

Matthew Chapter 16 Continued

Matthew 16:18 "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

“Upon this rock”: The word for “Peter”, “Petros, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with petra which means a foundation boulder (7:24-25).

Since the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 3:11), and the head (Eph. 5:23), of the church, it is a mistake to think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Eph. 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter.

So Jesus’ words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone. Peter himself explains the imagery in his first epistle. The church is built of “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5), who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Christ Himself is the “corner stone” (1 Pet. 2:6-7).

The word “church” is a translation of ekklesia, meaning “called out” or “assembly.” In the New Testament, it usually refers to a local group of Christians.

In this sense a church is an assembly of baptized believers under the discipline of the Word of God. They are organized to carry out the Great Commission, the administration of New Testament ordinances, and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

When a group of Christians today follows this example, it is a church in the biblical sense of the word. In the New Testament, Christians assembled as churches for fellowship, instruction, and worship and to carry out the Great Commission.

Perhaps the best-known New Testament churches were at Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and the other six cities mentioned (in Revelation 2 and 3).

Every Christian should follow the example of New Testament believers by identifying with a local church, and getting involved in its ministry.

In this, Jesus was telling Peter that His church would be built on the foundational rock of truth, which had just issued from Peter's mouth. All the blessed (believers in the Lord Jesus Christ), have this truth from the Father.

Jesus promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. The phrase “shall not prevail”, should be understood as meaning “shall not stand against.” The imagery would then picture the church as being on the offensive against the gates of hell.

While Jesus' resurrection certainly will overcome the sting of death, it will also enable His church to aggressively and offensively attack the gates of hell (usage as Satan's kingdom in Job 38:17; Isa. 38:10; Psalm 107:18); by snatching out victims from darkness into His glorious kingdom of light. The church is on the offensive here and hell is on the defensive.

Verses 19-20: The Lord promises to Peter and the other apostles "the keys of the kingdom." This means that Peter will have the right to enter the kingdom himself, and preaching the gospel would be the means of opening the kingdom of heaven.

The Book of Acts shows us this process at work. By his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40), Peter opened the door of the kingdom for the first time. The expressions "bind" and "loose" were common in Jewish legal phraseology, meaning to declare forbidden or to declare allowed.

Peter and the other disciples (see 18:18), were to continue on earth the work of Christ in preaching the gospel and declaring God's will to men, and were armed with the same authority He Himself possessed.

Matthew 16:19 "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

"The keys of the kingdom of heaven": These represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter (and by extension all other believers), authority to declare what was bound or loosed in heaven. This echoed the promise of (John 20:23), where Christ gave the disciple authority to forgive or retain the sins of people.

All this must be understood in the context of (18:15-17), where Christ laid out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church. The sum of it all means that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God's Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven.

The church's authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When they make such judgments on the basis of God's Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they "bind" or "loose" on earth is already "bound" or "loosed" in heaven.

When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.

You see, Jesus has based entrance into heaven on belief in the truth, which is Him. A key opens something, and truly the way to heaven is open to the true believer. God has given these true believers great power through the name of Jesus. This is a spiritual gift from Jesus.

The strength of the enemy is almost overwhelming, but we can bind that spirit through the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus actually binds it for us. The same is true of loosing. It is the power of Jesus in us.

Matthew 16:20 "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."

“Tell no man that he was the Messiah”: His reasons for it might be, lest his enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, should be the more provoked and incensed against him, and seek his death before his time; and lest the jealousy of the Romans should be stirred up.

Who might fear he would set up himself against Caesar, as king of the Jews, which might lead them to take measures obstructive of his further designs; and lest some persons, hearing of this, should rise and proclaim him king of the Jews, who were big with the notion of the Messiah being a temporal prince. And moreover, because the disciples were to attest the truth of this after his resurrection.

It was not time for this to be revealed. Even today, when you speak of Jesus being God manifest in the flesh, it causes people to hate you. Nevertheless, I shall proclaim it to everyone who will hear.

Matthew 16:21 "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

“From that time”: This marks the beginning of a new emphasis in Matthew’s account. He turns his attention from Jesus’ public ministry to His private instructions for the disciples, which took on a new, somber tone. The disciples had confessed their faith in His as Messiah. From then on, He began to prepare them for His death.

Jesus then announces His coming rejection and death at Jerusalem. “From that time forth:” Now that the disciples’ faith is established enough to bear it; He openly reveals His coming rejection. Thus, from this point onward, the Lord’s ministry seeks to prepare His followers for the suffering that awaited Him and that would so disappoint their hopes.

“Elders” were the religious leaders. The word probably denotes members of the Sanhedrin. The words “killed” and “raised again the third day” clearly indicate the divine Messiah’s awareness of His earthly mission and destiny.

Jesus did not want His own to be unaware of the fate that lay ahead for Him. He was trying to tell them that the learned in the law would have Him killed, believing they were doing God a favor. He also, gave them hope of the resurrection.

They were just not ready for this message. When persecution arises even today, many will flee.

Verses 22-28: "Be it far from thee:" The sentence seems to mean literally "Have mercy on yourself," which would signify, "God forbid!" Peter's instantaneous reaction to our lord's new teaching shows how foreign to their way of thinking was this concept of His suffering.

"Satan:" The Lord recognized in Peter's words a repetition of the temptations to avoid the cross that He had undergone in the wilderness. The word translated "offense" (Greek skandalon), means a "trap" or "snare." "Savorest (Greek phroneo), means, "You don't look at things from God's point of view, but from man's." It occurs (in Romans 8:5 and Philippians 2:5), meaning to adopt and maintain an attitude of mind upon which one's life and actions are based.

"Deny himself," that is, refuse his own claims upon himself. "Take up:" The meaning is "lift up." It is a stronger word than that used (in 10:38), and implies a lifting of the cross on high, so that all may see it. This is the strongest statement in the New Testament about the disciple's need to crucify himself, by yielding to the claims of Christ's lordship over him.

Matthew 16:22 "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

Then Peter took him, this may mean either that he interrupted him, or that he took him aside, or that he took him by the hand as a friend. This latter is probably the true meaning. Peter was strongly attached to him. He could not bear to think of Jesus' death.

He expected moreover, that he would be the triumphant Messiah. In his ardor and confidence, and strong attachment, he seized him by the hand as a friend, and said, "Be it far from thee." This phrase might have been translated, "God be merciful to thee; this shall not be unto thee." It expressed Peter's strong desire that it might not be.

This "rebuke" was not the same as it is usually used. It meant Peter just did not want this to happen to Jesus. He just would not accept it.

Matthew 16:23 "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Mark says, "when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter": Peter had taken him aside, and was arguing the case privately with him; but what he said was so offensive to him, that he chose to reprove him publicly before the disciples; and therefore, turned himself from him to them, in a way of resentment, and said unto Peter; in their hearing, and before them all, get thee behind me, Satan.

Thou art an offence unto me; or a stumbling block to me, a cause of stumbling and failing; not that he really was, but he endeavored to be. It may be observed, that nothing was more offensive to Christ, than to endeavor to divert him from the work his father called him to.

He was telling Peter (he was looking at this from the earthly standpoint), he did not understand the purposes of God. This is not a rebuff of the person of Peter, but rather of the spirit of evil which would try to tempt Jesus not to go through with the death of the cross.

Matthew 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

(See the notes on Matthew 10:38).

Jesus told these disciples and His followers for all ages, if you think it is going to be easy to follow Me, you are wrong. It is a life of self-denial and sacrifice.

To follow Jesus, we must die daily to self and pick up whatever burden has been allotted for us to carry without complaining; following in the footsteps of Jesus. Not living our lives for self, but letting Jesus live through us.

Matthew 16:25 "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

That is, shall wish to save his life, at the expense of his conscience, and casting aside the cross, he shall lose it, the very evil he wishes to avoid shall overtake him. And he shall lose his soul in the bargain.

See then how necessary it is to renounce one's self! But whatsoever a man loses in this world, for his steady attachment to Christ and his cause, he shall have amply made up to him in the eternal world.

You see, to be truly Jesus', we must allow it to be His life and not ours, as we read in:

Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

You see, it is Christ in us living this life.

Matthew 16:26 "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

“Exchange”: At the judgment when he faces the disastrous hell of remorse and suffering for his lost soul, with what will he buy it back from perdition? Nothing.

Life is temporary at the very best. We could possess all the world's goods, and still be lost. In fact, we probably would be lost. It reminds me of the rich man in the Bible who decided he had it made and started building new buildings to hold his wealth. Then God required his soul, and he left it all behind.

We will stand before Jesus. Then it won't matter how great we were here. Only the treasures we have laid up in heaven will count. You see, it would be no price at all to give all to Jesus, and exchange 70 years here for all the eons of eternity in heaven.

Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

“Shall come ... shall reward”: There is coming a time of rewards in the future for believers (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:8-10; Rev. 22:12). Here however, the Lord was concerned with the reward of the ungodly, final and eternal judgment (Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

You see, there is coming a day when the eastern sky shall open up and Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords, shall appear with His angels and shall blow the silver trumpet to redeem us from this earth. On that day, we shall see Him in all His majesty.

Jesus is the Judge of the earth. He shall judge those who are true believers of Him not guilty of any sins, and He will reward those who worked and were martyred for Him. Works do not get you into heaven, but they get you rewards after you get there.

Matthew 16:28 "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

“Some ... standing”: In all three of the synoptic gospels, this promise is made immediately prior to the Transfiguration (Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36). Furthermore, the word for “kingdom” can be translated “royal splendor.” Therefore, it seems most natural to interpret this promise as a reference to the Transfiguration, which “some” of the disciples, Peter, James and John would witness only 6 days later.

This cannot refer to the end of the world, and there is no need of referring it to the destruction of Jerusalem. “Taste of death”: That is, die. Before they die they shall see this.

Son of man coming in his kingdom, Mark and Luke have explained this:

Mark 9:1, "Until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power;"

Luke 9:27, "Till they see the kingdom of God." The meaning evidently is, "till they shall see my kingdom," i.e., my church, now small, feeble, and despised, greatly enlarged, established, and spreading with great rapidity and extent.

All this was accomplished.

Matthew Chapter 16 Continued Questions

1. What promise did Jesus make Peter about the church?
2. What foundation rock is the church built upon?

3. Who are the blessed?"
4. What did Jesus promise to Peter and the other disciples from the kingdom of heaven?
5. The true believers' power comes from what?
6. What did Jesus tell the disciples not to tell?
7. What did Jesus tell the disciples that worried them?
8. When Peter did not want Jesus to suffer, what did Jesus call him?
9. What did Jesus give in the way of hope?
10. Peter did not understand the _____ of God.
11. What two things must we do to follow Jesus?
12. Following Jesus is a life of what?
13. If we are truly Jesus', our lives belong to whom?
14. What does Galatians 2:20 teach?
15. What is our soul worth?
16. What is the only wealth that matters?
17. When the Son of man comes, who will be with Him?
18. What will Jesus be called when He comes in the sky?
19. What type trumpet will blow?