

Notes for Matthew –Chapter 16 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction – “Consider The Source”

1. When someone insults you, before you get upset, stop and consider the source.
 - a. If someone compliments you, ask if you respect that person who gave the compliment.
 - b. If the source is biblically inspired and you take your bible seriously, sometimes we (yes we!) have to ask ourselves if we are obeying that source.
2. This concept of “consider the source” ties together a handful of stories in Chapter 16.
 - a. First we have the story of some Pharisees and Sadducees asking Jesus for a miracle.
 - i. Jesus refuses to give them what they want and only gives them a bible reference to prove that he is the Messiah.
 - b. Next is Jesus tells the disciples to beware of teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - i. Jesus is warning to consider the source when listening to these groups.
 - c. Finally we have the story of “Good Peter and Bad Peter”.
 - i. Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah and is complimented by Jesus.
 - ii. Jesus says it was the Holy Spirit who inspired Peter to make that statement.
 - iii. A moment later Peter rebukes Jesus after Jesus predicts his death.
 - iv. Jesus tells Peter that the devil is the source of that rebuking.
 - d. The final story is Jesus (as our “great source”) teaching what is the cost of discipleship.

Verses 1-2a: Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked,

² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

1. First of all let's discuss who are the Pharisees and Sadducees:
 - a. The Pharisee's are very strict in their interpretation of the Old Testament Commands. In summary, their view on this issue is, “When in doubt, take an extreme view of how to interpret the Law as we don't want to offend God”.
 - b. The Pharisee's emphasis in their views on Judaism was on their own interpretations. Some of their traditions and commentaries were taken as God-inspired as the bible itself.
 - c. Modern Orthodox Judaism (one of the 3 branches of Judaism) as based on the Pharisee's.
 - d. The Saducee's are associated as being “Pro-Roman”. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus does not say the “Pharisees and the Sadducees”, but of the “Pharisee's and Herod”. (Mark 8:15)
 - e. The Sadducees denied the literalness of such aspects as angels, the resurrection, a coming Messiah, etc. They took the bible as a bunch of stories designed to teach us life lessons.
3. Imagine some extremely zealous Democrats and Republicans coming together to test Jesus. What we have here with the Pharisee's and Saducee's is “enemies united against the common enemy”.
4. Let's get back to the verse. The key phrase is they ask for a “sign from heaven”.
 - a. Let me paraphrase what they were asking: “OK Jesus, we heard about you doing these miracles. We believe Satan has that type of power too. Prove to us that you are from God with “heavenly” miracles as opposed to just “demonically possible” miracles.
 - b. A lesson to learn from this verse is “God-The-Father is under no obligation to show prove Himself to you. God won't manifest Himself in a miraculous way just to prove He's real.
 - i. I don't believe God responds to the question, “OK God, prove you are real, and then I will follow you”. It is always the other way around. Once we commit our live to God, it is then we begin to see Him work in our life.
 - ii. The most holy title for God (“Jehovah”) simply means, “I am” or “I am that I am”. The idea is that God exists and he doesn't have to explain himself.
 - iii. The corollary is God is more than willing to help those who come praying to him as God. Coming to Jesus just to test who he is won't get you a response. God is under no obligation to prove who is He to you.

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Verses 2b-4: 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."⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

1. Let me try to paraphrase what Jesus said: "When it comes to predicting the weather, you are aware of the common cliché that you can judge the weather by the color of the sky at dusk and dawn. That is a good cliché and holds true. Yet, you people, who majored in Old Testament studies in seminary ☺ don't recognize that the "signs" of the Old Testament point to me and you should know that I am the promised Messiah."
2. This set of verses is a reminder that Jesus holds you and I accountable for the information we do know. Jesus was much tougher on the religious leaders than the common folk as they had access to the bible and studied it thoroughly.
3. It may be helpful here to summarize the story of Jonah in a few sentences.
 - a. Jonah is a short 4-chapter book in the Old Testament. It is logically assumed to be written by Jonah himself, but it is never stated so. The story opens with God telling Jonah to go preach to the (gentile) City of Nineveh that they either repent of their ways or God will destroy that city. Nineveh was a menace to Israel and a threat. It would be like asking a modern Jew to go to Germany during WWII and to preach repentance.
 - b. Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh, so he took a boat in the opposite direction. The boat owners threw Jonah overboard as they blamed him for a storm. A "great fish" swallowed Jonah. Three days later the fish spit up Jonah, and off he went to Nineveh.
 - c. Jesus is teaching that just like Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in a great fish, and then "resurrected" to life is a pattern of Jesus on the cross.
 - d. The great miracle of the story is not that Jonah survived three days in a fish. The great miracle is that Nineveh actually collectively repented of their sins!
4. Here's my main point (pay attention! ☺): Where does it say anywhere in the story of Jonah that "Jonah is a model of the Messiah to come"?
 - a. Which leads us to the biblical concept of "typology". Biblical "typology" simply means you can study people in the Old Testament as "types" of Jesus.
 - b. Remember what Jesus taught about himself in the Old Testament.
 - i. "You diligently study the (Old Testament) Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." John 5:39-40, NIV
 - ii. Compared to the volume of the Old Testament, there are not that many passages that blatantly say, "this is about a future king who will rule forever". There are hints here and there, and some passages that are more blunt than others.
 - iii. But hints and some blunt passages are not the "volume" of the Old Testament. Jesus is saying he is the main topic of the Old Testament, via "typology".
 - iv. The fact that Jesus himself says, "Jonah speaks of me" is one of many New Testament validations where one can study the Old Testament and look for "types" or "patterns" of Jesus' purpose, ministry, life and death.
 - v. I will argue that every aspect of Jesus' life, miracles, death and resurrection are predicted somewhere in the Old Testament, mainly through "typology".

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Verses 5-6: 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." They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

1. Remember that "yeast", often translated "leaven" is a negative-Jewish idiom.
 - a. On Passover, part of the ritual is to clean the house of any yeast (leaven).
 - b. It is word-picture of sin, because if you leave yeast (or sin) alone, it grows.
2. So since we know Jesus is talking about the sin of the Pharisees and Sadducees, what specific sin is Jesus talking about? The text doesn't say, so some speculation is required:
 - a. In my opinion, the danger of the Pharisees is the danger of being too strict without any balance of having grace and compassion.
 - b. The Pharisees followed were obsessed with their rules and traditions to a point of a lack of any compassion (except for other Pharisees, of course).
 - c. The danger of Pharisees is to elevate yourself or your self-discipline following of rules above God.
 - d. The danger of Pharisees does creep into Christian churches. There are churches where their traditions are as important as bible doctrines. There are churches where specific dress ware is required, or particular kind of music is required. Any exception in their mind "means you are not one of us and don't belong here".
 - e. The modern "Sadducees" is the view of "don't take your bible too seriously". This is the danger where you allegorize the entire bible and refuse to take any part of it seriously.
 - f. Where the Pharisees pose the danger of being too strict and lack love, the danger of the Sadducees is too much compassion without any standard for Christian living.
 - g. You can always tell when you are in a church where Sadducees teaching comes in. This is a church that uses tag lines like "we love everyone just as you are. We will never condemn your actions here. Just come as you are and we will love you just as you are".
 - h. The balance of the Christian life is to understand God's grace and God's desire to see people change for the better.
3. Remember my opening premise is to "consider the source".
 - a. When someone at church tells you do something, consider the source. Is that person being biblical? Are they having a good balance of God's grace and God's requirement for your life? Do they want you to be more like Jesus or more like them?

Verses 8-12: 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 gathered? 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."

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.

1. Jesus warned the disciples of the "yeast" (or "leaven") of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The disciples misunderstood what Jesus was teaching and thought He was talking about literal bread.
2. Jesus point here is that he is not being literal in this analogy, but Jesus is using a word-picture of how "yeast" is a word-picture of the false-teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
3. This section is a reminder of when to take the bible literally and when to take it figuratively.
 - a. Remember the idiom, "When the plain text makes perfect sense, seek no other sense". Jesus is saying that his use of "yeast" did not represent literal bread, but false teaching.
 - b. I take the view to take my bible literally unless the author says so, such as the case here, when Jesus was being figurative.

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

1. Caesarea Philippi is a Roman-built town 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It is primarily non-Jewish in population. Jesus probably went here with the disciples to get away from the crowd.
 - a. Jesus main point is what comes out of the mouth is far more important than what we eat.

Verses 14-16: 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 Christ, the Son of the living God."

1. If you read Verse 13 by itself, it appears Jesus is doing a marketing survey. ☺
 - a. Jesus is asking that question to see if the disciples are listening to him or to what other people are saying about him! It was about getting the disciples focus on Jesus and not others.
 - b. The application to you and I is "Are we using our bible to discover who Jesus is, or are we going by what other people say?"
2. Remember that Matthew is writing this book to a Jewish audience. The main purpose of the book is to argue who Jesus is and who Jesus is not. Matthew may have been dispelling the false-assumptions of that day of about Jesus with these verses.
3. Finally, we have Peter's statement of, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
 - a. Peter becomes the spokesman of the twelve. He is speaking on behalf of all twelve disciples.
 - b. What they didn't comprehend at this point is the role and purpose of the Messiah.
 - c. They were looking for Jesus to overthrow Rome.

Verse 17: Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

1. Remember my opening premise of "consider the source". Jesus is saying that when Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah, it was God the Father revealing that fact through Peter.
2. Remember that God wants to mature us as believers. God gives us the "no" answer, as He knows best for us. Sometimes he wants to teach a lesson to us.
3. Chronologically, this is not the first time in the lifetime of the 12 disciples that somebody declared Jesus as Lord and Messiah. (References: John 1:48, Matthew 14:33b)
 - a. So what makes this statement by Peter "more special" than the other times?
 - b. The answer is, this is the first time anybody confessed Jesus as the Messiah without any special miracle or prophetic comment by Jesus.
 - c. Peter made this statement based on what he saw of Jesus. It was the logical conclusion.
 - d. We have all seen people praise God when a miracle happens and for example, they are rescued out of a great danger. The key is what do they do with their life once the emotion of that miracle is over. This is why I don't believe miracles are enough to change people. There has to be a desire in their heart to want to change on permanent basis.
4. Notice the bible does not say, "the earth shook" when Peter made this proclamation. ☺
 - a. My point is Peter felt nothing special when he declared Jesus as God. Jesus asked him a question and Peter answer it. No special mystical aspects from Peter.
 - b. My point is also that is how God works in our life. It is not a feeling or a special vision. What we think is "just logic" is God putting thoughts in our heads.
 - c. We will soon read of Jesus saying that Satan planted a thought in Peter's head.
 - i. I doubt that statement was any different in Peter's mind than this confession of Jesus as God by Peter.
 - ii. Both God and Satan can plant thoughts in our heads. If you have doubts, think of all the rotten thoughts you have had since you have become a Christian.
 - iii. This is why we are bible-dependant and prayer-dependant to discern God's will.

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Verse 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.

1. First, you have to understand that Jesus is using a play-on-words.
 - a. The word for Peter means “little stone”. The Greek word for “rock” is a different word.
 - b. Jesus then says on this rock I (Jesus) will build my church.
2. Roman Catholics use this verse as part of their basis that Peter was the first pope.
 - a. There is no historical or biblical evidence that Peter was the head of the church, or even the head of the Jerusalem church (James was) or the Roman church.
 - b. Jesus is not saying that upon Peter, he will build this church.
 - c. Next, let’s look at what Peter himself said about “stones”: As you come to him (Jesus), the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1st Peter, 2:4-5).
3. So when Jesus says he will build this church on this “stone”, what is he talking about?
 - a. The answer is the confession of Peter that Jesus is God and Lord.
 - b. Peter confessed Jesus as such. On that confession the church is built.
 - c. Two verses after Peter called Jesus a “living stone”, Peter quoted Psalm 118:22: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone” (1 Peter 2:7).
4. The last part of this verse says, “and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”
 - a. Is a “gate” an offensive weapon or a defensive weapon? (Answer is “defensive!”)
 - b. This world belongs to Satan. In Matthew Chapter 4, Satan tempted Jesus by saying “All this (the world) I will give you...if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matt. 4:9, NIV). This would not be a temptation unless Satan “owned” the world in the first place.
 - c. Jesus is saying Satan is trying to protect his kingdom with the “gates of hell”. Jesus is teaching the power given to the church will be greater than the power given to Satan.

Verse 19: I (Jesus) will give you (Peter) 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."

1. In this verse we get the misconception that Peter is in charge of heaven. There are lots of jokes based on the idea that Peter guards the gate of heaven and he decides who gets in and out.
2. To find out what the verse means, all we have to do is read ahead to further in Matthew:
 - a. Jesus says, “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:15-18, NIV)
 - b. Jesus gives the exact same quote in Matthew 18:18 than he does here in 16:19.
 - c. “Matthew 18” teaches that Jesus is saying to Peter that God gives us (the church) the power to decide who is and who is not part of our Christian fellowship.
 - d. Notice the verse says nothing about hell. It says, “bound in heaven”. Nobody is bound in heaven in the afterlife. They are either sent to heaven or hell. Therefore Jesus must be talking about something else. Jesus is talking about being part/not part of the church.
 - e. Peter was the first to “logically” confess Jesus as God. Peter was the first to speak after the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36) and the first to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10-11). In that sense God did give Peter the “first” to decide who was part of the church.

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Verse 20-21: Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. 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, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

1. Jesus is about to change the focus of his ministry. There are still healings and teachings, but now He will focus on "the cross". The disciples still thought He was going to overthrow Rome.

Verses 22-23: 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 things of God, but the things of men."

1. You have to catch the contradiction in terms "Never, Lord". Either Jesus is the Lord of your life, or he isn't. We can never say, "Never Lord" if he commands us to do something.
2. Jesus said that Satan himself planted that thought in Peter's mind.
3. Back in Chapter 4, when Satan was tempting Jesus, the whole point of the three temptations can be summarized as "Hey Jesus, you are God. It is not necessary for you to die on the cross. Just show off your power and everyone will believe you."
4. God wants us to come to him by faith. The bible is full of evidence to support Jesus as God, but I find that you first have to come to Jesus by faith, and then you will clearly see the evidence. This gets back to the Jesus denying the Pharisees any "sign from heaven" as proof.

Verse 24: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

1. Let us think about this passage in context of the surrounding verses.
 - a. First we had Peter give the God-inspired statement that Jesus is Lord.
 - b. Then we had Peter give the Satan-inspired statement telling Jesus to avoid the cross.
 - c. Now Jesus is saying that if you want to follow Jesus, you must give up everything.
2. Jesus calls us to be his disciples. The word disciple and discipline have the same root word. It is the idea that everything we are, everything we own, and our actions now belongs to Jesus. He is in charge and we take our marching orders from Jesus. Our Christian life begins with the confession of Jesus as God. We "mature" by our growing dependence upon God for all we have.

Verses 25-26: For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

²⁶ What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

1. To Jesus, all the world has to offer is less than the value of your soul.
2. After we have given our lives to Jesus, God the Father says in effect, "OK, now I want you to take the specific talents/powers/ success/ riches I have given you so you can use it for My glory. Our rewards in heaven are determined by how we use the gifts that God gives us."

Verse 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 he has done.

1. The key word is the "each". "Each" person will be rewarded according to what he has done.
2. Verses 25-26 are talking about the cost to be his disciple. Here Jesus talks about the rewards.

Verse 28: I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

1. This is not a reference to the second coming of Jesus. This verse ties to the next Chapter (17).
2. In Chapter 17, we are going to have the "transfiguration" by Jesus. This is where Jesus "becomes glowing white" and he is talking with Moses and Elijah. Only three of the 12 disciples get to see this miracle. That is why Jesus says some of you will not taste death before this event.