we would be on pretty shaky ground considering that in just moments from now Peter will be rebuked by the Lord and Jesus will call him Satan. So which is it, is Peter the rock on which the church is built, or is he Satan being mindful of the things of men?

In reality he's neither, but at the time Jesus said it, He was making a point. Well that was before the Holy Spirit came upon Peter, read Gal ch 2 sometime and you'll see that Peter made some significant errors even after the Holy Spirit came upon him. and In the book of acts we don't see Peter as the head of the church, he no doubt had a place of prominence, but things ultimately wound up on James' desk. And in the book of Acts you'll find Peter reporting to James, and Peter never really refereed to himself as anything other than an elder 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:1.

So I have difficulty in that point of view, still others say it was the confession that Peter made, that's the rock that the Church is built upon. I think that, that's not exactly right either in the respect of the church isn't built on a confession, and I'm splitting hairs here but I just want to be very clear that the church isn't built on a confession. I believe, (and if you don't see eye to eye with me that's your prerogative) but I believe that Jesus is in reference to the fact, or the truth of the confession. Not the confession itself, but the truth that's contained with in that confession and what's that, that Jesus is the Christ. The church is built upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ Paul the apostle said, "*no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is (Simon Peter?) Jesus Christ.*" Peter understood this, and he spoke of us as living stones in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter ch 2 but acknowledged Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone and he quotes Isa 28:16 which says, "*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation."* Jesus Christ is the sure foundation upon which His church is built.  
Now this portion here (read 2<sup>nd</sup> 1/2 of 18)

Some have seen this as an allusion to the resurrection, others see it as an encouragement for times of spiritual warfare meaning basically greater is He that is in you then He that is in the world. I'm good with either thought, it's possible that both are inferred.

Vs19

Keys obviously speak of authority, if you hold the keys to something, you control who comes in and who stays out. Again a few ways of looking at it 1 that the keys were given to Peter, and we do see Peter "unlocking" the kingdom of heaven to both the Jews in Acts ch 2, and the gentiles in Acts ch 10. In Acts ch 8 he exercises that authority in telling Simon the sorcerer that until he gets his heart right with God he'll have no part in the kingdom, because he wanted to buy the Holy Spirit. Others see this as a general statement to all believers granting them authority over the spiritual hosts of wickedness in Jesus name in regards to Spiritual warfare. Again it could apply both ways and whichever way you choose to view that, I won't argue with you unless it doesn't line up with the way I see it, but we need to be moving on.

Vs20

There were various reasons for this but ultimately it resolves in the fact that Jesus was on a divine timeline and it wasn't time for Him to be revealed yet. That day would come when He made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Vs21

The sign of the prophet Jonah, Jesus has referred to it a couple of times but now He begins to speak openly concerning it.

Vs22

So here's good ol' Peter (the rock), He's on a spiritual high, I've just had a divine revelation directly from the throne of God. Here's Jesus speaking of His crucifixion, and Peter more or less interrupts Him and says Lord, spare yourself, you're the Messiah, and he says emphatically there's no way that this is going to happen to you.

Vs23

The bible speaks in numerous places of the suffering aspect of the Messiah, none of which obviously have clicked with these guys, now in hindsight they'll get it. Remember at the last supper Jesus said, "*What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.*" But as for now the thought of the Messiah suffering the penalty of crucifixion is absolutely ludicrous. And how quickly Peter went from a vessel of divine revelation to an instrument of Satan, why? Because he couldn't discern in this case his thoughts, he was suffering from the same problem we all face as Christians, the inability to always discern what is of God vs what is from my own heart.

One minute he's expressing divine revelation, the next he's tempting the Lord with the philosophy of hell, spare yourself, there's no need for all that suffering. Remember in ch 4 we seen Satan tempting Jesus in this same exact format, there's no need for all that suffering I can give you the world, just bow down and worship me. and Jesus said the same thing, away with you Satan, and it says that Satan left Jesus until an opportune time. Here we see it, and Jesus repeats the command, Get behind Me Satan for you are an offense to Me, or a scandal, you're trying to entrap Me.

The philosophy of hell will always seek to cause you to avoid and escape the cross, take the easy path, indulge yourself escape the cross. But the bible is clear that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. But Satan encourages you to take the easy path, the broad path, but be warned Jesus made it clear that, that's the path that leads to destruction. It's the narrow Path that leads to life and its way is difficult and there are few who find it.

So with Peter's encouragement to Jesus to avoid the cross, Jesus seizes this opportunity to teach on the importance of the cross. The cross was central to God's plan of salvation, so any suggestion otherwise found its roots in hell. And here Jesus shares that not only is it essential to His own life, but it's also essential to anyone else who desires to follow Him, be where He is.

VS24-28

Peter has just said Lord spare yourself, and Jesus is saying Peter that's the philosophy of hell, if anyone wants to come after Me he can't spare himself, he has to deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. That's the 3 keys to discipleship denying self, taking up your cross and following Jesus. And there's no way that I can do this portion of text justice by rushing through it; it's too vital for us. So having read through it we'll call ch 16 done but next week before we jump into ch 17 we'll try to spend some time expounding on this last little segment of ch 16 of Jesus speaking of the 3 keys to discipleship, his explanation and rationale and then we'll take off into ch 17.