

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-4-23

Matthew 16

The Sadducees And The Pharisees Seek A Sign From Jesus – Verses 1-4

¹ The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. ² He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ ³ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.^[a] ⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

16:1 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. For more information on the Pharisees and Sadducees, see the chart “The Pharisees and Sadducees” and the chart “Prominent Jewish Religious and Political Groups.”

16:1 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.

16:4 By using the sign of Jonah, who was inside a great fish for three days, Jesus was predicting his death and resurrection (see also 12:38-42).

16:4 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 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 in your life!

Jesus Cautions The Disciples Against False Teaching – Verses 5-12

⁵ When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶ “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷ They

discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”⁸ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?⁹ Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered¹¹ How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

16:5-11 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?”

16:12 Jesus impressed the importance of being on guard against false teaching, especially that in the service of religious hypocrisy. Jesus charged His disciples with three things:

1. Ignorance, because they didn’t understand that He was using material things (leaven) to illustrate spiritual things (the dangerous teachings and practices of the Sadducees and Pharisees).
2. Unbelief, because they were overly concerned with the supply of bread, when they had seen Jesus miraculously provide bread on several previous occasions.
3. Forgetfulness, because they seemed to forget what Jesus had done before in regard to providing bread.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

16:13 Caesarea Philippi was located several miles north of the Sea of Galilee, in the territory ruled by Philip. The influence of Greek and Roman culture was everywhere, and pagan temples and idols abounded. When Philip became tetrarch, he rebuilt and renamed the city after the emperor (Caesar) and himself. The city was originally called Caesarea, the same name as the capital city of Philip’s brother Herod’s territory.

A Pointed Question And A Pointed Answer – Verses 14-16

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

16:14-16 The disciples answered Jesus’ question with the common view—that Jesus was one of the great prophets come back to life. This belief may have stemmed from Deuteronomy 18:18, where God said he would raise up a prophet from among the people. (See John the Baptist’s profile; Elijah’s profile; and Jeremiah’s profile.) Peter, however, confessed Jesus as divine and as the promised and long-awaited Messiah. If Jesus were to ask you this question, how would you answer? Is he your Lord and Messiah?

Jesus Compliments Peter – Verses 17-20

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

16:18 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. Just as Peter had revealed the true identity of Christ, so Jesus revealed Peter’s identity and role.

16:18 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 Ephesians 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.

16:19 The meaning of this verse has been a subject of debate for centuries. Some say the “keys” represent the authority to carry out church discipline, legislation, and administration (18:15-18), while others say the keys give the authority to announce the forgiveness of sins (John 20:23). Still others say the keys may be the opportunity to bring people to the kingdom of heaven by presenting them with the message of salvation found in God’s Word (Acts 15:7-9). The religious leaders thought they held the keys of the kingdom, and they tried to shut some people out. We cannot decide to open or close the kingdom of heaven for others, but God uses us to help others find the way inside. To all who believe

16:20 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.

Jesus Predicts His Death – Verse 21

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

16:21 The phrase “From that time on” marks a turning point. In 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 17:22-23; 20:18 for others).

Peter's Unwitting Opposition Of Jesus – Verses 22-23

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

16:22 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 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.

16:23 In his wilderness temptations, Jesus heard the message that he could achieve greatness without dying (4:9). 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.

Jesus Declares His Expectation – Verse 24

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

16:24 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 10:39).

Finding Life By Losing It – Verses 25-27

25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

16:25 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 eternal life. If we protect ourselves from the pain God calls us to suffer, 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.

16:26 When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though there were no afterlife. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. How we live this brief span determines our eternal state. What we accumulate on earth has no value in gaining eternal life. Even the highest social or civic honors cannot earn us entrance into heaven. Evaluate your lifestyle from an eternal perspective, and you will find your values and decisions changing.

16:27 Jesus Christ has been given the authority to judge all the earth (Romans 14:9-11; Philippians 2:9-11). Although his judgment is already working in our lives, there is a future, final judgment when Christ returns (25:31-46) and everyone's life will be 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 judge others' salvation; that is God's work.

A Promise To See The Son Of Man Coming In His Kingdom – Verses 28

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

16:28 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 (17:1-3). Others say this statement refers to the Resurrection (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20) and Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1). Still others believe that Pentecost (Acts 2) and the beginning of Christ's church fulfilled Jesus' words. In any case, certain disciples were eyewitnesses to the power and glory of Christ's kingdom.