

Week 17

Matthew series: Ministry of Jesus:

Matthew 16 Lessons in Faith part 3

This chapter is a lulu. What does that mean? There are several verses that are hard to understand. I poured over several commentaries and articles on Matthew 16:4; 16:18-19; and 16:28. These verses do not have easy answers. If they did, then the interpretations I read would have been unanimous. I assure you they were not. We also have several famous verses of interest. This might not be a famous chapter like Matthew 4 (the temptation) or Matthew 28 (the great commission), yet this chapter is near the middle of this book. I will call it a pivotal chapter in believing and having faith in Jesus.

I keep writing down the words *brilliant writing* by the author Matthew. If this is God breathed writing then God has brilliantly constructed this book. Either way, chapter by chapter, I see so much. In a way, I am stunned each time I read it. It's like a steno gram. They are pictures within pictures. The more you stare at it the more you begin to see something else within. We have the attack of the religious on Jesus. The attack of the disciples and peter on Jesus teachings. Both groups don't see or understand. What did you not see in God that you see now?

Matthew 16:4 **"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."**

Numbers 14:11 **"The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?"**

We get hung up a lot. I knew a man who had a Greek orthodox Bible. Inside that Bible were comments by other scholars to help us understand passages. He kept quoting the commentaries more than the scriptures. In the conversation he believed these insights to be scripture too. In a way, that is the point of this chapter. By faith we are to believe. What does that mean? We see an apple fall and we are told its gravity, yet we can't see gravity. We feel the wind on our face but we can't see wind. However, we are told it exists. The disciples and the religious rulers grew up learning about God. Yet, they could not see God. Meeting God forced them to change their thinking. How do you see the Bible now?

Matthew 16:3 **"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."**

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is assurance of [things] hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.”

In a way, this chapter’s theme is “what will you do with the keys of heaven?” The Pharisees and Sadducees were the remnant of God. Before Jesus birth there was a small uprising or war called the Maccabees. The remaining Jewish nation was under Roman rule. God’s Jewish religion was hanging on by a thread through these groups of men. They kept the laws of Moses. They kept the word of God (Old Testament). Yet, they had taken religion too far. They made it more than was intended. They were given the keys of heaven on earth, but those keys did not represent God rightly. Enter Jesus.

Do you really think Jesus came just because God decided it was time? Yes and no. Jesus came because things were going badly within the kingdom on earth. Teachings and understandings of God’s will and plan were lead astray. Today is similar. Which church or denomination represent God rightly? That is a good and scary question. Who has the right doctrine, theology, or answers to the Bible and God? We are not that different today than when Jesus came two thousand years ago. I think we are more of a mess personally. However, God is still here today.

I am a postman as well as a pastor. I deliver to a church called the true Jesus church. Is the Pentecostal church down the road not the true Jesus church? This chapter is a warning to our faith. Be careful of what you learn by men. See Jesus in the Bible words, not men. Our idea of what is true or right just might be totally wrong. I have a study of knowing God. I encourage you to read it. To know Jesus well is to know the Old testament well. Jesus quotes that book all the time. You could be led astray because you forgot to know God first. How can you see Jesus today, if you cannot see what you’re looking for?

Mark 8:18 “Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?”

Numbers 22:31 “Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So, he bowed low and fell facedown.”

Read Matthew 16. Also read Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1 is not easy to understand for a new Christian. There is hidden meaning to those who are familiar with the whole Bible. However, if you look closely, like a steno gram, you might see Jesus in that chapter. It’s about seeing him in scripture, the prophets, and within the word of God.

1. Verses 1-12 are all about two words discerning and understanding. What do you see? What do you know for sure? I have seen a red sky at night. That familiar saying runs through my head “red sky at night sailors delight.” The cool part is Jesus knew that saying too right here in Matthew 16. We can’t prove it to be true but we believe it. That is exactly what Jesus was saying to these learned men of

God. They learned God but did they know God. Obviously, they saw Jesus but they did not see God the Father in Jesus.

It says in verse 16:1 that they were testing Jesus. In the end, Jesus is testing them. Jesus asks them what they see of the coming kingdom. Reality is they did not care. These two religious groups of men cared more for the law, beliefs, and traditions than what God really was doing. It's really interesting the words Jesus chose to use. I think Matthew thought it was cool too. These religious men were at odds over resurrection, the law of Moses, and death. Jesus slaps a doozy right down the middle of these two groups. Jonah dead in the belly of a fish for three days. It's brilliant. Who was testing who?

Then we have this hilarious situation with the disciples. Recently they witnessed two miracles of feedings of five and four thousand. They did not bring the leftovers with them. Jesus begins to talk about bread. They think Jesus is chastising them for not bringing bread this time. They could not see Jesus clearly at times. Bread in those days usually did not have yeast in it. Jewish customs frowned upon it. Yeast changes bread. Jesus was pointing out that the teaching of that day was changing religion for the worst. We need to see that today also. Be mindful and know Jesus.

Matthew 16:11" 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."

Exodus 12:17 "You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance."

2. Have you ever sat in class and knew the answer? If you studied and know, it's the greatest feeling. Just like the reverse. If you did not study, you keep your hand and head down. This is Bible class with Jesus. Jesus the teacher asks who he is. All the disciple students raise their hands. Each has an answer. Then there is Peter. He waits, he knows the right answer. "you are the Christ Jesus." Jesus gives him a star sticker to put on his hand. Peter got it right. His finest moment.

Did you notice that they knew? I bet Jesus had told them in previous classes who he was. Then Jesus anointed Peter as head of the class. On you Peter I will build my church. You will be stronger than Hades. Wow, that is a great promotion on a great answer. Good for you Peter.

I just want to mention a few things. First is verses 18. My dad asked me if Peter was the first Pope. I suppose he was. Peter is appointed by Jesus not anointed by Peter. There is a difference. Secondly is verse 19. The keys. The Keys to heaven means Peter has the responsibility to invite people into heaven. Not the authority to let anyone in. I have a space key to my dad's house. He trusts me. Yet, I must be careful with those keys. Further to that, Peter was responsible for the image of God. That is amazing. This passage is not saying heaven and earth will be the same. It is saying we should make the earth more like heaven. Back to the keys. I was told to leave a place better than it was. Like Spiderman says "with great power comes great responsibility."

Matthew 1:19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Colossians 3:23-24 **“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”**

3. What is your greatest failure? For me personally it was my first marriage. I believed it was meant to be. I took it personally that it failed. Peter was just handed the keys to heaven. He was the rock. He was the church. My dad called him the first Pope. He was the big kahuna, CEO, and President of Christianity. Jesus tells his class of disciples that he will suffer and die at the hands of his enemies. President Peter says not on my watch. Jesus in turn throws The President under the bus. It's the beginning of Peters fall from the top.

Jesus says in John 14:6 he is the way, the truth, and the life, nobody comes to the Father except by me. Peter is thinking he is in charge now. Jesus reminds him (no) by calling Peter Satan. Wow, is that a blow. To me, it's like the teacher saying your smart but still so stupid. Peter, the disciples, and even the religious rulers just did not get the Kingdom. You don't make the kingdom. You don't own the kingdom or the keys. Within Peters fail is an epic misunderstanding. Today, we still are Peter. Christians defend the church as if it's not fallible. The church will never fail because Jesus said so right here in Matthew 16. Yet, we abuse kids, steal money from the poor, and take away freedom and grace that God gave to us.

There is a monumental lesson to be learned here. Yes, we the church, are ordained to be Gods representatives. We are the rock of Christ. Yet, those keys are not ours. The word is not ours. God's will, plan, and way are not ours. Peter was thrown under the Jesus bus because church will go one of two ways. It becomes ours or stays Gods. Matthew is teaching us to be mindful of the plan. God's plan, not ours.

Matthew 16:23 **“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.”**

John 14:6 **“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

Isaiah 55:8 **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.”**

4. Matthew is pleading, teaching, and begging us to listen. There is a message within this Gospel story. It would be easy to mention the famous verses like Peter is the rock. No other sign but Jonah is a cool verse. The keys, binding, and loosing on heaven and earth are epic. Get behind me Satan is nasty. Even saying some won't taste death until Jesus is glorified is interesting. Matthew 16 is full of one liners. Yet, books and books have been written on Peter and (his) church. Did some disciples not die until Jesus returns? What is allowed in heaven or on earth? Boy, we love to dissect the Bible.

This chapter is truly a steno gram. We pull out the big picture stuff but ignore the meaning inside. This chapter is screaming for us to listen. Matthew wants us to see. The religious rulers could see the sunset but could not see heaven on earth. The disciples could interpret bread but could not see false teaching. Peter wanted to be the Pope, but he forgot about his boss. There is a parable of a buried coin in Matthew 25. It's what you do with what's given that matters.

In this chapter Jesus mentions the feeding of five and four thousand, yet hundreds of books have been written on that subject. Many Bible experts have said those two stories are the same. Yet, Jesus says clearly, they are not. Most of the time we are looking for what is not there. We assume too much. This chapter is teaching us an important lesson in our Christian faith. God first, kingdom second, and we are last. Are we least important? Jesus never thought in those terms. It's about respect, not about who is winning. Remember that always.

Matthew 16:27 "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."

Matthew 20:16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

What it all means?

Some preachers make a point for 20 minutes they could have said in two. I have done that several times. I could go on and on. Some will say I already did. Yet, I want to stress the point of reading Matthew. He is training us to be Christian. He gives us foundation with Old Testament examples. He gives us Jesus lineage answers. There are facts and observations. All these help us decide if Jesus is the real Christ. We are shown that Jesus overcame the world for us. He was tempted by the Devil and the religious rulers. Jesus knows his Bible.

From there on in Matthew is showing us the pitfalls of religion. Watch the religious rulers. They put themselves and the law ahead of the heart of God. Matthew 16:27 is important. Jesus says he will come in his father's glory. Read it again. Not in Jesus glory but the Father's. Jesus puts the Father and the kingdom ahead of him in respect. All these verses tell us how to approach the keys of heaven. They are not a sword. They hold power but it's not a sword to slay people. They are the way, but not our way.

What it means is we hold the power of God inside us. This spirit is locked up within us who believe in the Christ Jesus. Matthew wants us to be responsible with the keys. Power, and image of God. What will you do with this opportunity? Some ruin churches. Some distort the word. Some abuse, steal, and lie with it. If you call yourself a Christian, what are you doing with those keys?

Matthew 16:23 "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."

Job 1:12 "The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man, himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord."