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Matthew 16

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Matthew 16.

Topics.

- The sign of Jonah.
- The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.
- Deny-self and take up the cross.
- Whoever would save their life will lose it.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes and told them it is not what goes in the mouth that defiles, but what comes out of the mouth. He spoke about God uprooting plants he has not planted and told a woman even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. He healed a child oppressed by a demon and the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others and miraculously fed four-thousand men and women.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MATTHEW 16:1-4

1

The Sign of Jonah.

- **Matthew 16:1-4:** And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but *no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.*" So he left them and departed.

The following verses give us further detail of what is meant by the sign of Jonah:

- Jesus answered them (the Pharisees and Sadducees), "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just 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 (Matt. 12:39-40).

Three days and three nights: is a Jewish Bible idiom which means the third day, (an idiom is an individual manner of speaking) (a colloquial). It is not teaching that Jesus was in the tomb for three full days and nights (i.e., seventy-two hours) as this idea is ruled out completely by the fact that one of the two disciples who was talking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus on the very afternoon of his resurrection said that it was the "third day" since Jesus had been crucified (Luke 24:21). This is decisive, if Jesus had lain in the tomb for three full days and three full nights that disciple should have been saying "the fourth day" thus for this reason alone the literal interpretation of three full days and three full nights must go. The Jewish idiom "Three days and three nights" simply means Jesus will be raised on the "third Day" and not that he will be in the tomb for three full days and nights. There is also the additional problem created by

such passages that state Jesus will be "Raised the third day" (Matt. 16:21), Raised the third day is used at least ten times and is quite incompatible with the three full days and three full night theory added to this is the question, if Jesus was crucified on Thursday why would the women leave their attempt to attend to his body until Sunday when they could have done what they deemed to be needful on the intervening Friday. This three full days and three full nights in the grave theory would never have arisen, based on one verse only, if there had been proper recognition of the common Bible idiom that three days and three nights is another way of saying the third day and the realisation that there is no lack of evidence to support this conclusion. For further information see the title:

- Three Days and Three Nights in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 16:5-12

Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

- **Matthew 16:5-12:** When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." ⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Leaven: in this context means the teaching of the Pharisees (v12).

2

Jesus has not long ago miraculously feed a crowd of five-thousand and four-thousand, plus, and the disciples are worried that they have no food with them so Jesus reminds them of the two events and then tells them he was not speaking about natural bread, but the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Sadducees: means the righteous ones. They were the religious political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They held strictly to the written law and because they were more interested in maintaining the political status quo than in the religious purity of the nation they became the religious party favourable to the Roman government. The Sadducees are mentioned about a dozen times in the New Testament and most likely referred to when mention is made of the chief priest. Though they resisted Christ, the truth of the Gospel and were active against the infant church Jesus only once warned his disciples against the Sadducees on all other occasions his criticism was against the Pharisees.

Pharisees: means the separated ones, they were rulers of the Jews and the most-strict and by far the most influential sect of the three prominent societies of Judaism that were around at the time of Christ (the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essences). Pharisees loved to wear distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognised and were found everywhere in Palestine not only in Jerusalem.

They made three contributions to Judaism so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous. The changes the Pharisees made to the Jewish faith began in earnest after the Babylonian Captivity, the temple worship and the sacrifices had ceased so the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees began to center the activities of Judaism in Jewish law, tradition and in the religious rites of the Synagogues.

The three changes the Pharisees made to Judaism:

1. **Jewish legalism:** The Scribes who were considered experts in interpreting the Scriptures studied the traditional exegesis of the Law which resulted in it becoming a major part of Jewish thought and giving Jewish legalism a great impetus during the New Testament era. The Pharisees closely associated with the scribes organised the followers of the scribes teaching in the Synagogues thus legalism became widespread in the Jewish faith.
2. **Formalised religion:** the Pharisees formalised the religion of the scribes and their interpretation of the law they placed it into the mind of Jewish faith and the practice of it in the synagogues and religious ceremony. The reason the scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together in the New Testament is because even though the Pharisees were not practical politicians like the more liberal Sadducees, they were the religious leaders of the Jews and the highest qualification for membership into the Pharisees was strict adherence to the Law (Oral or written).
3. **Organisation of Jewish religion:** after the seventy-year Babylonian captivity and the Maccabean Revolt (165 BC) the scribes increased tradition and adapted it with the Mosaic Law, but it was the Pharisees who formulated, developed and organised the scribes' teachings into Jewish religion itself. This increased focus on law and tradition resulted in separatism and an almost new religion, because much of it was the opposite from what had been handed down in the Covenant by the prophets.

The Pharisees became a closely organised group: the Pharisees were very loyal to their own society and to each other, but separate from others and even their own Jewish people, they pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to minutest detail and were sticklers to ceremonial purity. This developed into a feeling of superiority over other nations and people. From this superior feeling as well as religious emotion, pride found its most extreme expression. The Pharisees were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God's word. They made life difficult for themselves and bitter for others, and despised those whom they did not consider their equals. The Pharisees cultivated a national and religious consciousness, which has hardly been equaled. Their teaching that salvation came by maintaining tradition and keeping the law had such a strong influence on the minds of their followers that God's grace was thought to come from self-effort rather than grace so it was only natural that such a religion would ultimately become a matter of externals and not a faith of the heart. For further information see title:

- Sanhedrin in, Bible Dictionary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 16:13-18

You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

- **Matthew 16:13-18:** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Many during the time Jesus was on the earth thought of him as a great prophet similar to Elijah or Jeremiah etc., but very few understood that he was the Son of God even today people accept that Jesus was an exceptionally good man, but deny the fact he is the Son of God.

On this rock I will build my church: some believe that Jesus statement "On this rock I will build my church" (v18) means that Christ will build his church on the apostle Peter, but the rock Jesus is referring to is the revelation that Peter had and not Peter himself, it is Jesus Christ the Son of the living God that Jesus will build his church on, it is Jesus who is the rock and chief cornerstone of the church.

The Gates of Hell will Not Prevail against the Rock (v18).

Gates: carries the idea of an entrance.

Hell: is translated from the Greek word Hades which simply means the grave thus it implies death.

The statement: "The Gates of hell will not prevail against it" means eternal death will not prevail against those who are building their life on the Lord Jesus Christ (the Rock), the verse could read, "The power of eternal death will not have victory over those who belong to Christ (the Rock)."

MATTHEW 16:19

Binding and Loosing.

- **Matthew 16:19:** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The keys to the Kingdom of heaven that Jesus gave to Peter, is the teachings of the New Testament as opposed those of the Old. Since there is only one way to God and into His Kingdom and that is through repentance and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus and his Gospel are the keys. Jesus statement, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" simply means Jesus will give Peter the Gospel that leads a person to God and to His Kingdom.

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Binding and loosing: the term "Binding and loosing" does not mean Christians are to go into some form of spiritual warfare attempting in prayer to cast down evil entities called demons as some teach today, there is no-where in the Bible that God's people are seen in this form of prayer. "Binding and loosing" is simply another way of saying do not permit in the church what would not be permitted by God or accepted in heaven. Jesus gave Peter the authority to teach the New Covenant which involved binding a lot of the Old Testament ceremonial law and religious holy days etc., and loosing others (i.e. all foods were now clean to eat and everyone could come to God without the need for a human high priest etc.), so Peter was establishing the new church by binding (ending some things) and loosing (allowing other practises once forbidden). The term "Binding and loosing" can also be applied to church behaviour, meaning don't allow (binding) behaviour in the church that would not be accepted in heaven, but enjoy (loose) every form of outward expression that would be accepted by God and the angels in heaven, thus the term "Binding and loosing" simply means whatever Peter restrains or forbids in the church will be what is forbidden in heaven and whatever Peter allows in the church will be what is accepted in heaven.

MATTHEW 16:20-21

On the Third Day the Son of Man will be Raised.

- **Matthew 16:20-21** ---- ²⁰Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. ²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

One of the reasons Jesus may have told his disciples not to tell anyone he is the Christ is most likely because he would have been fully aware that the Pharisees were already plotting against him and did not want to stir up their anger and hatred toward him even more as it was not yet time and his primary mission was not to the crowds, but to the twelve apostles who after his resurrection turned the world upside down.

The third day: Jesus tells the disciples he must be killed, and on the third day be raised. To be raised on the third day means that Jesus was not in the tomb for the entire day, the three days in the tomb were three-part days not three full days (see notes following, "The sign of Jonah" (Matt. 16:1-4).

He must be killed, and on the third day be raised: it wasn't until after the resurrection that the disciples fully understand what Jesus meant when he told them he must be killed and on the third day rise again.

MATTHEW 16:22-23

Jesus calls Peter Satan.

- **Matthew 16:22-23:** And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Jesus did not call Peter a satan because he thought Peter was possessed by some evil inferior demonic god. Satan is the Hebrew and Greek words satanas and satan which simply mean in the Hebrew and Greek language an accuser, opposer or adversary. Jesus called Peter a satan because Peter (without realising it) was opposing the plan and purpose of God, the statement "Get behind me, satan!" Carries the same idea as saying, Peter you are and adversary to God's purpose. For further information see the title:

- Satan in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 16:24-28

Denying-Self and Taking up the Cross.

- **Matthew 16:24-28:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

These verses are in the context of eternal death and eternal life, Jesus is saying, what is the point of being the most successful, famous and wealthiest person on the planet if at the end of it you do not have eternal life. When we are lying in our coffin and being lowered into our grave to be buried everything, we have gained is worthless. In the language of the 21st century Jesus is telling his disciples, if it is a choice between the things of this world or following Christ, it is a no-brainer one choice leads to eternal death the other to eternal life. It is far better to deny ourselves now and sacrifice whatever is needed to have communion with God and with Christ now and gain eternal life at the end of our mortal life. There is no profit in gaining the entire world if it means forfeiting eternal life when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to repay each person according to

whether they have accepted God's plan of salvation and followed Christ or chosen to follow self, ego and pride and chase after the things of this world. Denying ourselves and taking up our cross means putting the things of Christ before self, ego and pride and sacrificing if required the things of this world (v26) to follow the Lord. It means if we are put in a position of choosing Christ or something, we desire we will always choose the Lord regardless of the loss or cost to ourselves even if it means death. To follow Christ is going to involve a cost to self, ego and pride, but whoever puts Christ before self will save their life for all eternity, but whoever is not prepared to put Christ before self-will lose their life to eternal death.

The Son of man coming in His Kingdom: Jesus tells his listeners that there are some standing amongst them that will not die before they see Christ coming in his Kingdom (v28), this could refer to the following six days when Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a high mountain and Jesus is transfigured before their very eyes and his face shines like the sun and his clothes become white as light and Moses and Elijah, appear, then a bright cloud overshadows them, and a voice from the cloud is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (Matt. 17:1-5), but the verse most likely refers to the disciples who witnessed Jesus after his resurrection.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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