

# Matthew 16 Commentary

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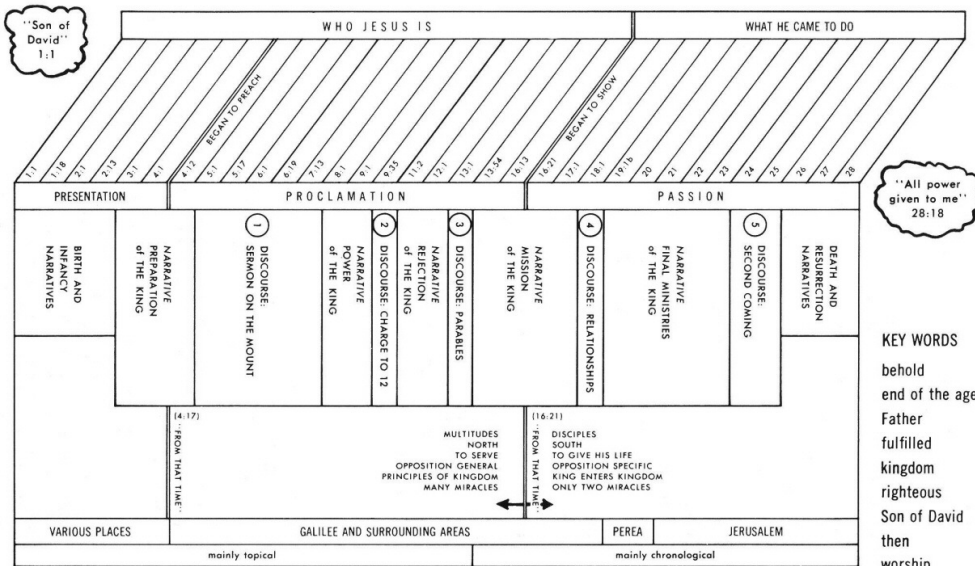
NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [Matthew 16:1](#)
- [Matthew 16:2](#)
- [Matthew 16:3](#)
- [Matthew 16:4](#)
- [Matthew 16:5](#)
- [Matthew 16:6](#)
- [Matthew 16:7](#)
- [Matthew 16:8](#)
- [Matthew 16:9](#)
- [Matthew 16:10](#)
- [Matthew 16:11](#)
- [Matthew 16:12](#)
- [Matthew 16:13](#)
- [Matthew 16:14](#)
- [Matthew 16:15](#)
- [Matthew 16:16](#)
- [Matthew 16:17](#)
- [Matthew 16:18](#)
- [Matthew 16:19](#)
- [Matthew 16:20](#)
- [Matthew 16:21](#)
- [Matthew 16:22](#)
- [Matthew 16:23](#)
- [Matthew 16:24](#)
- [Matthew 16:25](#)
- [Matthew 16:26](#)
- [Matthew 16:27](#)
- [Matthew 16:28](#)

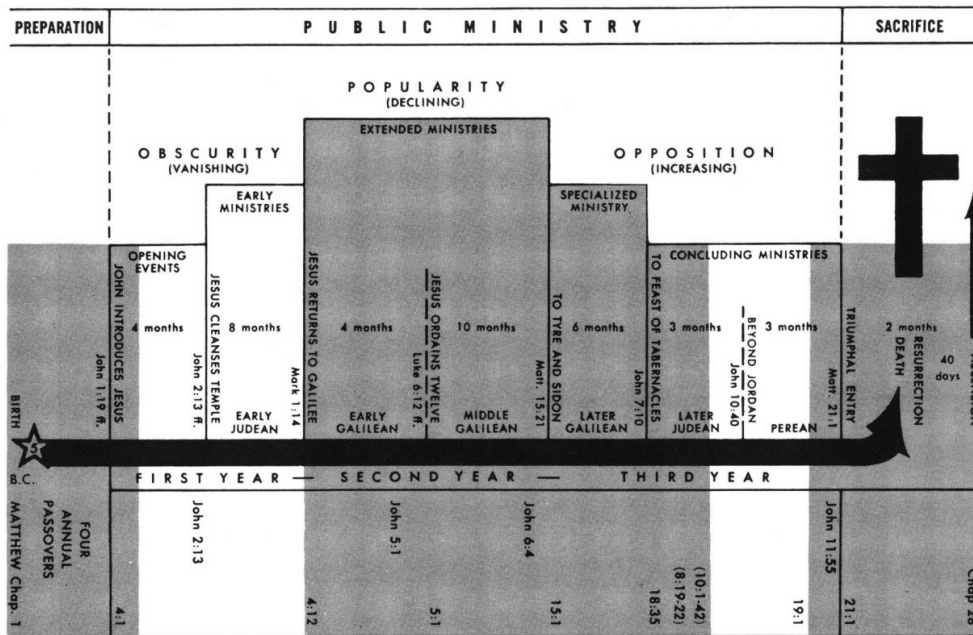
MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



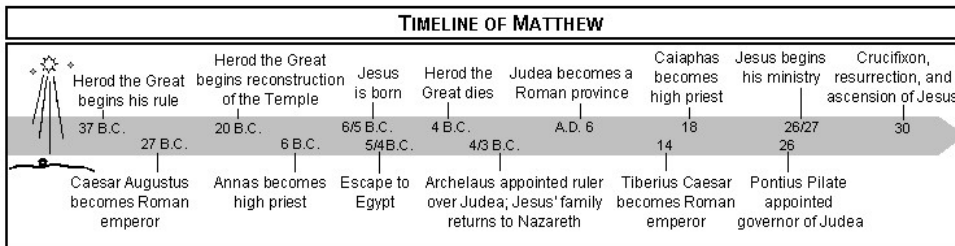
KEY WORDS  
 behold  
 end of the age  
 Father  
 fulfilled  
 kingdom  
 righteous  
 Son of David  
 then  
 worship

Click chart to enlarge  
 Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
 Another Chart from Swindoll

**THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED  
BY MATTHEW (shaded area)**



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#)

**Matthew 16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven**

- **Pharisees:** Mt 5:20 9:11 12:14 15:1 22:15,34 23:2 27:62
- **Sadducees:** Mt 16:6,11 3:7,8 22:23 Mk 12:18 Lu 20:27 Ac 4:1 5:17 23:6-8
- **testing:** Mt 19:3 22:18,35 Mk 10:2 12:15 Lu 10:25 11:16,53,54 20:23 Joh 8:6
- **a sign:** Mt 12:38,39 Mk 8:11-13 Lu 11:16,29,30 12:54-56 Joh 6:30,31 1Co 1:22
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Mark 8:11-12+ The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. 12 Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.

John 2:18+ The Jews then said to Him, "What **sign** do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

Matthew 12:38-42+ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see **a sign** from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for **a sign**; and yet no **sign** will be given to it but the **sign** of Jonah the prophet; 40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42" The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Luke 11:16+ Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him **asign** from heaven.

John 4:48+ So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see **signs** and wonders, you simply will not believe."

1 Corinthians 1:22 For indeed Jews ask for **signs** and Greeks search for wisdom;

**The "Pharisees ([pharisaiois](#)) and Sadducees ([saddoukaiois](#)) came up** - Earlier the "despicable duo" of the scribes and Pharisees had come to test Jesus (Matthew 12:38+). Now another "despicable duo" emerges and is it significant because these two groups were normally hostile to one another and yet here they see Jesus as their common "enemy" and thus become "friends" (see note on "[enemy of my enemy](#)"). "The Pharisees were the ritualists, the Sadducees, the rationalists." (Wuest) This is the first time in Matthew's Gospel that these natural enemies had joined forces to attack Jesus. In Mark's parallel we see this was not a friendly visit for they "began to argue ([present tense](#)) with Him." (Mark 8:11+).

[Knox Chamblin](#) has an interesting note on the association of **the Pharisees and Sadducees** - Given the great differences between the groups, the evidence of Mt 16 is striking. Here they are associated with one another in the closest way. In every instance (vv. 1, 6, 11, 12), both names stand under one definite article ("**the** Pharisees and Sadducees," not "the P's and **the** S's"). The two groups unite in their testing of Jesus, v. 1. Jesus ascribes to both groups a single teaching (*didachae*), Mt 16:12, here pictured as their "yeast," vv. 6, 11. This is most remarkable, given their different points of view - so remarkable that some interpreters infer from Matthew's language that he was ignorant of, or indifferent to, those differences (cf. e.g. [TDNT](#) 7: 52). But this is to miss the intention of both Jesus and the opposition.

[Constable](#) - Representatives of both parties constituted the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish governing body in Israel (cf. Acts 23:6). This delegation, evidently from Jerusalem, represented the most official group of religious leaders that Matthew reported coming to Jesus thus far...The Jews typically looked for **signs** as divine authentication that God was indeed working through people who professed to speak for Him. (1 Cor 1:22). ([Matthew 16 Commentary](#))

[Broadus](#) - Here, as in Matthew 3:7, there is but one article (literally, **the** Pharisees and Sadducees), presenting the Sadducees as accompanying the Pharisees...The Sadducees appear only three times in the Gospel history; (1) witnessing the baptism of John, Matthew 8:7, (2) tempting Jesus here, (3) tempting him, not at the same time with the Pharisees, but separately, in Matthew 22:23. (Mark 12:18 Luke 20:27) They are also spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 16:6,11 f., and are mentioned nowhere else in the Gospels. Only a few weeks before, and not more than a few miles away, Jesus had severely censured the Pharisees as **hypocrites** and violators of God's word (Matthew 15:6,7+) and had spoken of them as **blind guides** of the people, unworthy of notice. Yet the dissembled hostility here indicated was not first awakened by that censure, for they had already accused Him of being in league with Beelzebul. (Matthew 12:24) Some critics think it incredible that **Sadducees** should have come with **Pharisees**. But they were temporarily united by common hostility to Jesus. Compare. Herod and Pilate, Luke 23:12+, and Psalm 2:2. (Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.)

**And testing Jesus** - Matthew states the clear purpose of these serpents seeking a sign! It was to test ([peirazo](#) in the [present tense](#) - continually) Jesus. Their heart was evil and their motives were corrupt for they were not seeking a sign so that they might believe in Him. Like father, like son. These evil men were like their father Satan (Jn 8:44) as Matthew had described when "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** ([peirazo](#)) by the devil." (Mt 4:1+) The devil tested Jesus in an attempt to get Him to sin.

[Barnes](#) - That is, trying him - feigning a desire to see evidence that he was the Messiah, but with a real desire to see him make the attempt to work a miracle and fail, so that they might betray him and ruin him.

[Broadus](#) on **testing Jesus** - (cf. on Mt 4:1,7), with the hope that he will not stand the test, will not be able to show the sign; comp. Matthew 19:3, Mt 22:18,35. The Scribes and Pharisees had asked a sign from him in Matthew 12:38, and were refused. Now the Pharisees and Sadducees make a similar demand specifically for a 'sign from heaven' (so also Mark 8:11), and get (Matthew 16:4) exactly the same refusal as before. (Matthew 12:39) They might be thinking of such signs as when Moses gave bread from heaven, (Ps 78:23-25.; John 6:30-33) Joshua made the sun and moon stand still (Josh 10:12,13), Samuel brought thunder and rain in time of harvest (1 Sa 12:17, 18), Elijah repeatedly called down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10-12), and at Isaiah's word the shadow went back on the dial (Isaiah 38:8); comp. Joel 2:30ff. Origen conjectures that they regarded signs on earth as wrought in Beelzebul. (Matthew 12:24) Probably some Jews really expected celestial signs of Messiah's approach; but the present request was made from bad motives. Jesus promised "great signs from heaven" in connection with his second coming, (Matthew 24:29,30.; Luke 21:11,25; cp. Rev. 15:1) and predicted that the false Christs would show great signs. (Matthew 24:24) (Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew)

**Testing** ([3985](#)) ([peirazo](#) from **peira** = test from **peiro** = pierce to test durability of things) is a morally neutral word simply meaning "to test". Whether the **test** is for a good (as it proved to be in Heb 11:17) or evil depends on the intent of the one giving the test and also on the response of the one tested. (See related

words [dokimazo](#); [peirasmos](#)) Uses of peirazo in Matthew - Matt. 4:1; Matt. 4:3 (If our Lord was tested, rest assured His followers will also be tested!); Matt. 16:1; Matt. 19:3; Matt. 22:18; Matt. 22:35;

Mark alluded to the testing by the religious leaders "Then they sent some of the Pharisees and [Herodians](#) to Him in order **to trap Him in a statement**. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? "Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you **testing** Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." (Mark 12:13-15+)

**They asked Him to show them a sign** ([semeion](#)) **from heaven** - Asked is [eperotao](#) which was a legal technical term that carried the sense of to interrogate or examine as in Acts 5:27+. That is undoubtedly the sense of [eperotao](#) in this context. Jesus because in a sense Jesus was "on trial" (cf "test") before these religious leaders, but it was hardly a fair trial for they had essentially convicted Him and condemned Him to die. They were now looking for some "missteps" or some supposed "blasphemy" by Jesus which would give them an "airtight case" to justify murdering Him! He had already performed many "signs" on earth but that only stiffened their unbelief. Even if He performed a miracle **from heaven** they would not believe in Him! The fascinating thing is that Jesus Himself was the ultimate **sign** for He was God Who had come from Heaven and they were blinded to that incredible truth! In His second coming Matthew refers to Him as a sign writing "And then the **sign** of the Son of Man will appear in the sky (JESUS IS THE SIGN!), and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory." (Mt 24:30+). As Luke had recorded at Jesus' birth "Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, **Behold**, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a **sign** to be opposed" (Lk 2:34+) In short, Jesus Himself was the **sign** at His first coming and at His second coming! Most of the Jewish leaders missed the first **sign**, but they won't miss the second **sign** (indeed a "**sign from Heaven!**") for John writes **"BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him;** and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. ." (Rev 1:7+)

**MacArthur** explains "Popular Jewish superstition held that demons could perform earthly miracles but that only God could perform heavenly ones. **From heaven** indicates the desire to see a miraculous **sign** in the sky. The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a miracle they thought was beyond Jesus, hoping to prove that His power, and therefore His message, were not divine. He would be publicly discredited, and they would be vindicated...As Abraham said of the brothers in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Like Pharaoh before Moses, the more they saw God's power demonstrated, the more they hardened their hearts against Him (Ex. 7-11). Heavenly signs would come in the future (Matt. 24:29-30; Luke 21:11, 25; Acts 2:19; Rev. 15:1), but they would signal the very end. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**Albert Barnes** on **sign from heaven** - Some miraculous appearance in the sky. Such appearances had been given by the prophets; and they supposed, if he was the Messiah, that his miracles would not all be confined to the earth, but that he was able to give some signal miracle from heaven. Samuel had caused it to thunder 1 Samuel 12:16-18; Isaiah had caused the shadow to go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz Isaiah 38:8; and Moses had sent manna from heaven, Exodus 16:4; John 6:31. It is proper to say, that though Christ did not choose then to show such wonders, yet far more stupendous signs from heaven than these were exhibited at his death. (See [Miracles at Calvary in the Death of Jesus Christ](#))

The religious leaders were like Voltaire who said "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle." Guess what? Voltaire believes in miracles today!!! [See some of Voltaire's last words.](#)

As an aside, God would give the religious leaders and all of Israel a **"sign"** from Heaven when Jesus was crucified, and that "sign" would be darkening of the heavens in the middle of the day, as Jesus bore the sin of the world and the Father turned away! Mk 15:33+ says that "When the sixth hour (High Noon) came, **darkness fell over the whole land** until the ninth hour." (3PM, the time of the sacrifice of the lambs in the Temple!) This **sign** from Heaven would be followed by a sign on earth when He gave up His spirit, Mark recording that "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (Mk 15:38) This "sign" signified the end of the Old Covenant and beginning of the New Covenant which provided access to God's Holy Place (cf Heb 10:19-20+).

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**Sign** ([4592](#)) ([semeion](#) akin to **semaino** = to give a sign; **sema** = a sign) is a distinguishing mark or symbol that carries a special meaning or like a simple sign points to something else. In Scripture when semeion used of God's miraculous works (that which is contrary to the usual course of nature) it points to spiritual truth. A **sign** directs attention away from its unusual nature to the meaning and the significance it points to. It speaks of outward compelling proof of divine authority. Twice in Matthew Jesus answered the Jews request for signs declaring "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a **sign**; and yet no **sign** will be given to it but the **sign** of Jonah the prophet." (Mt 12:39, Mt 16:4) He was referring of course to His resurrection as the **sign** of Jonah. In the uses of **semeion** by His disciples in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 there of course was no rebuke for they were not asking out of a heart of unbelief but of belief. Ancient peoples often viewed **signs** in the sky, such as lightning or eclipses, as omens of terrible

things to come (Mt. 16:3).

**Wiersbe** says that a **sign** is "Something that points beyond itself to something greater. It was not enough for people to believe in Jesus' works; they had to believe in Him and in the Father who sent Him (John 5:14-24). This explains why Jesus often added a sermon to the miracle and in that sermon interpreted the sign. In John 5, the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath opened the way for a message on His deity, "the Lord of the Sabbath." The feeding of the 5,000 (John 6) led naturally into a sermon on the Bread of Life." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Trench** on **sign** - "It is involved and declared in the very word that the prime object and end of the miracle is to lead us to something out of and beyond itself: that, so to speak, it is a kind of finger-post of God, pointing for us to this: valuable, not so much for what it is, as for what it indicates of the grace and power of the doer, or of his immediate connection with a higher spiritual world"

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#### Question - [What does it mean to test God?](#)

**Answer:** In the Bible, there are examples of both an acceptable and unacceptable kind of testing God. It's acceptable to "test" God in regard to tithes and offerings, for example, but unacceptable when the test is rooted in doubt.

Malachi 3:10 says, "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'" This is the only situation given in the Bible in which God tells His people to "test" Him. Interestingly, the Hebrew word used for "test" in this verse is *bachan*, which means "to examine, scrutinize, or prove (as in gold, persons, or the heart)." Just as gold is "tested" with fire to prove its quality, God invites Israel to test Him in tithes and offerings and see that He proves His faithfulness in response.

There is another Hebrew word for "test" used elsewhere in the Bible. *Nacah* means "to put to the test, try, or tempt." It is used in Deuteronomy 6:16, where God commands Israel to not test Him: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah."

This second, unacceptable kind of testing is when doubt leads us to demand something of God to prove Himself to us. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 in the wilderness, in response to one of Satan's temptations. "The devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test"' (Matthew 4:7-10+). Essentially, the devil was telling Jesus to "prove" God's Word was true by forcing God's hand—if Jesus was in peril, God would have to save Him. Jesus refused to test God in such a way. We are to accept God's Word by faith, without requiring a sign (see Luke 11:29). God's promises are there for us when we need them; to manipulate situations in an attempt to coerce God into fulfilling His promises is evil.

The occasion where the Israelites tested God at Massah is found in Exodus 17. As God was leading Moses and His people toward the Promised Land, they camped at a place where there was no water. The Israelites' immediate reaction was to grumble against God and quarrel with Moses (Exodus 17:1-3). Their lack of trust in God to take care of them is evident in their accusations toward Moses: "They said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?'" (Exodus 17:3). The Israelites were obviously in a situation where they needed God to intervene. The point at which they tested God, though, is when doubt and fear overtook them and they came to the conclusion that God had abandoned them (see Exodus 17:7). They questioned God's reliability because He was not meeting their expectations.

The difference between these two kinds of testing God is faith. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). The Israelites at Massah tested God because they lacked faith in Him. The Israelites in Malachi's day were invited to test God because they had faith in Him.

Faith, by definition, takes risk. When true faith is present, obedience follows. It is that faith-inspired action of obedience that God loves. As seen in the example of Israel's tithes and offerings, when we give out of our faith in who God is, He proves Himself to be faithful. By contrast, when we view God through our doubt and demand something of Him as a way of determining whether or not He can be trusted, we're in danger of testing God (see Mark 8:11-12). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Matthew 16:2 But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.'**

- **When:** Lu 12:54-56
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HIS OPPONENTS CAN INTERPRET WEATHER SIGNS

**But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.'** -This recalls a common saying "Red sky at night is the shepherd's delight; Red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning." A related saying is "Red sky at night, sailors' delight / Red sky at morning, sailors take warning." Jesus' point is that these men used certain indications by which to judge the weather.

**Albert Barnes** - In the evening you think you can predict the weather tomorrow. You have evidence in the redness of the sky by which you judge. So there are sufficient indications on which you should judge concerning me and these times. My miracles, and the state of affairs in Judea, are an indication by which you should judge.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Rebuke comes to the Pharisees and Sadducees for their ability to examine the meteorological evidence and predict the weather, while failing to read the evident signs of the hour and comprehend the unfolding of God's plan and program.

**MacArthur** - Those sayings correspond to the age-old mariner's ditty, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailor's warning." From many years of observation men learned that a red sky in the evening is usually followed by good weather, whereas a red sky in the morning is often followed by a storm. The religious leaders who confronted Jesus accepted the reliability of that folk meteorology without question. (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Matthew 16:3 "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"**

- O ye: Mt 7:5 15:7 22:18 23:13 Lu 11:44 13:15
- the signs: Mt 4:23 11:5 1Ch 12:32
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HIS OPPONENTS CANNOT INTERPRET SIGNS OF THE TIMES!

**And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.'** As noted above, this was an common saying of the day. The threatening clouds in the sky were made red by the rays of the rising sun and this was a sign of a storm. **Threatening** is *stugnazo* (only here and Mk 10:22), used literally here of an overcast, threatening (dark, gloomy) sky, but in Mk 10:22+ of the appalled, shocked (having a state of intense dismay) face of the rich young ruler.

**Do you know how to discern ([diakrino](#)) the appearance of the sky** - "The face of the sky you know how to discern." The religious leaders knew these weather "signs" and could discern natural storms but were unable to discern the coming spiritual storm (e.g., destruction of the Temple in 70 AD)!

**MacArthur** - Their method of predicting the weather by looking to the color of the sky was primitive and crude. Yet, ironically, they were better meteorologists than theologians. They could recognize a coming storm from something as subtle as a ruddy morning hue, but they failed to recognize the coming of the Messiah in spite of the abundant evidence that was right in front of them. (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**But cannot discern the signs ([semeion](#)) of the times ([kairos](#))?** - This alludes to the various indications the the Messianic age was at hand, including the fulfilment of Messianic prophecies, as well as the miracles wrought by Jesus and his followers, for such miracles were considered to be a sign of the Messianic Age (see Isaiah 35:5-6)..These spiritually blind religious leaders could make a weather forecast but could not make a "Messiah forecast!" Sadly they knew more about the weather than they did about the God Who caused the weather! Blind guides Jesus called them! Their "prophetic wrist watches" were broken and they had no clue that **the signs of the times** clearly showed it was the time fo the Messiah! Are not these ancient religious leaders still in our midst, men like Stephen Hawking who was brilliant and wrote a book by the pretentious title "[A Brief History of Time](#)." Indeed, our modern world has many who can predict various things but fall short of understanding God's plan for the ages which is consummated in His Son Jesus Christ!

**Constable** has a good summary of some of the signs of the times the religious leaders had missed - What were the signs of the times that Israel's religious leaders failed to read? John the Baptist's appearance and preaching was one. John had told these leaders that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of Messiah's forerunner (Isa. 40:3; Mt. 3:1-12). Jesus had also identified John as the forerunner (11:14). Jesus' works were another sign that the King had arrived, and Jesus had pointed this out (12:28).

Finally the prophecy of Daniel's 69 weeks should have alerted these students of the Old Testament to the fact that Messiah's appearance was near (Dan. 9:25–26; cf. John 5:30–47; 8:12–20).

**MacArthur** adds "They were better weathermen than biblical scholars (cf. Luke 12:54-56). They were "blind guides of the blind" (Matt. 15:14). In Matthew 23, Jesus labeled them blind guides (Mt 23:16, 24) and blind fools (Mt 23:17)." (See [The MacArthur Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** commenting on Jesus words on signs in Mt 24:3, 6, 7, 11, 12 wrote "signs that Jesus will return abound in our day. No period of history has experienced more wars or been so preoccupied with the prospect of war as our own. With unprecedented surpluses of food in some parts of the world, other parts still experience devastating famines. Cults and false religions of every sort are proliferating even in countries that have been nominally Christian for hundreds of years. The spirit of lawlessness and self-will is rampant....**All of those signs that mark the end times are characteristic of our day. There can be no doubt that we live near the end of the age, and the concern of believers should be for what the Bible says rather than for what men say and for what God is doing rather than for what men are doing.** (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Do you see the manifold signs around us today (I am writing in September, 2020)? Are you preparing to meet your God (Amos 4:12)? Do you know the Son of God by grace through faith so that you will not need to shrink back in shame at His coming? Are you looking for the Blessed Hope, so you are motivated to live for Him? (Titus 2:13+) John writes that "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 Jn 3:3+) His return is [imminent](#) so let us each, enabled by His Spirit, diligently seek to [Redeem the Time](#) for the days are evil (Eph 5:16+). Now is the time to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal (Mt 6:20+)

**Matthew 16:4 "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.**

- **evil:** Mt 12:39,40 Mk 8:12,38 Ac 2:40
- **except:** Jon 1:17 Lu 11:29,30
- **And he:** Mt 15:14 Ge 6:3 Ho 4:17 9:12 Mk 5:17,18 Ac 18:6
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE LAST SIGN THE SIGN OF JONAH

Mark 8:12+ adds that Jesus was "**Sighing deeply** in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."

The point is that when Jesus made this judgmental statement, He did not do so without a deep feeling, reflecting how deeply their continued perverseness and obstinacy affected Him.

**An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign** - In the parallel account in Mark 8:11 we read that "The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him." Here Jesus "defines" these men seeking **after a sign** as "**evil**" and "**adulterous**." Jesus used this phrase **evil and adulterous generation** to describe the Pharisees in Mt 12:39 in their initial request for a sign. This description recalls the words of Deuteronomy 32...

Dt 32:5+ "They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.

Dt 32:20+ "Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

**Evil** (wicked, bad) (4190)([poneros](#) from [poneo](#) = work or toil, cf [poneria](#)) means evil, malignant character, pernicious and denotes a determined, aggressive, and fervent evil that actively opposes what is good. **Poneros** is not just bad in character (like [kakos](#) - see below), but bad in effect (injurious), evil in active opposition to good. **Poneros** used to describe Satan (ho poneros = "Evil one"), the god of this age, who is corrupting man and dragging him to destruction. This denotes someone who is not content in being corrupt themselves. They seek to corrupt others and draw them into the same destruction!

**Adulterous** (3428)([moichalis](#) related to [moichos](#) = "married and impure", literally adulterer, "unlawful"

lover, 1Co 6:9, He 13:4, Lk 18:11; Lxx = Job 24:15, Pr 6:32) pertains to being unfaithful to one to whom one should remain faithful and here is used literally of a wife who does not remain faithful to her husband. Figuratively **moichalis** is used to describe one who is unfaithful (in Lxx of His "wife" Israel [cp this idea in the OT [but these passages do not use moichalis] Je 2:2, Je 3:14, Je 3:14KJV, Je 3:14NIV, Je 31:32, Isa 54:5, Hos 2:16YLT] Ezek 16:38, 23:45) toward God even as an adulteress is unfaithful toward her husband (Mt 12:39, 16:4, Mk 8:38 - observe how Jesus links adulterous with **evil** and **sinful** and the serious consequences for this state of unfaithfulness!)

**Adulterous** is especially interesting as [Barnes](#) notes "The relation of the Jews to God was often represented as a marriage contract - God as the husband, and the Jewish people as the wife. See Isaiah 57:3; Hosea 3:1; Ezekiel 16:15. Hence, their apostasy and idolatry are often represented as adultery. This is the meaning, probably, here. They were evil, and unfaithful to the covenant or to the commandments of God - an apostate and corrupt people. There is, however, evidence that they were literally an adulterous people.

**MacArthur** explains the concept of "**adulterous generation**" - The scribes and Pharisees (Mt 12:24, 38+) represented the nation of Israel, which had wandered far from God's Word and fellowship and which had become enmeshed in the superficial, self-righteous, and legalistic religion those leaders epitomized. The unbelieving Jews were not only physically and **mentally but spiritually adulterous** because they had breached the vows of their unique [covenant relationship with God](#), a relationship the Old Testament frequently speaks of in terms of marriage (see Ps. 73:27; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:6-10; 13:27; Hos. 9:1). Their idolatry, immorality, unbiblical traditions, and hardness of heart marked them as an evil people. During the Babylonian captivity Jews had forsaken formal idolatry, in the sense of worshiping physical objects carved from wood, stone, or metal. But in its place they erected idols of man-made [tradition](#) in which they trusted and put their hope. They had abandoned the [Canaanite](#) gods for ones of their own making and in doing so were just as much in rebellion against the true God as when they offered sacrifices to [Baal](#) or [Molech](#). A Jew who faithfully served God under the covenant given to Moses would accept His Son when He came, because anyone rightly related to the Father could not fail to recognize the Son-just as did the godly Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38), [John the Baptist](#) (Matt. 3:14), and the twelve disciples, except [Judas](#) ([Carl Bloch's famous painting of Judas retiring from the Last Supper](#)) (Mt 4:20-22; Mark 3:13; Luke 5:27-28; John 1:41, 49). Because they knew the Father, they knew the Son and did not need a sign to verify His identity. (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Miracles will give confirmation where there is faith, but not where there is willful unbelief.  
-- Warren Wiersbe

**And a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah**(cf Mt 12:39, 40+) - So they would receive a "**sign**" and it would be His last sign to them, for it was the greatest sign, His resurrection from the dead, the sign that must be believed in order to enter the Kingdom of God, which these foolish men futilely sought by works and not by faith! "Sadly, even that (SIGN) would be knowingly rejected by the religious leaders, who bribed the Roman soldiers, instructing them to spread lies about what actually took place at the tomb (cf. Matt. 28:11-15)." (MacArthur)

**Constable** - "The only sign to Nineveh was Jonah's solemn warning of near judgment, and his call to repentance-and the only sign now, or rather "unto this generation no sign," [ Mark 8:12] was the warning cry of judgment and the loving call to repentance."

Let be be understood,  
unless one is abandoned to God,  
he will be abandoned by God!

**And He left them and went away** - The word **left** is [kataleipo](#) meant He left them behind using a verb which also carried the idea of forsaking or abandoning (2 Pet. 2:15). [See the diagram](#) in Mt 16:13 which depicts this time as a critical transition in the ministry of our Lord, for from here to the Cross, opposition would increase and He would spend most of His time preparing His disciples for their mission once He was gone.

**Left** (2641)([kataleipo](#) from **kata** = intensifies or strengthens the meaning of **leipo** + **leipo** = to leave behind, forsake, to be wanting or deficient) literally means to leave behind or leave remaining (of a person or place - Mt 4:13, 16:4, 21:17, Heb 11:27). **Kataleipo** is often used to indicate abandoning a heritage, giving up riches, and leaving one's native land. Figuratively **kataleipo** was used to mean "neglect" (Acts 6:2+). **Kataleipo** conveys a strong sense of to abandon or forsake (as forsaking true Christianity 2Pe 2:15). To cause something to be left over and so to remain in existence (Ro 11:4-note, Heb 4:1-note = a promise remains). To leave without help (Lk 10:40). In the passive to remain behind (1Th 3:1-note, John 8:9). To leave alone in the sense of disregard as describing those who sail past a place without stopping (Acts 21:3) **Kataleipo** can mean to cease an activity (eg, give up a vice) but there are no uses with this sense in Scripture.



**Constable** - Jesus withdrew again in response to opposition. However this time Matthew used a stronger word (kataleipo) meaning "to forsake or abandon." Jesus turned His back on these religious leaders because they were hopeless and incorrigible. [Plummer, p221.] This was to be Jesus' last and most important withdrawal from Galilee before His final trip south to Jerusalem (Matthew 19:1). He remained outside Galilee through Matthew 17:20, when He returned there from the North.

**J C Ryle** - IN these verses we find our Lord assailed by the untiring enmity of the Pharisees and Sadducees. As a general rule these two sects were at enmity between themselves. In persecuting Christ, however, they made common cause. Truly it was an unholy alliance! Yet how often we see the same thing in the present day. Men of the most opposite opinions and habits will agree in disliking the Gospel, and will work together to oppose its progress. "There is no new thing under the sun." (Eccles. 1:9.)

The first point in this passage which deserves special notice, is the repetition which our Lord makes of words used by Him on a former occasion. He says, "a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." If we turn to the twelfth chapter of this Gospel and the 39th verse, we shall find that He had said the very same thing once before.

This repetition may seem a trifling and unimportant matter in the eyes of some. But it is not so in reality. It throws light on a subject, which has perplexed the minds of many sincere lovers of the Bible, and ought therefore to be specially observed.

This repetition shows us that our Lord was in the habit of saying the same things over again. He did not content Himself with saying a thing once, and afterwards never repeating it. It is evident that it was His custom to bring forward certain truths again and again, and thus to impress them more deeply on the minds of His disciples. He knew the weakness of our memories in spiritual things. He knew that what we hear twice, we remember better than what we hear once. He therefore brought out of His treasury old things as well as new.

Now what does all this teach us? It teaches us that we need not be so anxious to harmonize the narratives we read in the four Gospels, as many are disposed to be. It does not follow that the sayings of our Lord, which we find the same in St. Matthew and St. Luke, were always used at the same time, or that the events with which they are connected must necessarily be the same.—St. Matthew may be describing one event in our Lord's life. St. Luke may be describing another. And yet the words of our Lord, on both occasions, may have been precisely alike.—To attempt to make out the two events to be one and the same, because of the sameness of the words used, has often led Bible students into great difficulties. It is far safer to hold the view here maintained, that at different times our Lord often used the same words.

**Matthew 16:5 And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread.**

- Mt 15:39 Mk 8:13,14
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:13+ Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side. 14 And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.

### FAILURE TO TAKE BREAD

**Broadus** points out that "This is the last and most important of our Lord's four withdrawals from Galilee during the last six months of his ministry in that region (comp. Mt 14:13; 15:21, 29), and will continue to Mt 17:20.

**And the disciples came to the other side of the sea**(to the eastern side - cf Mt 15:39+), **but they had forgotten to bring any bread** - Mark's parallel passage says that Jesus "again embarked and went away to the other side" and adds they "did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them." There is not a discrepancy. The point is this is not enough to feed 12 hungry men. The verb **had forgotten** can even imply willful neglect!

**THOUGHT** - Sadly, they also had forgotten that they had a relationship with the Creator of bread! How they could have overlooked this truth so quickly is a enigma, but does serve as a warning that we are all just like the disciples and are prone to forget what God has done in our lives!

**Had forgotten** (1950)(**epilanthanomai** from **epi** = in or upon - intensifies meaning of following verb + **lanthano** = lie hidden or concealed) conveys 2 basic nuances in the NT, to **forget** (not recall information

concerning something) or to **neglect** (give little attention to, to omit by carelessness or design). The **epi-** preposition intensifies the meaning as noted and thus the idea is not just forgetting but "**completely forgetting.**" (cf use in Lxx of Ezek 23:33)

**POSB** - When Jesus arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the disciples remembered something. They had forgotten to bring food. In this lapse of memory Jesus saw another opportunity to teach a much needed lesson: beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (cp. Matthew 13:33; Mark 8:15). (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

**Matthew 16:6** And Jesus said to them, "**Watch out and beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

- **Watch out and beware** : Lu 12:15
- **the leaven**: Mt 16:12 Ex 12:15-19 Lev 2:11 Mk 8:15 Lu 12:1 1Co 5:6-8 Ga 5:9 2Ti 2:16,17
- **the Pharisees**: Mt 16:1
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONTINUALLY BE ALERT FOR LEAVEN OF FALSE TEACHING

### Related Passages:

Mark 8:15+ And He was giving orders to them, saying, "**Watch out! Beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

**And Jesus said to them** - This is an abrupt, urgent warning in light of their forgetfulness regarding bread. "This warning from Jesus comes in the form of a riddle, which the disciples misunderstand to be about the bread that they had forgotten to bring along with them." (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Matthew)

**Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" - Both commands are in the [present imperative](#) calling for the disciples to continually be vigilant ([active voice](#) = need to make a choice of their will) and on alert for the leaven of the legalists, for their "leaven" could be very subtle and even appear "spiritual." In Luke Jesus warned His disciples "**Beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (i.e., they say one thing but do another) (Lk 12:1+). I would submit that ultimately to truly obey these commands one needs [to depend on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit](#). Clearly this command precedes Pentecost, so in some way God would enable them to obey. Mark's account adds a third danger to avoid "the leaven of Herod." (Mk 8:15+)

[Broadus](#) explains that "These great politico-religious parties (Pharisees and Sadducees) had immense influence. The disciples had been reared to respect them, and so Jesus takes occasion to give a warning against their teachings and influence....They took it all literally, supposing that the Master had observed their lack of bread, and was cautioning them not to purchase any loaves made with the kind of leaven used by the Phar. and Sadd. This seems to the modern mind a strange and almost impossible notion; but it was just such a matter as the Rabbis made much of. The Talmud contains discussions as to whether it was right to use Gentile leaven.

[Albert Barnes](#) notes that **leaven** "passes secretly, silently, but certainly through the mass of dough. "None can see its progress." So it was with the doctrines of the Pharisees. They were insinuating, artful, plausible. They concealed the real tendency of their doctrines; they instilled them secretly into the mind, until they pervaded all the faculties like leaven."

[Barclay](#) on **leaven** - "It was the Jewish metaphorical expression for an evil influence. To the Jewish mind leaven was always symbolic of evil...leaven stood for an evil influence liable to spread through life and to corrupt it."

[Trapp](#) on **leaven** - "False doctrine; which is fitly called leaven, because it soureth, swelleth, spreadeth, corrupteth the whole lump, and all this secretly."

[EGT](#) - leaven, here conceived as an evil influence, working, however, after the same manner as the leaven in the parable ([Matthew 13:33](#)). It is a spirit, a *zeitgeist*, insinuating itself everywhere, and spreading more and more in society, which Jesus instinctively shrank from in horror, and from which He wished to guard His disciples. The leaven of Pharisaism is made thoroughly known to us in the Gospels by detailed characterisation. Sadducaism very seldom appears on the stage, and few words of Jesus concerning it are recorded; yet enough to indicate its character as secular or "worldly". The two classes, antagonistic at many points of belief and practice, would be at one in dislike of single-hearted devotion to truth and righteousness." -- [Expositor's Greek Testament](#)

[Hiebert](#) on **Watch out! and Beware** - The first verb [horao](#) calls for mental alertness, while the second demands that one look

attentively at the object called to one's attention in order to avoid the danger that it presents. The two verbs underscore the intensity of the warning.

**Wuest on Watch out! and Beware** - The first verb is **horaō** "to see, to become acquainted with by experience." This word gives prominence to the discerning mind. The disciples were to use their heads. They were to put the teachings of the Pharisees and the Herodians to the acid test of experience, not in the actual doing of the things taught, but with the mind's eye following out the ultimate conclusion of the act of practicing what they taught. The verb is [present imperative](#), commanding the beginning of an action and its habitual continuance. The second verb is **blepō** "to perceive by the use of the eyes." It is used in a metaphorical sense, "to see with the mind's eye, to discern mentally, understand, to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, to take heed." It is also [present imperative](#), "Be constantly keeping a watchful eye open to consider and take heed of." [Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#)

**Hiebert on leaven** - As producing a process of fermentation, leaven or yeast pictures a pervasive corrupting tendency that works invisibly. Christ's warning was thus "a pithy one-word parable for unseen pervasive influence." Mark did not give an interpretation of Christ's meaning, but Matthew (Mt 16:12+) noted that His reference was to "**the teaching**" of those warned against.

**MacArthur** sums up that "Jesus' admonition provided a somber warning against the ever-present temptations of legalism, hypocrisy, rationalism, materialism, immorality, and worldliness." (See [MacArthur's sermon for more discussion of the specific negative effects](#))

**Beware** (take care, take heed) [\(991\)](#) (**blepo**) basically means to have sight, to see, to look at, then to observe, to discern, to perceive with the eye, and frequently implies special contemplation (e.g., often in the sense of "keep your eyes open," or "beware"). **Blepo** indicates greater vividness than **horaō**, (**Watch out**) a similar verb meaning "to see." W E Vine says **blepo** expresses "a more intentional, earnest contemplation. **TDNT** says that like **horaō** "**blepo** in this context speaks of spiritual perception. **Other uses in Mark** - Mk. 4:12; Mk. 4:24; Mk. 5:31; Mk. 8:15; Mk. 8:18; Mk. 8:23; Mk. 8:24; Mk. 12:14; Mk. 12:38; Mk. 13:2; Mk. 13:5; Mk. 13:9; Mk. 13:23; Mk. 13:33;

**Leaven** (yeast) [\(2219\)](#) (**zume** probably from **zeo** = to heat, as occurs in fermentation of dough when leaven is mixed in) was literally a small portion of dough that was retained in order to start a new batch of dough (literal uses - Mt 16:12; Lk 13:21; 1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9). In ancient times, when bread was about to be baked, a small piece of dough was pulled off and saved. That **leaven** or yeast would then be allowed to ferment in water, and later kneaded into the next batch of fresh dough to make it rise. **Leaven** throughout Scripture was used figuratively to describe permeating power or influence, usually the influence of evil and clearly the influence of the evil of the Pharisees and Herod in the present passage.

**Zume** is used figuratively to depict corruption of thought and conduct, which Jesus termed hypocrisy in Lk 12:1. **Zume** was used figuratively to describe teachings based on unspiritual value systems (Mt 16:12). Finally, **zume** was a metaphor for sin within a believing community, and was identified as wicked ways (1 Cor 5:8). The first use of **zume** in the Septuagint (Ex. 12:15; 12:19) is associated with the Passover, where the Jews were instructed to eat bread without leaven for seven days. (See [What is the significance of unleavened bread?](#))

**Wuest on Zume** -The word is **zumē**. It is used in the LXX (Ex. 12:15) of beer-yeast. The principle of fermentation which inheres in it makes it the symbol of corruption, for fermentation is the result of the divine curse upon the material universe because of sin. Always in the Bible, it speaks of evil in some form, Matthew 13:33 being no exception, for the kingdom of heaven here refers to Christendom, in which are the true and the false, the evil and the good. Leaven in I Corinthians 5:6–8, speaks of malice and wickedness as contrasted to sincerity and truth. In Matthew 16:12, it speaks of evil doctrine in its three-fold form of Pharisaism, externalism in religion, of Sadduceeism, scepticism as to the supernatural and as to the Scriptures, of Herodianism, worldliness. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

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**QUESTION** - [What does leaven symbolize in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Bible mentions leaven, or yeast, in several contexts. In some contexts, the reference to leaven is obviously literal; in other contexts, *leaven* takes on symbolic connotations.

Leaven causes dough to rise, but the process takes time. The Israelites, when God freed them from captivity in Egypt, had no time to spare, so, in their haste, they baked and ate flat (unleavened) bread for their journey: "With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves" (Exodus 12:39).

To commemorate of His deliverance from Egypt, God instructed the Israelites to celebrate a week of feasting following the [Passover Day](#) (the 14th day of the 1st month on the Jewish calendar). This was called the “Feast of Unleavened Bread.” During that time the Israelites were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses and eat no bread that contained leaven (Exodus 12:15; 13:6–7).

Elsewhere in the Mosaic Law, leaven represents sin or corruption. The law forbade [grain offerings](#) made with leaven (Leviticus 2:11). In fact, no yeast was allowed to be burned on the altar in any sacrifice. The grain offering for Aaron and his sons (the priests) was also not to contain leaven and was to be eaten in a holy place (Leviticus 6:17).

Leaven is also mentioned in the New Testament. In Matthew 16:6–12, Jesus compared the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians to leaven. The Pharisees had come to Jesus to test Him (verse 1), but Jesus perceived their true intent and the state of their hearts. He later warned His disciples against being taken in by their teachings (verse 12), which He compared to leaven. A small portion of the “leaven” of falsehood can permeate a person’s heart and mind. In Luke 12:1 Jesus specifies that the leaven of the Pharisees is “hypocrisy.” Having a show of piety, without true holiness, is like leaven in that it gradually increases and spreads corruption, puffing up a person with vanity. Lies and hypocrisy can poison one’s whole character.

Paul warned the church at Corinth against tolerating sin in their midst, using leaven as a metaphor (1 Corinthians 5:1–8). There was a man in the church who was guilty of sexual immorality. Paul told them to remove the man from their fellowship because, like leaven, his influence would permeate the whole church. “Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?” Paul asks (verse 6). Then he points them to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: “Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (verse 7).

In [one of Jesus’ parables](#) of the kingdom of heaven, He uses leaven in a different sense: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33). In this case, leaven is not used as a symbol of evil; rather, leaven is a symbol of the kingdom, which will gradually and secretly permeate society. Just as a woman uses the smallest bit of leaven in the dough, so the gospel starts with small beginnings. Just as the leaven quietly works its way through the whole batch, the gospel will have a profound impact on all sectors of society. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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[Albert Barnes](#) - Erroneous doctrines are like leaven in the following respects:

- 1.They are at first slight and unimportant in appearance, just as leaven is small in quantity as compared with the mass that is to be leavened.
- 2.They are insinuated into the soul unawares and silently, and are difficult of detection.
- 3.They act gradually.
- 4.They act most certainly.
- 5.They will pervade all the soul, and bring all the faculties under their control.

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[J C Ryle](#) - The second point which deserves special notice in these verses is, the solemn warning which our Lord takes occasion to give to His disciples. His mind was evidently pained with the false doctrines which He saw among the Jews, and the pernicious influence which they exercised. He seizes the opportunity to utter a caution. “Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” Let us mark well what those words contain.

To whom was this warning addressed? To the twelve apostles,—to the first ministers of the Church of Christ,—to men who had forsaken all for the Gospel’s sake! Even they are warned! The best of men are only men, and at any time may fall into temptation. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” If we love life, and would see good days, let us never think that we do not need that hint, “take heed, and beware.”

Against what does our Lord warn His apostles? Against the “doctrine” of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. The Pharisees, we are frequently told in the Gospels, were self-righteous formalists. The Sadducees were sceptics, freethinkers, and half infidels. Yet even Peter, James, and John must beware of their doctrines! Truly the best and holiest of believers may well be on his guard!

By what figure does our Lord describe the false doctrines against which He cautions His disciples? He calls them leaven. Like leaven, they might seem a small thing compared to the whole body of truth. Like leaven, once admitted they would work secretly and noiselessly. Like leaven, they would gradually change the whole character of the religion with which they were mixed. How much is often contained in a single word! It was not merely the open danger of heresy, but “leaven,” of which the apostles were to beware.

There is much in all this that calls loudly for the close attention of all professing Christians. The caution of our Lord in this passage

has been shamefully neglected. It would have been well for the church of Christ, if the warnings of the Gospel had been as much studied as its promises.

Let us then remember that this saying of our Lord's about the "leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" was intended for all time. It was not meant only for the generation to which it was spoken. It was meant for the perpetual benefit of the Church of Christ. He who spoke it saw with prophetic eye the future history of Christianity. The Great Physician knew well that Pharisee-doctrines and Sadducee-doctrines would prove the two great wasting diseases of His Church, until the end of the world. He would have us know that there will always be Pharisees and Sadducees in the ranks of Christians. Their succession shall never fail. Their generation shall never become extinct. Their name may change, but their spirit will always remain. Therefore He cries to us, "take heed and beware."

**Matthew 16:7 They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread."**

- **they:** Mk 8:16-18 9:10 Lu 9:46
- It is: Mt 15:16-18 Ac 10:14
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:16+ They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

### DISCIPLES DISCUSS JESUS' WORDS

**They began to discuss this among themselves, saying** - **Discuss** is in the [imperfect tense](#) depicting first one then another speaking up. **'Among themselves** (and Mark's "discuss with one another") indicates this was a private conversation (see "Jesus aware of this" in next verse). They had just received a strong double command about leaven and yet they are turned to their deficiency of bread. Amazing! Perhaps their stomachs were growling! And so once again they were more focused on the physical need than on the spiritual truths Jesus had just served them. The upshot is that they totally missed Jesus' figurative use of leaven and thought He was speaking of yeast which brought to their minds their "bread problem." "Jesus is talking about corrupting influences and they think He's talking about food!" ([Utiley](#))

[Albert Barnes](#) - The disciples did not understand him as referring to the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, because the word "leaven" was not often used among the Jews to denote doctrines, no other instance of this use of the word occurring in the Scriptures. Besides, the Jews had many particular rules about the leaven (yeast) which might be used in making bread. Many held that it was not lawful to eat bread made by the Gentiles; and the disciples, perhaps, supposed that he was cautioning them not to procure a supply from the Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Discuss** ([1260](#)) [dialogizomai](#) from **dia** = intensifies meaning + [logizomai](#) - to reason, reckon, consider. Related to our English word "[dialogue](#)" (a conversation between two or more people) means to consider, reason or reckon thoroughly, to think through, to [deliberate](#) by reflection. "To bring together different reasons." (Vine) To hold a discussion. Uses in Matthew - Matt. 16:7; Matt. 16:8; Matt. 21:25;

**He said that because we did not bring any bread** - They are thinking "Don't buy bread from either of these religious sects!" How dimwitted can they be? Their stomachs were working but their minds were not and the mention of leaven brought up the image of literal bread made from literal leaven. And so they completely misinterpret what Jesus is saying.

**EGT** - Stupid mistake, yet pardonable when we remember the abruptness of the warning and the wide gulf between Master and disciples: He a prophet with prescient eye, seeing the forces of evil at work and what they were leading to; they very commonplace persons lacking insight and foresight. ([Matthew 16 Commentary](#))

**Matthew 16:8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?"**

- **when:** Joh 2:24,25 16:30 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- **You men of little faith:** Mt 6:30 Mt 8:26 Mt 14:31 Mk 16:14

- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 8:17+ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?"

## MEN OF LITTLE FAITH

**But Jesus, aware of this** - This implies He did not directly hear them discussing the bread deficit, but by default was aware supernaturally. In short, Jesus realized the disciples did not grasp His figurative use of leaven, but that they had interpreted it to mean literal leaven.

**Swindoll** quips this was "another "face-palm moment" for Jesus....I would paraphrase Jesus this way: "Don't you get it? Can't you connect the dots? The clues make the conclusion self-evident; how can you fail to see it?" (See [Insights on Mark](#))

**A T Robertson** - Jesus asks four pungent questions about the intellectual dullness, refers to the feeding of the five thousand and uses the word κοφινους [kophinous] (Mt 14:20) for it and σφουριδας [sphuridas] for the four thousand (Mt 15:37), and repeats his warning (Mt 16:11). Every teacher understands this strain upon the patience of this Teacher of teachers.

**Carson** - "The miracles Jesus performs, unlike the signs the Pharisees demand, do not compel faith; but those with faith will perceive their significance." (Borrow [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)),

**Albert Barnes** - Jesus, in reply, said that they should not be so anxious about the supply of their temporal wants. They should not have supposed, after the miracles that he had performed in feeding so many, that he would caution them to be anxious about procuring bread for their necessities. It was improper, then, for them to reason about a thing like that, but they should have supposed that he referred to something more important. The miracles had been full proof that he could supply all their wants without such anxiety.

**Said, "You men of little faith (oligopistos), why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?- You men of little faith** is one word in Greek ([oligopistos](#)) and at least is better than no faith. Sadly one of the twelve did not even have genuine **little faith** and would spend eternity in perdition. Why does Jesus say they are **men of little faith**? What had they just witnessed and been part of in the previous days? They watched Jesus supernaturally multiply bread enough to feed 4000 and 5000. And here they were, 13 men in a boat with the very One Who had miraculously fed 1000's. Could He not feed them? The two feedings should have "fed" their faith, so that now they would trust that Jesus would not let them go hungry. And yet their faith had not grown, but is what Jesus still quantitated as "**little faith!**" Hey, micro-faith!" Jesus is saying "Is that all the confidence you have in me? Don't you trust me more than that?"

**Zodhiates** says **little faith** is "not equivalent to "unbeliever" [ἀπίστος GreekStrong's:G571 ). Jesus never called His disciples "faithless" ([apistos](#)). Faith, πίστις, in the New Testament has several objects and therefore can be qualified as great or little depending on the number of biblical propositions to which a believer assents.

**Teach the Text Commentary** - Little faith has been variously defined contextually as worry (Mt 6:30), fear (Mt 8:26), and doubt or wavering (Mt 14:31). In all cases it is an inadequate faith in Jesus' power to rescue and provide (see also Mt 17:20). Here little faith is tied to the disciples' lack of understanding.

**Wiersbe** - "Little faith" was one of our Lord's favorite names for His disciples (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). Of course, "little faith" is better than no faith. The disciples had many lessons to learn before they would graduate to "great faith." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Broadus** - The Master rebukes them for supposing that he was concerning himself about kinds of food. A few weeks or months before, he had said (Mt 15:1), "Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man"; how then could he be laying stress on a particular kind of leaven? And the repeated miracles of feeding vast multitudes from a very little food, and leaving a large surplus, ought certainly to have showed them that the mere lack of bread would cause him no concern. Only because they were of little faith (6:30; 8:26; 14:31) did they imagine such a thing. Mark gives still sharper expressions. **Notice the connection here between faith and spiritual perception.** With stronger faith in him they would have been lifted above temporal anxiety, and in better condition to understand his spiritual instructions.

Earlier when the 12 were frightened by the storm at sea Jesus made a similar "diagnosis" of the disciple's mini-faith declaring to them "Why are you afraid, **you men of little faith?**" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly

calm." (Mt 8:26+)

Faith, even although "little," can be effective if it is directed toward the Almighty One.

Mark 8:17+ adds another question from Jesus to the 12 which must have been painful for them to hear - **Do you have a hardened (poroo) heart?** (For discussion of meaning see comments on Mk 8:17)

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**Little Faith** (3640)(**oligopistos** from **oligos** = little + **pistis** = faith) of one who does not believe or trust, not strong in trusting; a person not trusting firmly. Vine says this word is used only by the Lord, and as a tender rebuke, for anxiety. Three of the five uses occur related to the disciples crossing the lake in a boat. The other 2 uses deal with anxiety or worry. In fact in a sense all 5 uses have something to do with worry. Worry is the opposite of faith, that is, trust or confidence in God's abilities. In each of these cases, the disciples forgot what God was capable of doing. They forgot he is the almighty Commander and Creator. And whenever you worry, it means that you don't think God is up to handling your problems and your needs. We need to be like the old Mad Magazine character who always said "[What, me worry?](#)" There is an old song "[Don't worry, be happy](#)" which is close to truth but it would be more Biblical if it said "Don't worry, be believing."

Matthew 6:30+ (Addressing the issue of worry or anxiety) "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of **little faith!**

Matthew 8:26+ (Waves crashing over the side of the **boat**, afraid disciples are going to die) He \*said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of **little faith?**" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Matthew 14:31+ (Peter got out of the **boat**, walked for a moment on water, but then began to doubt and sink) Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and \*said to him, "You of **little faith**, why did you doubt?"

Matthew 16:8 (This is the third time they are in a boat) But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of **little faith**, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?"

Luke 12:28+ (Addressing the issue of worry or anxiety) "But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of **little faith!**

**Matthew 16:9 "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up?"**

- **Do you not yet** : Mt 15:16,17 Mk 7:18 Lu 24:25-27 Rev 3:19
- **Do you not yet** : Mt 14:17-21 Mk 6:38-44 Lu 9:13-17 Joh 6:9-13
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:17+ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18"HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember,

Matthew 15:16+ Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?"

### **SLOW ON THE "UPTAKE"!**

**Slow on the uptake** means dimwitted, slow to understand, taking a long time to understand.

**Do you not yet understand (noeo) or remember (mnemoneuo) the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up?** (Mt 14:13–21+) - Clearly they did not understand! They did not put the pieces together (so to speak = meaning of [suniemi](#)) regarding the pieces of broken bread! They also suffered from short term memory loss!

Distrust cuts the heart of God to the core.

- Hebrews 11:6

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## Lappin's Sermon Outlines - THE RECALL OF FAITH

"Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"—Matt. 16:9.

INTRODUCTION.—Consider circumstances. "Do ye not perceive, neither remember..." To renew their faith, he points them back to what had gone before.

### I. Our Soreset Defect Is Lack of Faith.

To those who believe, all things are possible. It is the man who thinks he can who actually does. The man who doubts is beaten before he begins. So a nation, an age, a cause. The advocacy of faith wins.

### II. Our Sure Remedy Is to Remember.

Along the track of the Israelites God left memorials to strengthen the faith of future generations. Jesus Himself gave a memorial institution to hold His disciples through the age now passing.

### III. Our Obligation in the Face of These Facts.

1. We are to remember. (See Heb. 13:7.)
2. We are to keep the memorials till He come to strengthen the faith of others.
3. We are not to grow weary in well-doing, for, if we must look back to others, we may be sure others will have to look back to us.

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## Matthew 16:10 "Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up?"

- Mt 15:34,38 Mk 8:5-9,17-21
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 8:19+ when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they \*said to Him, "Seven."

## JESUS' MEMORY JOGGER

**Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up?**(Mt 15:32-39+) - Matthew does not record their answers but in Mark's account they get the correct answer for the feeding the 5000 (12 baskets left over) and feeding the 4000 (7 baskets left over).

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## Matthew 16:11 "How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But**beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

- Mk 4:40 8:21 Lu 12:56 Joh 8:43
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 8:21+ And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

## JESUS MAKES IT CLEAR NOT LITERAL BREAD!

**How is it that you do not understand** ([noeo](#)) **that I did not speak to you concerning bread?** - As noted in the previous passage, only Mark 8:19-20+ records the answer to Jesus' questions.

**But** - Term of contrast. Jesus is not speaking of the literal but of the figurative and specifically in this context the spiritual meaning. .



**Beware** ([prosecho](#)) of the leaven ([zume](#)) of the Pharisees and Sadducees - **Beware** is in [present imperative](#) calling for continual attention to the danger of this spiritual leaven! Jesus reiterates He is not concerned with the physical but with the spiritual. In a word, beware of their false teaching. To "digest" the teachings of these evil, godless men (as one would do when eating bread) would cause more than *indigestion*. It would tragically result in *damnation* for those who partook of their "spiritual table."

**MacArthur** - The Christian needs constant exposure to the Word of God and constant illumination by the Spirit of God. Only God's Word and Spirit can raise him above the cares, concerns, perplexities, and confusion that are the inevitable heritage of life that is viewed and lived purely in the human dimension. ([Matthew Commentary](#))

**POSB** - Note: the danger was not in eating bread with false teachers, but in being misled by their teachings and behavior. Christ ate with them (Luke 7:36; Luke 11:37; Luke 14:1). (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

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**Understand** (3539) ([noeo](#) from [nous](#) = mind, the seat of moral reflection) has the basic meaning of direct one's mind to something and thus means more than just take a glance at. It means to perceive with the mind, to apprehend, to ponder (= weigh in one's mind, think especially quietly, soberly and deeply). It means to consider well, to reflect on with insight, or to think over a matter carefully. The idea is to grasp or comprehend something on the basis of careful thought. Used 4x in Matthew - Matt. 15:17; Matt. 16:9; Matt. 16:11; Matt. 24:15; Mk. 7:18; Mk. 8:17; Mk. 13:14; Jn. 12:40; Ro. 1:20; Eph. 3:4; Eph. 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:7; 2 Tim. 2:7; Heb. 11:3

**Beware** (pay or give attention) (4337) ([prosecho](#) from [pros](#) = before, toward + [echo](#) = hold) means literally to hold to, toward or before. Originally it was followed by the word "the mind" ([nous](#)) but at times "the mind" was omitted but still the idea of "the mind" was implied. To apply one's self to. To attach one's self to. **Prosecho** means to moor a ship, to tie it up. **Prosecho** was also used to mean "to remain on course". Figuratively (see also below) the idea is to hold one's mind before then to take heed, to pay attention, to give heed, be in a state of alert, to watch out for or to be on guard. The word implies the giving one's consent, as well as one's attention. When used in this manner **prosecho** always warns of some type of danger (usually spiritual danger but occasionally physical)! **Prosecho** is not a call simply to notice or sense something, but to be on guard against it because it is so harmful (eg, the danger of practicing your righteousness for others to see, the danger of false prophets, false teachers and false teaching, the danger of the Pharisees and Sadducees). The idea is to turn one's mind or attention to a thing by being on one's guard against it.

**Matthew 16:12 Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

- **but:** Mt 15:4-9 23:13-28 Ac 23:8
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE "LIGHT BULBS" FINALLY COME ON!

**Then** - This is a marker of time. In this case finally it marked the time when the "lights went on" about Jesus' warnings concerning the Pharisees and Sadducees!

**They understood** ([suniemi](#)) that He did not say to beware [prosecho](#) of the leaven ([zume](#)) of bread, but of the teaching ([didache](#)) of the Pharisees and Sadducees - They finally understood that Jesus was not speaking of literal leaven, but was speaking of figurative leaven, the teaching of false doctrine. False doctrine is dangerous because it spreads like leaven. It does not take much until the whole body is "leavened!" False teachers are to be removed immediately and thrown out of the body of Christ. There is absolutely no room for compromise!

**Gilbrant** - The evil leaven—the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees—stands in contrast to the pure, unleavened bread—the true words of Jesus. At the same time, the warning was a call to be separate from the Pharisees (Mt 15:6; 15:14). It is also a warning to stay away from teachings that have their roots in human thinking and human philosophy instead of in the Bible. All through the history of the Church too many have absorbed subtle teachings that had their source in heathenism. Even the Reformation did not bring a full return to the Bible as the standard. Too many continued to interpret the Bible through a mindset of human reasoning that disregards the place of the Holy Spirit and the Bible's exhortations to holiness. European philosophers, with their arguments against the supernatural, influenced many toward modernism or liberalism and, more recently, toward neoorthodoxy and existentialism. Oriental heathen philosophies have gained a great deal of popularity through so-called "new age" writings. All of these things are evil leaven. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Teach the Text Commentary** – This specific understanding, however, does not allow us to attribute the trait of understanding to the disciples, since they will continue to misunderstand Jesus' teachings (e.g., Mt 16:22; 19:10, 13).

**Constable** has an interesting analysis - This section of the Gospel ( Matthew 13:54 to Matthew 16:12) emphasizes the continuing and mounting opposition to the King. Matthew recorded Jesus withdrawing from this opposition twice ( Matthew 14:13; Matthew 15:21). In both instances He proceeded to train His disciples. The first time He ministered to Jews, and the second time He ministered to Gentiles. This was the pattern of Jesus' ministry that Matthew hinted at in the first verse of this Gospel. Opposition arose from the Jewish people ( Matthew 13:54-58), from the Romans ( Matthew 14:1-12), and most strongly from the religious leaders within Judaism ( Matthew 15:1-9; Matthew 16:1-4). The rejection of this last group finally became so firm that Jesus abandoned them ( Matthew 16:4). From now on He concentrated on preparing His disciples for what lay ahead of them because of Israel's rejection of Her King.

**J C Ryle** - Finally, let us make a personal use of this caution, by keeping up a holy jealousy over our own souls. Let us remember, that we live in a world where Pharisaism and Sadducees are continually striving for the mastery in the Church of Christ. Some want to add to the Gospel, and some want to take away from it. Some would bury it, and some would pare it down to nothing. Some would stifle it by heaping on additions, and some would bleed it to death by subtraction from its truths. Both parties agree only in one respect. Both would kill and destroy the life of Christianity, if they succeeded in having their own way. Against both errors let us watch and pray, and stand upon our guard. Let us not add to the Gospel, to please the Roman Catholic Pharisee. Let us not subtract from the Gospel, to please the Neologian Sadducee. Let our principle be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," nothing added to it, and nothing taken away.

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**Understood** (4920) (**suniami** from **sun/syn** = with + **hiemi** = send) ([Click](#) study of related noun **sunesis**) literally means to send together or bring together. The idea is to put together "pieces of the puzzle" (so to speak) and to exhibit quick comprehension. They had multiple pieces of bread on two occasions which should have enabled them to put the pieces together!

**Teaching** (instruction) (1322) (**didache** from **didasko** = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal; English = didactic = intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction).

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**POSB - False Teaching— Pharisees— Sadducees:** What is the leaven, the false teaching, of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that is, the religionists? Very simply put, it is just what the disciples finally understood: the doctrine (teachings) of the religionists. They fermented, soured, and brought disease to everyone they touched (see Deeper Study #2—Acts 23:8; Deeper Study #3—Acts 23:8; cp. Mark 8:15).

The Pharisees believed in a personal God and in the Scripture as God's Word to man, but they added to God's Word (see Deeper Study #1—Luke 6:2). They added rules and regulations, rituals and ceremonies laying undue restrictions upon man's behavior. This led to three gross errors.

1. It led people to think that their good behavior and their religious rituals and ceremonies made them acceptable to God. A religion of good works—of trying to do enough good to become acceptable to God—was being depended upon for righteousness.
2. It led to a religion of social respectability, an external religion. If a person was respected socially and did all the right things, then he was judged acceptable to God.
3. It led to an attitude and an air of self-righteousness. If a person kept the rules and regulations, he naturally felt righteous and sometimes demonstrated it. There was a dependence upon himself, upon keeping the right rules and thereby becoming righteous.

The Sadducees or Herodians were the liberal minded of their day. Their leaven or false teaching was twofold.

1. They took away from God's Word, denying all Scripture except the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.
  2. They were the free thinkers, the rationalists, the secularists, and the materialistic minded of their day. Thus they were willing to collaborate with the Romans in doing away with Jewish culture and in establishing Roman and Greek culture. Because of this, Rome placed their leaders in the governing positions (the Sanhedrin) and gave them wealth. Their worldly mindedness, their secular philosophy, and their liberal theology were always a threat to any man. (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))
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**Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"**

- **came:** Mt 15:21 Ac 10:38
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Mark 8:27+ Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?"

Luke 9:18+ (And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?"

Here Mark's parallel account inserts the story of the blind man which is not found in Matthew's account

"And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and \*implored Him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. 26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." (Mark 8:22-25+)

Caesarea Philippi

Click to Enlarge Reconstruction  
of Ancient Caesarea Philippi

Spring of Banias & Cave of Pan  
Modern Remains of Reconstruction Above

## WHO IS THE SON OF MAN?

**Constable** - Almost as a fugitive from His enemies, Jesus took His disciples to the far northern extremity of Jewish influence, the most northerly place Jesus visited. At this place, as far from Jerusalem and Jesus' opponents as possible, Jesus proceeded to give them important revelation concerning what lay ahead for Him and them. Here Peter would make the great confession of the true identity of Jesus, whereas in Jerusalem to the south the Jews would deny His identity. In this safe haven Jesus revealed to the Twelve more about His person, His program, and His principles as Israel's rejected King.

**Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi**- **Caesarea Philippi** is located near the ancient Israelite town of Dan (cf. Jdg. 20:1; 1 Chron. 21:2), about forty to fifty miles southwest of [Damascus](#).

**Background on [Caesarea Philippi \(Banias\)](#)** - Situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, near a large spring that fed the Jordan River, Caesarea Philippi was originally named Paneas (or [Banias](#)), after the Greek deity [Pan](#) (a mythological half goat, half man famed for his flute-playing). When [Philip the Tetrarch](#) inherited the territory from his father, [Herod the Great](#), he greatly enlarged the city. In A.D. 14, he renamed it Caesarea in honor of [Caesar Augustus](#). To distinguish it from [Caesarea Maritima](#), located west of Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast, the city became known as Caesarea Paneas or **Caesarea Philippi** (so called in honor of Philip the Tetrarch). The city itself was largely populated by Gentiles and thus filled with pagan idols. By again journeying outside of Galilee (cf. Mark 7:24–8:10), Jesus and the apostles enjoyed a reprieve from the oppressive crowds, the antagonistic religious leaders, and the threat posed by Herod Antipas (cf. Luke 13:31+). Mark explains that it was while they were still on the way to the region surrounding Caesarea Philippi that the conversation recorded in these verses took place. (MNTC-Mk)

**Albert Barnes** adds that "There were two cities in Judea called **Caesarea**. One was situated on the borders of the Mediterranean (See the notes at Acts 8:40), and the other was the one mentioned here. This city was greatly enlarged and ornamented by Philip the tetrarch, son of Herod, and called Caesarea in honor of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar. To distinguish it from the other Caesarea the name of Philip was added to it, and it was called Caesarea Philippi, or Caesarea of Philippi. It was situated in the boundaries of the tribe of Naphtali, at the foot of Mount Hermon. It is now called Panias or Banias, and contains (circa 1880's) about 200

houses, and is inhabited chiefly by Turks. The word "coasts" here now usually applied to land in the vicinity of the sea - means "borders" or "regions." He came into the part of the country which appertained to Caesarea Philippi. He was passing northward from the region of Bethsaida, on the coasts of Magdala [Matthew 15:39](#), where the transactions recorded in the previous verses had occurred.

So Jesus and His disciples were not in the actual town of **Caesarea Philippi** (see depiction of town above), but in the region where the town was located. Keep the context in mind. Jesus has left the Pharisees (Mark 8:13) and now will focus on His disciples who have traveled with Him for the previous two years (approximate). At the beginning of their time with Jesus they were hoping He was a "political" Messiah Who would defeat the Romans and set up His Messianic Kingdom. Recall the words of Andrew to Peter " "We have found the **Messiah**" (which translated means Christ)." (Jn 1:41+), Nathanael made a similar proclamation "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the **King** of Israel." (John 1:49+). The disciples (at least some) had heard but not totally comprehended John the Baptist's proclamation "The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, **the Lamb of God** Who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29+, cf Jn 1:34). Several months earlier when Jesus had walked to them on the water of the Sea of Galilee, they responded with worship and acclamation "You are certainly **God's Son!**" (Mt 14:33+). And even the next day after most of those following Jesus deserted Him (Jn 6:66+) when He taught He was the Bread of Life (Jn 6:35, 48+), Peter declared "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6:69+) And so even though they had "hardened hearts," they unlike the Pharisees had recognized the deity and messiahship of Jesus.

#### Related Resources:

- Wikipedia - [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Caesarea philippi](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Caesarea Philippi](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Caesarea](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Caesarea](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Caesarea](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Caesarea](#)

**He was asking His disciples** ([mathetes](#)), "**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**" - Mark 8:27+ has "Who do people say that I am?" Luke gives some additional background recording "And it happened that **while He was praying alone**, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" (Luke 9:18+) Compare The question of WHO IS JESUS - Lk 7:49, Lk 8:25, Lk 9:9. This is the single most important question in all of time or eternity for one's answer determines one's eternal destiny.

**People** does not include the antagonistic religious leaders -- they have had their chance and blew it! So first Jesus begins by asking the disciples what the public opinion was regarding His identity, for they would have heard various opinions voiced by the crowds to whom Jesus had ministered, teaching and performing miracles to authenticate His authority, divinity and His true identity. Jesus is not asking because He did not know for He did (cf Jn 2:24-25+), but He asked to prepare His disciples for their test question.

The answer is that Jesus is the **Messiah foretold in over 300 passages in the Old Testament** so that He would not be missed! The four Gospels underscore the truth that Jesus is both the **Messiah** (Mt. 1:18; 16:16; 23:10; 26:63-64; Mk 1:1; 14:61-62; Lk 2:11, 26; 4:41; 24:46; Jn 1:17, 41; 4:25-26; 11:27; 17:3) and that He is also the **Son of God** (Mt. 8:29; 27:43, 54; Mk 3:11; 15:39; Lk 1:35; 3:21-22; 4:41; 9:35; 22:70; Jn 1:34, 49; 5:18; 10:30, 36; 11:4; 14:9-10; 19:7).

John summarizes the reason for the his Gospel but also for the synoptic Gospels -

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written ([perfect tense](#)) so that you may believe that **Jesus is the Christ** (THE MESSIAH), **the Son of God**; and that believing you may have life in His Name. (John 20:30, 31+)

In his first epistle John writes

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20+)

**Utley** - This event is a watershed event in the Gospel...The miracle stories that affirm the power, authority, and deity of Jesus cease. From this point on the emphasis is the crucifixion. Mark's Gospel changes from a focus on who He is to His great redemptive act (i.e. what He did).

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**Question - [Why did Jesus ask the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"](#)**

**Answer:** Jesus asked a lot of questions. **Query** was one of His favorite teaching tools. One of the questions Jesus put to the disciples was "Who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20). This question drew out a response that is instructive to all of us.

The context of Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?" is important:

"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?'

"They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.'

"'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'God's Messiah'" (Luke 9:18–20).

Parallel accounts are found in Matthew 16 and Mark 8.

Matthew relates that Peter did more than just identify Jesus as the Christ; he also proclaimed Jesus' divine nature: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

Jesus' question "Who do you say I am?" was not a sign of ignorance; He knew all things, including what was on the disciples' minds. The question was also not motivated by some type of self-conceit or vanity; Jesus did not preen, and He had no desire to fish for compliments. Rather, His question was aimed at provoking the disciples to consider their level of faith. The immediate results of His question make it clear why He asked them what He did.

Jesus began the conversation by asking a related question: "Who do the crowds say I am?" (Luke 9:18). In response, the disciples related the various things they had heard: the opinions included several personages come back to life, pointing to the fact that the crowds viewed Jesus as someone special. But the crowds' guesses were all wrong. So Jesus directs the question to the disciples themselves: "Who do you say that I am?" In other words, are you following the crowd? Are you sticking with the conventional wisdom about Me? Or do you have another, more insightful answer? What do you really think?

Peter then speaks up. In answer to the question, Peter affirms his belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and, more than that, the Son of God. By this time, the disciples had seen many miracles, including the raising of a widow's son in Nain, the calming of a storm, the casting out of many demons from a man in the Gerasenes, and the feeding of 5,000. The disciples knew that Jesus was more than a prophet; He was absolutely unique; He was, in fact, God in the flesh.

In response to Peter's declaration, Jesus expresses the blessedness of his faith: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). God, in His grace, had opened the disciples' eyes to see Jesus for who He truly was.

So Jesus asks the question "Who do you say that I am?" and He receives the correct (divinely inspired) response from Peter. This marks a turning point in Jesus' teaching ministry with His disciples. Starting then, the Lord gives His disciples additional information, as shocking as it was for them to hear: "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" (Matthew 16:21).

Jesus had refrained from telling His disciples about His death and resurrection until they had reached an important milestone: namely, that their faith had grown to the extent that they could express their conviction that Jesus was the Son of God. How the disciples handled the additional information of Jesus' death would depend on who they believed Jesus to be. Knowing that He is the Son of God, they should be able to trust Him—even to the point of accepting His death (and resurrection) without being shaken.

Unfortunately, the disciples had a hard time processing what Jesus was now telling them, as evidenced in Peter's response (Matthew 16:22–23). Even having faith in Jesus as the divine Son of God, the disciples were thrown into confusion at the prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection (see Mark 9:32).

Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?" is a good example of one of His teaching methods. Asking a question demands engagement, promotes thinking, and draws out a considered response. Jesus' question and subsequent teaching also illustrate the

progressive nature of God's revelation and our need for growing in faith. Throughout history, God has revealed His message gradually, starting in Genesis and continuing through the close of the canon. He did not reveal any more than mankind needed or was capable of receiving at any given time. Also, Jesus' delay in introducing the subject of His death and resurrection suggests that the disciples' faith needed to mature to the point that they could hear and understand. All of us are called to grow in our faith. There is always more to know of Christ. "Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity" (Hebrews 6:1). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Matthew 16:14** And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

- **John:** Mt 14:2 Mk 8:28
- **Elijah:** Mal 4:5 Mk 6:15 Lu 9:18,19 Joh 7:12,40,41 9:17
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:28+ They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets."

Luke 9:19+ They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again."

## FALSE IDENTIFICATIONS OF THE SON OF MAN

**A T Robertson** - They were ready to respond for they knew that popular opinion was divided on that point (14:1f.). They give four different opinions. It is always a risky thing for a pastor to ask for people's opinions of him. But Jesus was not much concerned by their answers to this question. He knew by now that the Pharisees and Sadducees were bitterly hostile to him. The masses were only superficially following him and they looked for a political Messiah and had vague ideas about him. How much did the disciples understand and how far have they come in their development of faith? Are they still loyal?

**And they said, "Some say John the Baptist** - Some of the people supposed that he might be John the Baptist, as Herod did, risen from the dead as he declared in Mt 14:2+ "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." **Albert Barnes** adds "Jesus performed many miracles, and strongly resembled John in his manner of life, and in the doctrines which he taught." Of course one major difference is that John did not perform miracles.

**and others, Elijah** - This refers to the fulfillment of the prophecy that Elijah was the forerunner of the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6; cf. Mt 3:1-3; Mt 11:9-10; Mt 17:10-13). "Jesus' activity, possibly his warnings of coming judgment (e.g., 11:20-24; 13:40-43, 49-50), has caused some to identify him with this preparatory figure." (Teach the Text)

**William Barclay** points out that even today the Jews expect Elijah to return before the Messiah. In the celebration of the Passover, they always leave a chair vacant for him to occupy.

**POSB** notes that "Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow woman and her son (1 Kings 17:14). The people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude." (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

**but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (prophetes)** - In other words they perceived Jesus as speaking for God to men. The mention of the specific prophet Jeremiah is because the Jews had always thought that Jeremiah was going to return to earth right before the Messiah and bring with him the tabernacle, ark, and altar of incense. "He was said to have taken these and hid them in Mount Nebo right before he died (2 Maccabees 2:1-12; 2 Esdras 2:18)." (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

**One of the prophets** recalls the prophecy by Moses in Deuteronomy - (Deut. 18:15) - "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." and (Deut 18:18) 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

**Broadus** sums it up - no class of the people at this time regarded him as being the Messiah. How could they, when in their view Messiah was to be a splendid conqueror and king?

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**POSB** - It should be noted that the same false confessions about Christ exist in every generation.

- ⇒ There are some people who think that Jesus was only a great man of righteousness who was martyred for His faith. Therefore, He leaves us a great example of how to live and stand up for what we believe.
- ⇒ There are other people who think that Jesus was only one of the great teachers and prophets of history.
- ⇒ There are still others who think that Jesus was only a great man who revealed some very important things to us about God and religion. Therefore, He can make a significant contribution to every man in their search for God.
- ⇒ There are some others who think that Jesus was just a great man and prophet sent to the people (Jews) of His day. We can learn about Him by studying His life. (Borrow [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

### Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

- **But:** Mt 13:11 Mk 8:29 Lu 9:20
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:29+ And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter \*answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

Luke 9:20+ And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." 21 But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,

Who Am I?

## THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR EVERY SOUL EVERY BORN!

The diagram above marks Chapter 16 as a strategic time in this Gospel in regard to the life of Jesus.

**He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"** - "But *you*, who say ye that I am?" Jesus has heard what the people think of Him. Now He wants to know what the twelve who have followed Him over 2 years think of Him. Note that **YOU** (emphatic - humeis - in the PLURAL = You twelve) is the personal pronoun used for contrast and so it might be paraphrased "As for **YOU**, in contradistinction to others, who are you saying that I am?"

**John MacArthur** explains that "it was on this occasion (Mark 8:29+; Mt. 16:16±; Luke 9:20±) that the apostles, through their spokesman Peter, stated that truth with greater conviction and confidence than ever before, doing so against the backdrop of widespread confusion among the crowds and increasing hostility from Israel's religious leaders. That which began as a hope-filled expectation had become a heart-fixed certainty. Appropriately, this passage marks the climax of Mark's gospel and the culmination of Jesus' training of the Twelve. Their discipleship had been intensified over the previous few months, as the Lord increasingly withdrew from the Galilean multitudes to focus on mentoring His apostles. After weeks of concentrated instruction, this essentially constituted their final exam." (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Constable** - The timing of this question in Jesus' ministry was very important. The disciples had believed that Jesus was the Messiah from the beginning of their contact with Him (John 1:41, 51). However their understanding of the Messiah then was the traditional one of their day, namely that of a political leader. The multitudes likewise failed to understand that Jesus was much more than that. The religious leaders were becoming increasingly antagonistic. The disciples were about to receive new revelation regarding Jesus that would have costly implications for them. Therefore it was necessary for them to confess Jesus' identity clearly and unmistakably now.

This passage represents the climax of Jesus' teaching ministry. It was, in effect, the apostles' final examination, consisting of but one question, the ultimate question that every human being must face: Who is Jesus Christ? A person's answer is of the most monumental importance, because on it hinges his eternal destiny. It is a question that no one can escape or avoid. Every soul, as it were, will be pinned against the wall of eternity and forced to answer that question. For some two and a half years Jesus had been moving to this moment-teaching and reteaching, affirming and reaffirming, demonstrating and re-demonstrating, building and rebuilding the truth of who He was in order to establish it completely and securely in the minds and hearts of the Twelve. During the previous several months the Lord had largely shunned the crowds and the Jewish leaders. His few encounters with them were brief

and terse. The misguided multitudes wanted to make Him their political deliverer from the military bondage of Rome and the capricious ambitions of Herod. The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were, for the most part, thoroughly convinced He was a threat to their religious system and were determined to be rid of Him, if necessary by taking His life. As He spent more and more time alone with the Twelve, Jesus went more often into Gentile territory and stayed longer. He withdrew to the fringes of Palestine in order to be free of the misguided and fickle adulation of the multitudes and the growing hostility of the Jewish religious leaders.

### Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- **You:** Mt 14:33 26:63 27:54 Ps 2:7 Mk 14:61 Joh 1:49 6:69 11:27 20:31 Ac 8:37 9:20 Ro 1:4 Heb 1:2-5 1Jn 4:15 5:5,20
- **the living God:** De 5:26 Ps 42:2 Da 6:26 Ac 14:15 1Th 1:9
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:29+ And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

Luke 9:20+ And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

**Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ- Christ** ( [Christos](#) See also [Messiah - Anointed One](#)) was the equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah" (Messiah = [messias](#)) or "Anointed One" ([mashiach/masiyah](#)). The Greek literally reads: "You are **the** Christ, **the** Son of **the** God, **the** Living One!" (Peter used four definite articles for each Name, each emphasizing the uniqueness).

[A T Robertson](#) - It was a noble confession, but not a new claim by Jesus. Peter had made it before (John 6:69) when the multitude deserted Jesus in Capernaum. Since the early ministry (John 4) Jesus had avoided the word Messiah because of its political meaning to the people. But now Peter plainly calls Jesus the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of the God the living one (note the four Greek articles). This great confession of Peter means that he and the other disciples believe in Jesus as the Messiah (ED: EXCEPT JUDAS ISCARIOT) and are still true to him in spite of the defection of the Galilean populace (John 6).

[Guzik](#) - Peter knew the opinion of the crowd—while it was complimentary towards Jesus—wasn't accurate. Jesus was much more than John the Baptist or Elijah or a prophet. He was more than a national reformer, more than a miracle worker, more than a prophet. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

**MacArthur - Christ** is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah, God's predicted and long-awaited deliverer of Israel, the supreme "Anointed One," the coming High Priest, King, Prophet, and Savior. Without hesitation Peter declared Jesus to be the Messiah, whereas the multitudes of Jews believed Him to be only the Messiah's precursor. On first meeting Jesus, Andrew had excitedly proclaimed Him to be the **Messiah**, and Nathaniel had called Him "**the Son of God ... the King of Israel**" (Jn 1:41, 49). The disciples knew that John the Baptist had borne witness that Jesus "**is the Son of God**" (Jn 1:34), and the longer they stayed with Jesus, the more evidence they had of His divine nature, power, and authority. Like their fellow Jews, however, they had been taught to expect a conquering and reigning Messiah who would deliver God's people from their enemies and establish forever His righteous kingdom on earth. And when Jesus refused to use His miraculous power for His own benefit or to oppose the Roman oppressors, the disciples wondered if they were right about Jesus' identity His humility, meekness, and subservience were in total contrast to their preconceived views of the Messiah. That the Messiah would be ridiculed with impunity, not to mention persecuted and executed, was inconceivable. When Jesus spoke of His going away and coming back, Thomas doubtlessly echoed the consternation of all the disciples when he said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" (John 14:5).

**The Son of the living God:** OT name for Jehovah (Dt 5:26; Jos 3:10; 1Sa 17:26, 36; 2Ki 19:4, 16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Da 6:26; Hos 1:10) contrast the dead, dumb idols (Jer 10:8; 18:15; 1Co 12:2) and even the fact that Caesarea Philippi was a center of the worship of [dead god Pan](#). The **Son of Man** (Mt 16:13) was also the **Son of God**, the Creator of the universe and all that is in it. He was the true and real God, not a mythological figment such as [Pan](#) or a [mortal "deity" such as caesar](#)—both of whom had shrines in Caesarea Philippi. The disciples' Lord was **Son of the living God**. As evidenced by numerous things the Twelve later said and did, they did not at this time have a full comprehension of the Trinity or even of the full nature and work of Christ. But they knew Jesus was truly the Christ, the Messiah, and that He was truly divine, the **Son of the living God**. **Son** reflects the idea of oneness in essence, because a son is one in nature with his father. So Jesus Christ was one in nature with God the Father (cf. Jn 5:17,18; 10:30–33, Heb 1:3+).

[Albert Barnes](#) - The term "**living**" was given to the true God to distinguish him from idols, that are dead, or lifeless blocks and stones. He is also the Source of life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The word "living" is often given to him in the Old



Testament, Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26, 1 Samuel 17:36; Jeremiah 10:9-10, etc. In this noble confession Peter expressed the full belief of himself and of his brethren that he was the long-expected Messiah. Other people had very different opinions of him, but they were satisfied, and were not ashamed to confess it.

**Broadus** - The **Son of the living God** is a very solemn expression. The gods of the heathen were lifeless; Jehovah the God of Israel, the one true God, was living. So Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:15 R. V.): "that ye should should turn from these vain things unto the living God." Mark 8:29 records simply 'thou art the Christ (Messiah)'; Luke (9:20) 'the Christ (Messiah) of God.'—The earliest disciples of Jesus, including Simon Peter, at once concluded that he was the Messiah. (John 1:41, 49.) But he proceeded to act so differently from what they had been reared to expect of Messiah, that they would naturally become greatly perplexed about his Messiahship, even as John felt in his prison (see on Mt 11:3). Again and again, however, some work or word would persuade them afresh. Thus in Mt 7:22 he declares, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord," etc. In Mt 11:5 f. he refers the messengers of John to his Messianic miracles and preaching to the poor. In Mt 14:33 the persons in the boat say, "of a truth thou art the Son of God." In John 6:69, R. V., Peter says (as spokesman): "We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God." (This last the copyists changed into "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," by assimilation to our passage of Matthew.) Now, two or three years later than their first early persuasion, they have become established in the conviction, though so in conflict with their life-long conceptions, that their Master is the Messiah. We thus see that there is no contradiction, such as many critics have alleged, between the statements of Matt., Mark., and Luke at this point, and that of John 1:41. Nor do we read that he had ever distinctly told the disciples that he was the Messiah, though he had said so to the woman of Samaria. (John 4:26, 29.) A few months later, the noble Martha, who receives scant justice in many pulpits, made the same confession for which Peter is here so commended. (John 11:27.) We understand the importance of this confession when we hear a Jew of the present time announce his new-found conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.—Does this confession of Peter represent the Saviour as divine? Not necessarily, if it stood alone without any later revelation. (Comp. on Mt 14:33.) But subsequent apostolic teaching, guided by the Holy Spirit, employs kindred phrases to set forth his divinity, which may therefore be regarded as implicitly contained in the language here used.

**Henry Morris** - Peter's great confession apparently was given as spokesman for all the disciples since Jesus had asked them the question (Matthew 16:15). They understood that Jesus was both the promised Messiah ("the Christ") and also the only begotten Son of God. They had learned this first from John the Baptist (see John's testimony as recorded in John 1:15-18), but this had been further confirmed by their personal knowledge of Christ and by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - Peter means by his answer that Jesus is the One who would fulfill the messianic hope of the O.T. He does not completely understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship, but the truth is beginning to dawn, as Matthew makes clear by the expression "the Son of the living God." This is Peter's astonishing insight. To avow that Jesus was the Messiah was not startling. But to affirm that Jesus, the Messiah, was the Son of God -- deity in human flesh -- was an insight of momentous illumination (v. 17).

**Hiebert** - In the time of Jesus, it was the current Jewish designation for the promised greater Son of David who would restore the kingdom of David and reign in worldwide power. The occurrences of the title in the Gospels show that Jesus was reluctant to use the term of Himself, apparently because of the limited and inadequate nature of the current messianic hopes. In popular thought, the Messiah had largely become a nationalistic figure; and, if used of Jesus, the title would at once have inflamed the political aspirations of the people (cf. John 6:14–15). But Jesus did not reject the title whenever it was applied to Him. He understood and fulfilled His messianic mission in a way different from and larger than the current messianic expectations. In His own understanding of His Person and mission, Jesus fused the Old Testament pictures of the Messiah, the suffering Servant, and the Son of man. Thus, His own presentation of Himself was not at once fully understood. The present discussion with His disciples was intended by Jesus to lead them into a fuller understanding of His messianic identity and function.

**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) describes one who has been anointed with oil, one who has been consecrated. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (exceptions = "false Christs" - Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22). **Christos** describes one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. It is used here as the title "Anointed One" and is the Greek synonym for "Messiah." Christos is used in the [Septuagint](#) describing everyone anointed with the holy oil, especially the priesthood (Lev. 4:5+, Lev 4:16+) and it is also a name applied to those who were acting as redeemers like Cyrus. In the TWOT Hamilton suggests a fourfold significance to anointing (Heb - [Mashiach](#)): (1) separation unto God, (2) authorization by God, (3) divine enablement, and (4) the coming Deliverer. In regards to Deliverer Hamilton says "Though this association with the term m̄ashach is not as prevalent in the OT as often supposed, the prospect of a righteous, Spirit-filled ruler is increasingly discernible in the OT (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7+; Isaiah 1:1-5+; Isa 61:1+)" **BDAG** adds Christos signifies the "Fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a Deliverer" and was used in the [Septuagint](#) of the great messianic Ps 2:2+ describing the future day when "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His **Anointed** (Hebrew = [Mashiach/masiyah](#); [Lxx](#) = Christos)." The first use of **Christos** in the Septuagint

describes "the anointed (Hebrew = [Mashiach/masiyah](#); [Lxx](#) = Christos) **priest**" (Lev 4:5+) carrying out a blood sacrifice, clearly foreshadowing the One Who would come as both the Sacrifice and the Priest! Daniel 9:26+ gives us the incredible prophecy that after 69 weeks (483 years) "the Messiah ([Mashiach](#); Christos) will be cut off," a specific prophecy of **what** would happen to Messiah and **when** it would happen. The Jews could have known and should have known (and some Jews have been saved when they read Daniel's prophecy) (See Luke 19:42+. [Christos](#) is translated in the NAS 1995 edition as Christ (516x), Christ's (11x) and **Messiah** (4x - Mt 1:1, 16, 17, 2:4). The NIV and ESV never translate Christos as Messiah, but always as Christ. The Holman Christian Standard Bible has an interesting approach and translates Christos as Messiah many times depending on the context ([see explanatory note](#)) The NLT translates **Christos** as Messiah over 80 times. The NET translates Christos as Messiah in Jn 4:29, Acts 3:20, Eph 2:12.

#### Related Resources:

- [Messiah - Anointed One](#)
- Messiah = [messias](#)
- [See incredible videos that chronicle Jewish men and women recognizing Jesus as their Messiah](#)
- [Is Jesus the Messiah?](#)
- [What does Messiah mean?](#)
- [Why do most Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah?](#)
- [Does the Old Testament truly predict a second advent of the Messiah?](#)

**Matthew 16:17** And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

- **Blessed:** Mt 5:3-11 13:16,17 Lu 10:23,24 22:32 1Pe 1:3-5 5:1
- **Simon:** Joh 1:42 21:15-17
- **for:** Ga 1:11,12,16
- **but:** Mt 11:25-27 Isa 54:13 Lu 10:21,22 Joh 6:45 17:6-8 1Co 2:9-12 Ga 1:16 Eph 1:17,18 2:8 3:5,18,19 Col 1:26,27 1Jn 4:15 5:20
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark has no parallel

Luke has no parallel

### NOT NATURALLY REVEALED BUT SUPERNATURALLY REVEALED

**And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona - [Broadus](#) on Simon Barjona** - The Hebrew Ben (Benjamin, Benhadad, etc.), and the Aramaic Bar, signifies 'son'; e. g., Bar-Jesus, Barabbas (Mt 27:16), Bartholomew (Mt 10:3), Bartimeus, Barnabas, etc.

**because** - Term of explanation - explains why Peter is blessed.

**Flesh and blood did not reveal ([apokalupto](#)) this to you, but** (important term of contrast) **My Father Who is in heaven** - This truth was not revealed by a man, by humanity, by natural means but by supernatural means, uncovering to his heart and mind (**reveal**) truth that heretofore had been concealed from the disciples. In other words "Blessed are you, because he had received this insight through divine revelation and not through human influences." God the Father removed the veil regarding Jesus' true identity, exposing to open view what was heretofore hidden. He made manifest and revealed the Holy One Who was previously unknown to the apostles as the Messiah.

**Spurgeon** - "If you know no more of Jesus than flesh and blood has revealed to you, it has brought you no more blessing than the conjectures of their age brought to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who remained an adulterous and unbelieving generation."

**A T Robertson** - The disciples express positive conviction in the Messiahship or Christhood of Jesus as opposed to the divided

opinions of the populace. "The terms in which Jesus speaks of Peter are characteristic—warm, generous, unstinted. The style is not that of an ecclesiastical editor laying the foundation for church power, and prelatial pretensions, but of a noble-minded Master eulogizing in impassioned terms a loyal disciple" (Bruce).

**Broadus** makes a good point - None but the Father knows the Son. (Mt 11:27.) To lift them out of all the perplexed conceptions due to their education and environment, and fix them in the conviction that one without sceptre or army or even home, is the Messiah, required revelation from the Father (comp. John 6:44 = "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.").

**NET Note** - The expression "flesh and blood" could refer to "any human being" (so TEV, NLT; cf. NIV "man"), but it could also refer to Peter himself (i.e., his own intuition; cf. CEV "You didn't discover this on your own").

**THOUGHT** - If you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, then you have had an experience similar to Peter's revelation. Jesus declared "'No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.'" (John 6:44) Beloved, this truth should evoke a chorus of "Hallelujahs" from our innermost being.

**Blessed** (3107) (**makarios** from root **makar**, but others say from **mak** = large or lengthy) means to be happy, but not in the usual sense of happiness based on positive circumstances. From the Biblical perspective **Makarios** describes the person who is free from daily cares and worries because his every breath and circumstance is in the hands of His Maker Who gives him such an assurance (such a "blessing"). As discussed below **makarios** was used to describe the kind of happiness that comes from receiving divine favor. **A T Robertson** - The word accents the actual inner state rather than the outward appearance as another sees it.

**Reveal** (601) (**apokalupto** from **apó** = from + **kalúpto** = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse - see study of **apokalupsis** English = apocalypse) literally means to remove the cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. Almost all of the NT uses have a figurative use, especially to some aspect of spiritual truth that was heretofore hidden but now has the "lid removed" so that it can be seen (understood). Thus **apokalupto** means to "take the lid off", to remove the cover and thereby to expose to open view that which had heretofore not been visible, known or disclosed. The idea is to make manifest something previously secret or unknown. Uses in Matthew - Matt. 10:26; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 16:17;

**J C Ryle** - We shall do well to copy that hearty zeal and affection which Peter here displayed. We are perhaps too much disposed to underrate this holy man, because of his occasional instability, and his thrice-repeated denial of his Lord. This is a great mistake. With all his faults, Peter was a true-hearted, fervent, single-minded servant of Christ. With all his imperfections, he has given us a pattern that many Christians would do wisely to follow. Zeal like his may have its ebbs and flows, and sometimes lack steadiness of purpose. Zeal like his may be ill-directed, and sometimes make sad mistakes. But zeal like his is not to be despised. It awakens the sleeping. It stirs the sluggish. It provokes others to exertion. Anything is better than sluggishness, luke-warmness, and torpor, in the Church of Christ. Happy would it have been for Christendom had there been more Christians like Peter and Martin Luther, and fewer like Erasmus.

**Matthew 16:18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."**

- **you**: Mt 10:2 Joh 1:42 Ga 2:9
- **upon**: Isa 28:16 1Co 3:10,11 Eph 2:19-22 Rev 21:14
- **I will**: Zec 6:12,13 1Co 3:9 Heb 3:3,4
- **my**: Mt 18:17 Ac 2:47 8:1 Eph 3:10 5:25-27,32 Col 1:18 1Ti 3:5,15
- **and the**: Ge 22:17 2Sa 18:4 Job 38:17 Ps 9:13 69:12 107:18 127:5 Pr 24:7 Isa 28:6 38:10 1Co 15:55
- **will not**: Ps 125:1,2 Isa 54:17 Joh 10:27-30 Ro 8:33-39 Heb 12:28 Rev 11:15 21:1-4
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark has no parallel

Luke has no parallel

**I also say to you that you are Peter** - Peter is **petros** (Latin = Petrus) is a masculine proper noun which means a "stone" and

generally a smaller stone than the feminine form **petra** which refers to a massive rock or a foundation boulder

**And upon this rock I will build My church** - My church emphasizes the church belongs to Jesus Who built, sustains it, protects it and will one day remove it from this godless globe at the rapture. The church is a unique entity distinct from the nation of Israel. The Church did not replace Israel. God is not finished with the nation of Israel as even an honest view of history reveals, for in May, 1948 Israel again became a nation after almost 2000 years. How can anyone honestly say God is finished with Israel? The church began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The church was not present in the Old Testament. The Septuagint uses the word [ekklesia](#) in the Old Testament to describe an assembly but not the church as described in the New Testament.

**For More Discussion of this controversial passage see the following resources:**

- [Matthew 16 Commentary](#) - Thomas Constable
- [Matthew 16:18-20: The Church that Christ Builds 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 16:18-20: The Church that Christ Builds 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 16 Peter, the Rock of the Church](#) - Q&A John MacArthur
- [Matthew 16 Upon this Rock I Will Build My Church](#) - Q&A John MacArthur

**Related Resources:**

- [When did the church begin/start?](#)
- [What is replacement theology / supersessionism? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is spiritual Israel? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is New Israel? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is the pope the Vicar of Christ? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Will all Israel be saved in the end times? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Guzik** comments that "Peter, by His own testimony, did not see himself as the rock on which the church was founded. He wrote that we are living stones, but Jesus is the cornerstone. We could say that Peter was the "first believer"; that he was the "first rock" among "many rocks." Peter explains upon Whom the church will be built...

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A **CHOICE STONE**, A **PRECIOUS CORNER stone**, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE **STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED**, THIS BECAME THE **VERY CORNER stone**," 8 and, "A **STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE**"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. (1 Peter 2:4-8+, compare Acts 4:10-12+)

Peter himself explains that Jesus is the **Corner Stone**, not Peter! Peter says that Jesus is the foundation. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church, but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. Paul affirms that Jesus is the Cornerstone...

Ephesians 2:19-20+ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

**Arnold Fruchtenbaum** explains that "The simple point of Greek grammar is: You cannot modify a masculine by a feminine. A feminine noun can never modify a masculine noun. The word for Peter, [petros](#), is a masculine noun and means "a small stone or pebble." Yeshua said, "You are Peter—**Petros**. You are a small stone—a small pebble—just like the small stones or pebbles in this stream shooting forth from the base of the cliff-rock, which overshadowed the town of Caesarea Philippi." On the other hand, when He talked about this **rock**, the Greek term He used was [petra](#). **Petra** is a feminine noun which means "a massive cliff-rock," just like the one overshadowing Caesarea Philippi. So, Peter is a small stone, which make terrible foundations. You do not build a building on a foundation of small stones. But a house could be built on a solid, massive, huge cliff-rock, because that would be a firm foundation. So Yeshua said to Peter, you are Peter [petros, masculine noun, meaning a small stone], and upon this rock [Petra, feminine noun, meaning a huge, massive cliff-rock] I will build my church. In other words: "Peter, you are a petros, a small stone like the ones in the river that are broken off this cliff. But upon the petra, from which you were broken off, I will build My Church."

**Bruce Barton** - The "rock" on which Jesus would build his church has been identified in four main ways:

1. The “**rock**” refers to Jesus himself (his work of salvation by dying for us on the cross). This would mean that Jesus is the divine architect of our faith and that he himself is the chief cornerstone. But this truth does not seem to be what the language conveys here. The focus was on Peter and on Jesus’ response to him.
2. The “**rock**” refers to Peter as the supreme leader or first “bishop” of the church. This view is promoted by Roman Catholic scholars. It gives authority to the hierarchy of their church and regards Peter and each of his successors as the supreme pontiff of the church. There is no mention of succession in these verses, however, and while the early church expressed high regard for Peter, there is no evidence that they regarded him as final authority. Also, this creates a great problem because such a view excludes the churches who do not trace their origin to Peter.
3. The “**rock**” refers to the confession of faith that Peter gave and that all subsequent true believers give. This view was promoted by Luther and the reformers as a reaction to view number two. To regard Peter’s confession and discount his leadership makes the situation unnecessarily abstract. Peter was looked to as a leader in the church. In the phrase, “You are Peter,” you is emphatic, emphasizing Peter’s role.
4. The “**rock**” refers to Peter as the leader and spokesman (foundation stone) of the disciples. Just as Peter had revealed the true identity of Christ, so Jesus revealed Peter’s identity and role. While apostolic succession cannot be found in this context or in any of the epistles, Peter’s role as a leader and spokesman of the church must not be discounted. This view has an element from number two in that Peter is the forerunner because he is the one who received the revelation of insight and faith concerning Christ’s identity, and Peter is the first one who confessed Christ. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary](#))

**Peter** (4074)(**petros** Latin = Petrus) is a masculine proper noun which means a "stone" and generally a smaller stone than the feminine form **petra** which refers to a massive rock or a foundation boulder (eg Mt 7:24+). Peter is the Greek equivalent of the Syriac or Aramaic name **Cephas** (*Kephas* from Aramaic *kay fah*) which was assigned to Simon by Jesus. **Peter** was not always a model of rock-like (**petros** is a symbol of imperturbability as determined from used in Greek literature) firmness. Note for example his actions in Gethsemane, his denial three times of Christ, his unsuccessful attempt at walking on water and his conduct at Antioch (Gal 2:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) where he is called **Cephas**. Despite all this **Peter** was clearly the leader of Jesus’ disciples, the spokesman for the Twelve and one of the three closest to Jesus. All uses in Matthew - Matt. 4:18; Matt. 8:14; Matt. 10:2; Matt. 14:28; Matt. 14:29; Matt. 15:15; Matt. 16:16; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 16:22; Matt. 16:23; Matt. 17:1; Matt. 17:4; Matt. 17:24; Matt. 18:21; Matt. 19:27; Matt. 26:33; Matt. 26:35; Matt. 26:37; Matt. 26:40; Matt. 26:58; Matt. 26:69; Matt. 26:73; Matt. 26:75;

**Rock** (4073)(**petra** feminine of the masculine noun **petros**) refers to a massive rock, a large expanse of bedrock or a great outcropping of rock. Vine distinguishes **petra** as a "mass of rock" from the masculine **petros** which refers to a detached stone or boulder, including a stone that might be thrown or easily moved. All uses of **petra** translated rock(10), rocks(3), rocky(2). - Matt. 7:24; Matt. 7:25; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 27:51; Matt. 27:60; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 6:48; Lk. 8:6; Lk. 8:13; Ro 9:33; 1 Co. 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:8; Rev. 6:15; Rev. 6:16

**Build** (3618)(**oikodomeo** from **oikos** = dwelling + **doma** = building [of a house] from **demo** = to build) means literally to build, construct or erect a dwelling. Matt. 7:24; Matt. 7:26; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 21:33; Matt. 21:42; Matt. 23:29; Matt. 26:61; Matt. 27:40

**Church** (1577)(**ekklisia** from **ek** = out + **klesis** = a calling, verb = **kaleo** = to call) literally means called out (but see note by Louw-Nida below) and as commonly used in the Greco-Roman vernacular referred to citizens who were *called out* from their homes to be publicly assembled or gathered to discuss or carry out affairs of state. **Wuest** writes that "The word **assembly** is a good one-word translation of **ekklisia**." Only uses in Gospels - Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:17

#### Related Resources

- [Multiple Bible Dictionary Discussions](#)
- [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Ecclesiology: The Church - Greg Herrick](#)
- [Questions about the Church](#) (e.g., [What is the church?](#))
- [What was the first / original church? Is the original / first church the true church?](#)

**And the gates of Hades will not overpower it.** = - **Hades** means that which is out of sight-- hades is down (Mt 11:23), and it is a prison to which Jesus holds the keys (Rev 1:18).

**NET Note** - In the OT, Hades was known as Sheol. It is the place where the unrighteous will reside (Matt 11:23; Luke 16:23; Rev 20:13–14 ). Some translations render this by its modern equivalent, "hell"; others see it as a reference to the power of death.

"The gates of Hades" symbolize death. **MacArthur** says "Hades is the place of punishment for the spirits of dead unbelievers. The point of entry for such is death. This, then, is a Jewish phrase referring to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan (cf. Heb 2:14, 15+), has no power to stop the church. The blood of martyrs, in fact, has sped the growth of the church in size and spiritual power." (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#)). The blood of martyrs, in fact, has sped the growth of the church in size and spiritual power. By His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ conquered death, and so gave victory over death to any who have built their future upon the Rock.

Jesus was thus telling the disciples His death would not prevent His work of building the church. Later (Mt 16:21) He spoke of His imminent death. He was therefore anticipating His death and His victory over death through the Resurrection.

**Michael Andrus on gates of Hades** - The church which Christ will build will not be overcome by the gates of Hades, meaning "the place of the dead." We have often misunderstood this to mean that Satan and His forces will attack the Church but will not prevail because God will defend his Church. But please realize that gates are not offensive weapons but defensive ones. The picture is not of Satan attacking the church but rather Christ's church literally banging down the gates of Hades. Its gates are not strong enough to withstand the church. It seems to me that the point is that sin and death have been conquered by Christ, that He will raid the place of the dead and raise up His saints to be with Himself. ([Sermon](#))

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**Gates** (4439) ([pule](#) derivative is [pulon](#) = magnificent gate) is a leaf or wing of a folding entrance and here describes a door or gate. Note that there are only 2 gates and every person will enter one or the other. To not choose to enter the narrow gate is in fact a choice to enter the wide gate and subsequent destruction. Pule i - Matt. 7:13; Matt. 7:14; Matt. 16:18; Lk. 7:12; Acts 3:10; Acts 9:24; Acts 12:10; Acts 16:13; Heb. 13:12

**Overpower** (2729) ([katischuo](#) from [kata](#) = against + [ischuo](#) = to prevail) means to be strong against someone or something and so to prevail over. In a hostile sense (Mt 16:18) it means to overcome or vanquish, getting the upper hand, so to speak. Used only 3 times in the NT - Mt 16:18, Lk 21:36. [Katischuo](#) is used to describe the cry to crucify Jesus in Lk 23:23+, which was so loud and persistent by the Jews, that they prevailed with Pilate. O, the difference a few days can make in one's heart response -- they hailed Him and wanted to crown Him King on His Triumphal Entry (Lk 19:38+) and now they cry for His crucifixion like a criminal. But Jesus always gets the last word for He uses [katischuo](#) in His prophecy "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower ([katischuo](#)) it."

**Hades** (86) ([hades](#) is the transliteration of the Greek word **Hades** from [a](#) = negative + [eido](#) = to see) literally means "not seen" or "unseen". As noted the understanding of Hades is somewhat confusing, as it changes meaning somewhat as one moves from the uses in the Old Testament into the uses in the New Testament. That said, in the OT **Hades** was used most often to describe the region of ALL departed souls. Everyone who die, whether righteous or unrighteous, is described as departing to **Hades**. But as we move into the NT, we see the progressive revelation of the term, so that **Hades** gains a more restricted sense and refers not to the place of ALL who die (believers and unbelievers as in the OT) but only to the abode of unbelievers. In other words, in the NT **Hades** comes to be synonymous with what we refer to as **Hell**. But to confuse the picture a little, you must realize that even in this sense of meaning "Hell" **Hades** is only a "temporary holding tank" so to speak, because as shown in Rev 20:14+ **Hades** ceases to exist for it is thrown into the Lake of fire. Don't be confused. **Hell** is permanent and in Scripture is clearly described as such. The unrighteous dead will be resurrected in their bodies (The "Second Resurrection" - see [Births, Deaths, and Resurrections](#)) at the **Great White Throne judgment** in Revelation 20:11-15+ and after being judged for their deeds in the body (to determine the degree of punishment in Hell), they are thrown into the Lake of fire which is synonymous with [Gehenna](#). And **Hades** is also thrown into the Lake of fire (thus the reason Hades is referred to as temporary) and is never again described in Scripture.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the rock in Matthew 16:18?](#)

**ANSWER** - The debate rages over whether "the rock" on which Christ will build His church is Peter, or Peter's confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). In all honesty, there is no way for us to be 100% sure which view is correct. The grammatical construction allows for either view. The first view is that Jesus was declaring that Peter would be the "rock" on which He would build His church. Jesus appears to be using a play on words. "You are Peter (petros) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church." Since Peter's name means rock, and Jesus is going to build His church on a rock – it appears that Christ is linking the two together. God used Peter greatly in the foundation of the church. It was Peter who first proclaimed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47). Peter was also the first to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). In a sense, Peter was the rock "foundation" of the church.

The other popular interpretation of the rock is that Jesus was referring not to Peter, but to Peter's confession of faith in verse 16: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus had never explicitly taught Peter and the other disciples the fullness of His identity, and He recognized that God had sovereignly opened Peter's eyes and revealed to him who Jesus really was. His

confession of Christ as Messiah poured forth from him, a heartfelt declaration of Peter's personal faith in Jesus. It is this personal faith in Christ which is the hallmark of the true Christian. Those who have placed their faith in Christ, as Peter did, are the church. Peter expresses this in 1 Peter 2:4 when he addressed the believers who had been dispersed around the ancient world: "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

At this point, Jesus declares that God had revealed this truth to Peter. The word for "Peter," Petros, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with petra ("on this rock") which means a foundation boulder, as in Matthew 7:24, 25 when He described the rock upon which the wise man builds his house. Peter himself uses the same imagery in his first epistle: the church is built of numerous small petros "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5) who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and those confessions of faith are the bedrock of the church.

In addition, the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:11) and the head (Ephesians 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 (Ephesians 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. And Christ Himself is called the "chief cornerstone" (1 Peter 2:6, 7). The chief cornerstone of any building was that upon which the building was anchored. If Christ declared Himself to be the cornerstone, how could Peter be the rock upon which the church was built? It is more likely that the believers, of which Peter is one, are the stones which make up the church, anchored upon the Cornerstone, "and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

The Roman Catholic Church uses the argument that Peter is the rock to which Jesus referred as evidence that it is the one true church. As we have seen, Peter's being the rock is not the only valid interpretation of this verse. Even if Peter is the rock in Matthew 16:18, this is meaningless in giving the Roman Catholic Church any authority. Scripture nowhere records Peter being in Rome. Scripture nowhere describes Peter as being supreme over the other apostles. The New Testament does not describe Peter as being the "all authoritative leader" of the early Christian church. Peter was not the first pope, and Peter did not start the Roman Catholic Church. The [origin of the Catholic Church](#) is not in the teachings of Peter or any other apostle. If Peter truly was the founder of the Roman Catholic Church, it would be in full agreement with what Peter taught (Acts 2, 1 Peter, 2 Peter). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?](#)
- [Did Jesus go to hell between His death and resurrection?](#)
- [What are the gates of hell?](#)
- [Where did Old Testament believers/saints go when they died?](#)
- [Did God create hell?](#)
- [Where was Jesus for the three days between His death and resurrection?](#)
- [What is Tartarus?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about soul sleep?](#)
- [What is Abraham's bosom?](#)
- [What are the keys of death \(Revelation 1:18\)?](#)

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

- **give:** Ac 2:14-42 10:34-43 15:7
- **the keys:** Isa 22:22 Rev 1:18 3:7 9:1 20:1-3
- **and whatever:** Mt 18:18 Joh 20:23 1Co 5:4,5 2Co 2:10 1Th 4:8 Rev 11:6
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 16 Binding and Loosing Satan, Sin, or Sinners?](#) - Q&A John MacArthur

#### Related Passages:

Mark has no parallel

Luke has no parallel

**I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven** Though verse 18 is difficult, verse 19 has been even more fiercely debated. However, nothing in either verse suggests the possibility that Peter was given authority to forgive men of their sins (see [note below](#)). See **Wuest** expanded translation below to help get the sense of this difficult passage. The keys are Jesus' keys to give to whom He wills.

**Michael Andrus on keys of the kingdom of Heaven** - Peter is given the keys to the kingdom here in this passage. Jesus uses the second person singular pronoun, "I will give you the keys . . ." And historically Peter was given the privilege of opening the way for many into the Kingdom. In Acts 2 and 3 his preaching resulted in thousands of new converts. In Acts 10 he shared the Gospel with the Gentile Cornelius and introduced the Gentile world to baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8 we find Peter excluding, i.e. locking the door, to an unrepentant sinner named Simon the Sorcerer. ([Sermon](#))

**Allen on keys** - If you have been entrusted with the "keys" to something, it may not be yours to own or to use as you will; but it is yours to exercise authority over in the name of the one who entrusted the keys to you. You have the owner's authority given to you to open it or close it. You have their authority entrusted to you to let someone in, or to lock someone out....In the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah, for example, God promises to remove an evil high priest named Shebna from service to the Jewish temple; and to replace him with a good, godly, faithful priest named Eliakim. God speaks to that wicked high priest concerning his replacement—and of the authority and responsibility God would entrust to him—when He says,

*"I will clothe him with your robe  
And strengthen him with your belt;  
I will commit your responsibility into his hand.  
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem  
And to the house of Judah.  
The key of the house of David  
I will lay on his shoulder;  
So he shall open, and no one shall shut;  
And he shall shut, and no one shall open" (Isaiah 22:21-22).*

And did you know that the Lord Jesus—our great High Priest—later claimed that same authority to Himself? In the Lord's seven letters to the seven churches, found in the Book of the Revelation, He introduced Himself to the church at ancient Philadelphia with these words:

*"These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens . . ." (Revelation 3:7).*

In saying that He had possession of the keys of David, He was affirming that He possessed full authority over the covenant people of God.

I believe that the greatest expression of the authority that came from possessing "keys" is found in Revelation 1:17-18. There, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ appears in a vision to the apostle John. It was a heavenly vision of our Lord in His resurrected glory and majesty. John was terrified at the glory of our Savior; but Jesus said,

*"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Revelation 1:17-18).*

Clearly, this meant that our risen Savior had utterly conquered death and hell through His cross; and now holds full authority over them. And so, it is greatly significant that, in our passage this morning, our Lord tells Peter, who is the church's representative 'confessor' and 'testifier' of Christ—and through Peter, also tells the whole church—that He entrusts a set of keys to him. They are the keys, He says, "of the kingdom of heaven"; that is, the kingdom that Jesus Himself taught about in great detail in various parables in Chapter 13; that spiritual kingdom over which He Himself reigns as King, and which will one day be fully realized in His physical reign on the earth upon His return. In our passage this morning, Jesus is about to go to the cross, die in our place for our sins, be raised on the third day, and then ascend to His Father—from where He will await the day of His glorious return to receive His church to Himself. He is about to leave His disciples and return to His heavenly home. And if I may put it this way, it's as if He turns to Peter and says, "The work of the kingdom has been started; and I'm about to go now. Until I return for you, you—and all of the people who believe on Me because of your testimony—are going to be here while the work of the spread of the kingdom goes on. Here are the keys." Think of it! The very keys of the kingdom of heaven! What great authority it is that our Savior and Lord has entrusted to His church on earth! ([Sermon](#))

**Keys** represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter authority to declare what was bound or loosed in heaven.

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.

**Guzik** - This idea of Peter holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven has captured the imagination (and theology) of many Christians throughout the centuries. In artistic representation, Peter is almost always shown with keys. Some people think that this means that Peter has the authority to admit people to heaven, or to keep people out of heaven. This is the basis for the popular image of Peter at the Pearly Gates of Heaven, allowing people to enter or turning them away.. Some people think that it also means that Peter was the first Pope, and that his supposed successors have the keys that were first given to Peter. Indeed, the Papal insignia of the Roman Catholic Church is made up of two prominent keys crossed together.i. There is no doubt that Peter had a special place among all the disciples, and that he had some special privileges: He is always listed first in the listings of the disciples. He opened doors of the kingdom to the Jews in Acts 2:38–39. He opened doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34–44.. Yet there is no Biblical argument whatsoever that Peter's privilege or authority was passed on. To put it one way; one might say that Jesus gave Peter the keys, but didn't give him the authority to pass them on to further generations, and there is not a whisper in the Scriptures that Peter's authority was to be passed on. The idea that apostolic authority comes from Jesus, who gave it to Peter, who set his hands on the heads of approved and ordained men, who in turn set their hands on the heads of approved and ordained men, and so on and so on through the generations until today is nonsense. It is exactly what Spurgeon said it was: the laying of empty hands on empty heads.

**And whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven:-** The expressions "**shall be bound in heaven**" and "**shall be loosed in heaven**" are examples in Greek of the periphrastic future perfect passive construction and should, therefore, be translated "will have been bound already" and "will have been loosed already" in heaven. In other words, Peter's pronouncement of "binding" or "loosing" is dependent upon what heaven has already willed, rather than earth's giving direction to heaven.

**Michael Andrus** on **bind** and **loose** - The metaphor of binding and loosing was used by the rabbis for declaring something forbidden or permitted.iv But it is critical that we pay attention to the grammar here in verse 19. In my version there is a footnote with the verb "will be" both times and a note that the Greek literally reads, "will have been." It's actually a future perfect tense. That makes a huge difference. If it said "will be," that would mean that Peter would be setting policy in heaven. But the future perfect means that Peter is just discerning and responding to what God has already done in heaven. I don't have any problem accepting that this was Peter's job, because it's also the task of every apostle and every true follower of Jesus. Furthermore, Matthew makes it absolutely clear that Peter is not the only one given this responsibility. Look over one page to Matthew 18:18. There the identical promise is made, but Peter is nowhere mentioned in the section from Mt 18:15-20. Jesus is evidently speaking to all the apostles, or better yet, speaking to the church as a whole. In fact, the very next verse reads, "I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." This has always been interpreted as "two or three believers," not just as "two or three apostles." So, apparently this wonderful promise of binding and loosing, of authority in His church is not the exclusive property of Peter or even of the Apostles.([Sermon](#))

**Broadus** - Bind and loose, in the Talmud and other Rabbinical writings (Lightf., Wet., Wün., Edersh.), signify to interpret and apply the law and traditions on any subject with strictness or with laxity, and hence in general to forbid or allow. The strict school of Shammai is represented as binding many things which the school of Hillel loosed. . Comp. on Mt 19:3. In Rabbinical phrase it would be said that in Acts 15:10 Peter advocated loosing what the Judaizers wished to bind.

**Guzik** - "Binding" and "loosing" were administrative terms in daily Jewish life; whenever a Jew came up against the Law of Moses, that Jewish person was either "bound" or "loosed" in regard to that law. To loose was to permit; to bind was to prohibit. To loose was to free from the law, to bind was to put under the law. "Their regular sense, which any Jew would recognize was to allow and to forbid. To bind something was to declare it forbidden; to loose was to declare it allowed. These were the regular phrases for taking decisions in regard to the law." (Barclay) In daily Jewish life, this could be rather complicated. Here is one example from ancient rabbinical writings, cited by teacher Mike Russ: If your dog dies in your house, is your house clean or unclean? Unclean. If your dog dies outside your house, is your house clean or unclean? Clean. If your dog dies on the doorstep, is your house clean or unclean? Ancient rabbinical writings took the issue on and decided that if the dog died with his nose pointing into the house, the house was unclean; if the dog died with his nose pointing away from the house, the house was clean. As their rabbi, Jesus did this binding and loosing for His own disciples. Without using the same words, this is what Jesus did when He allowed them to take the grains of wheat in the field (Matthew 12:1–8). Significantly, when it came time to understand the dietary laws of the Old Covenant in light of the new work of Jesus, God spoke to Peter first. He and the other apostles, guided by the Spirit of God, would bind and loose Christians regarding such parts of the Old Covenant. In a lesser, secondary sense, this power is with the Church today. "Today the Lord continues to back up the teaching and acts of his sent servants, those Peters who are pieces of the one Rock. The judgments

of his Church, when rightly administered, have his sanction so as to make them valid. The words of his sent servants, spoken in his name, shall be confirmed of the Lord, and shall not be, either as to promise or threatening, a mere piece of rhetoric." (Spurgeon)

**John MacArthur** helps understand what Jesus is saying here -

Then He said it to the whole duly constituted assembly of redeemed people. You mean we (BELIEVERS TODAY) can go into the world and say your sins are bound on you, your sins are loosed from you, your sins are forgiven, your sins are not forgiven, you can do that, you can't do that? What authority. That's right. That's right. You say, "Well, now wait a minute. Where did we get that authority? How in the world can we have that authority?" I'll tell you how. Very simple. Where is all of the truth needed to apply to every situation? It's in the Word of God, isn't it? It says what you're doing shall have already been done where? In heaven. You want to know how we can know what heaven is approving and disapproving? It's right here, isn't it? I have the authority, if a person comes up to me, I can say to that person, "Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" If he says yes, I say then your sins are forgiven, your sins are loosed. If someone says to me, "I have never received Jesus Christ," I have the authority based on the Word of God to say to that individual your sins are retained, your sins are not forgiven. And I have the authority to know that what I said to that individual, heaven has already said because heaven has revealed it right here. That's that authority. It is not some authority isolated from the Word of God. That's why the promise of the keys came on the heels of a divine revelation from the Father. As long as the Father is giving you the Word on the basis of the revelation of the Father, you have the authority. And I can say to a person you are forbidden to do that. Why? Because the Bible says so. I can say to another person you're free to do that because the Bible says so. So that Peter had that right. The disciples had that right. So does the church because we have heaven's word on the matter. You understand? So it isn't some authority based on title. It isn't some authority based on office, or some human worthiness, or some elevation, or some intelligence level, or some wisdom level. It is that the authority of the church lies in the fact that the church has heaven's word on everything and it can take heaven's word and make it authoritative in the lives of people.....So the church is the authority of the world. That's right. And those who are in the church are authoritative in the world as long as they enforce the Word of the living God revealed to them through the Spirit. And so we have authority. And we don't worry about what the world says, we're not going to change our message. We're not going to compromise. Our reason to exist in this world is to glorify God and we glorify God when we hold up the standard of His Word, don't we? ([Sermon](#))

**Wuest** expanded translation of Mt 16:18,19:

"And answering, Jesus said to him, Spiritually prosperous are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven. Moreover, as for myself, I also am saying to you, You are Rock [petros, masculine in gender, a detached but large fragment of rock], and upon this massive rock [petra, feminine in gender, feminine demonstrative pronoun cannot go back to masculine petros; petra, a rocky peak, a massive rock] I will build my Church. And the councils of the unseen world shall not overpower it. I shall give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth [forbid to be done], shall have been already bound [forbidden to be done] in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth [permit to be done], shall have already been loosed in heaven [permitted to be done]." ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Louis Barbieri** summarizes **keys, bind** and **loose** - A "**key**" was a sign of authority, for a trusted steward kept the keys to his master's possessions and dispensed them accordingly (cf. "the keys of death and hades" [Rev. 1:18] and "the key of David" [Rev. 3:7], which Jesus possesses). Peter was told he would possess the keys and be able to bind and loose people. These were decisions Peter was to implement as he received instruction from heaven, for the binding and loosing occurred there first. Peter simply carried out God's directions. This privilege of binding and loosing was seen in Peter's life as he had the privilege on the day of Pentecost to proclaim the gospel and announce to all those who responded in saving faith that their sins had been forgiven (Acts 2). He was able to do the same thing with the household of Cornelius (Acts 10-11; cf. Acts 15:19-20). The same privilege was given all the disciples (John 20:22-23). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

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**Question** - [What are the keys of the kingdom?](#)

**Answer** - The biblical passage that makes reference to the "keys of the kingdom" is Matthew 16:19. Jesus had asked His disciples who people thought He was. After hearing several of the more popular opinions, Jesus aimed His question directly at His disciples. Peter, responding for the twelve, acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. After this great confession, Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And 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. 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” (Matthew 16:17–19).

Keys are used to lock or unlock doors. The specific doors Jesus has in mind in this passage are the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is laying the foundation of His church (Ephesians 2:20). The disciples will be the leaders of this new institution, and Jesus is giving them the authority to, as it were, open the doors to heaven and invite the world to enter. At this point it is important to understand how, biblically speaking, one enters the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus said that, unless one is born again, he will not see the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). One is born again as the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to bring about new life in a dead sinner. The content of the message is the substitutionary death of Christ and His subsequent resurrection (Romans 10:9–10). So the faithful preaching of the gospel is the key to the kingdom.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus is specifically addressing Peter, so it is significant that, in the book of Acts, Peter figures prominently in the “opening of doors” to three different groups of people so they can enter the Kingdom. In Acts 2, it is Peter who preaches in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost; about three thousand Jewish people are saved that day. Peter’s preaching had “unlocked the door” of heaven for the Jews. Later, in Acts 8, the Samaritans believe the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit; again, Peter (and John) was present for this event. Peter had “unlocked the door” for the Samaritans. Then, in Acts 10, Peter brings the gospel to a Roman centurion’s household, and they, too, receive the Holy Spirit. Peter had “unlocked the door” for the Gentiles. The “keys” that Jesus had given him worked in each case.

Of course, keys can be used to lock doors as well as open them. Part of the gospel message is that faith is necessary. Without faith in Christ, the door to heaven is shut and barred (see John 3:18). As the apostles preached the gospel, those who responded in faith and repentance were granted access to the Kingdom of Heaven; yet those who continued to harden their hearts and reject the gospel of God’s saving grace were shut out of the Kingdom (Acts 8:23).

The context of Matthew 16 also refers to a “binding and loosing.” To better understand this concept, we turn to Matthew 18:15–20, where Jesus gives the guidelines for church discipline, using the same “binding and loosing” language we find in Matthew 16. The apostles were not to usurp Christ’s authority over individual believers and their eternal destiny, but they were to exercise authority to discipline erring believers and, if necessary, excommunicate disobedient church members. Based on God’s Word, believers today can declare an unrepentant sinner to be unsaved (“bound”) and a repentant believer in Jesus Christ to be saved (“loosed”). The binding or loosing, based on one’s rejection or acceptance of the gospel, reflects heaven’s perspective on the matter. In heaven, Christ ratifies what is done in His name and in obedience to His Word on earth.

God’s will is that sinners be granted access to heaven through the righteousness of Christ. Consider Jesus’ warning to the Pharisees: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in” (Matthew 23:13). If the gospel message is distorted or ignored, or if unrepentant sin is not adequately disciplined, the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven are being shut in people’s faces. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**Walter Kaiser**, et al - And what about the “**keys of the kingdom**”? The keys of a royal or noble establishment were entrusted to the chief steward or major domo; he carried them on his shoulder in earlier times, and there they served as a badge of the authority entrusted to him. About 700 B.C. an oracle from God announced that this authority in the royal palace in Jerusalem was to be conferred on a man called Eliakim: “I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Is 22:22). So in the new community that Jesus was about to build, Peter would be, so to speak, chief steward. In the early chapters of Acts Peter is seen exercising this responsibility in the primitive church. He acts as chairman of the group of disciples in Jerusalem even before the coming of the Spirit at the first Christian Pentecost (Acts 1:15–26); on the day of Pentecost it is he who preaches the gospel so effectively that three thousand hearers believe the message and are incorporated in the church (Acts 2:41); some time later it is he who first preaches the gospel to a Gentile audience and thus “opens a door of faith” to Gentiles as well as Jews (Acts 10:34–38). Both in Jerusalem at Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea, what Peter does on earth is ratified in heaven by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on his converts. This divine confirmation was specially important in his approach to Gentiles. As Peter put it himself, “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9).

“**Binding**” and “**loosing**” were idiomatic expressions in rabbinical Judaism to denote the promulgation of rulings either forbidding or authorizing various kinds of activity. The authority to bind or loose given to Peter in the present context is given to the disciples as a body in Matthew 18:18, in a saying of Jesus similarly preserved by this Evangelist only. Again, the record of Acts provides an illustration. Where church discipline is in view, Peter’s verbal rebuke of Ananias and Sapphira received drastic ratification from heaven (Acts 5:1–11). And Paul for his part, though he was not one of the disciples present when Jesus pronounced these words of

authorization, expects that when judgment is pronounced by the church of Corinth on a man who has brought the Christian name into public disrepute, “and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,” the judgment will be given practical effect by God (1 Cor 5:3–5). Again, when “the apostles and the elders” came together in Jerusalem to consider the conditions on which Gentile believers might be recognized as fellow members of the church, their decision was issued as something which “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28). Here, then, Luke may be held to provide a commentary on Matthew’s record by showing how, in pursuance of Jesus’ words, the keys of the kingdom were used and the power of binding and loosing was exercised in the primitive church in preaching, discipline and legislation.

This may be added. The words in which Peter is singled out for special commendation and authority were probably handed down in a community where Peter’s name was specially esteemed. The church of Antioch in Syria was one such community. There are other reasons for envisaging a fairly close association between the church of Antioch and the Gospel of Matthew, and it may well have been from material about Peter preserved at Antioch that Matthew derived these words which he incorporates into his account of what Jesus said at Caesarea Philippi. (Hard Sayings)

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**Question:** [What does the Bible mean by binding and loosing?](#)

**Answer:** The concept of “**binding and loosing**” is taught in the Bible in Matthew 16:19: “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.” In this verse, Jesus is speaking directly to the apostle Peter and indirectly to the other apostles. Jesus’ words meant that Peter would have the right to enter the kingdom himself, that he would have general authority symbolized by the possession of the keys, and that preaching the gospel would be the means of opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers and shutting it against unbelievers. 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 to Jewish legal phraseology meaning to declare something forbidden or to declare it allowed.

Peter and the other disciples were to continue Christ’s work on earth in preaching the gospel and declaring God’s will to men and they were armed with the same authority as He possessed. In Matthew 18:18, there is also a reference to the binding and loosing in the context of church discipline. The apostles do not usurp Christ’s lordship and authority over individual believers and their eternal destiny, but they do exercise the authority to discipline and, if necessary, excommunicate disobedient church members.

**It’s not that the apostles were given the privilege of changing God’s mind, as if whatever they decided on earth would be duplicated in heaven; rather, they were encouraged that, as they moved forward in their apostolic duties, they would be fulfilling God’s plan in heaven.** When the apostles “bound” something, or forbade it on earth, they were carrying out the will of God in the matter. When they “loosed” something, or allowed it on earth, they were likewise fulfilling God’s eternal plan. In both Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, the syntax of the Greek text makes the meaning clear: “Whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens” (Matthew 16:19, Young’s Literal Translation). Or, as the Amplified Bible puts it, “Whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful] on earth will have [already] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth will have [already] been loosed in heaven.”

Jesus taught that the apostles had a special task on earth. Their words of authority, as recorded in the New Testament epistles, reflect God’s will for the church. When Paul declared an anathema on those who pervert the gospel, then we know that anathema was already declared in heaven (see Galatians 1:8–9). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Norman Geisler - MATTHEW 16:19—Does this text prove that Peter, as the first Pope, was given special authority by Christ to forgive sins?**

**MISINTERPRETATION:** After Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus said, “I will give you the keys to 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” (Matt. 16:19 NIV). According to Catholic teaching, “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” mean “supreme authority on earth over the earthly empire of God. The person who possesses the power of the keys has the full power of allowing a person to enter the empire of God or to exclude him from it [and] . . . the power to forgive sins must also be included in the power of the keys” (Ott, 1960, 418).

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** That Jesus’ disciples were given the power to pronounce the forgiveness of or retaining of sins by Christ is not disputed by Protestants. What is disputed is whether this is a unique power now possessed by those with proper ordination, such as Roman Catholic priests. There is absolutely nothing in this text to indicate that it is.

It is important to observe that Jesus gave this same power to all the apostles (Matt. 18:18), not just to Peter. So, whatever this power was it was not unique to Peter.

In fact, everyone who proclaims the gospel has the same power, for the gospel “is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16 NIV). Indeed, Paul defined the gospel in terms of Christ dying and rising “for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:1–4). So every preacher of the gospel—clergy or laity—has the power to say, on the basis of a person accepting Christ’s death and resurrection for them, that their sins are forgiven. Likewise, all who evangelize can say to those who reject the gospel that their sins are retained. For, as the apostle Paul said, messengers of Christ are “the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death” (2 Cor. 2:15–16).

The Catholic claim that the Old Testament priesthood is somehow “translated” into a New Testament priesthood on the basis of Hebrews 7:12 misses the whole point of this passage. The writer of Hebrews is arguing that both the law and the Old Testament priesthood are done away with by Christ, our great High Priest, for he writes: “When there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law” (Heb. 7:12 NIV). He then goes on to say “a former commandment is annulled . . .” (v. 18). Christ did not translate Aaron’s Old Testament priesthood into a new one for priests in the New Testament. The whole point of this section of Hebrews is to show that Christ, by perfectly fulfilling what the Old Testament priesthood prefigured (cf. 7:11, 18–19), did away with it and replaced it with his own high priestly office, after the order of Melchizedek, not after Aaron (7:17–28).

Indeed, a vivid contrast is made here between the repeated offerings of the Aaronic priests and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ our High Priest that should cause serious pause for Roman Catholics who believe that Catholic priests offer up continually the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. The Book of Hebrews declares: “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but he [Christ], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.” For “by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:11–12, 14 NASB). Contrary to the Catholic claim that Hebrews is only speaking of a once-for-all unbloody sacrifice, no such qualifying word is found in the text. Hebrews says emphatically the opposite of what Catholics affirm, namely, that the Mass is a sacrifice that is repeated over and over. Holy Writ says explicitly that Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. Then he sat (his work finished forever) at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12). This sacrifice is called a “once for all” offering in the preceding verse, which is directly opposed to the Catholic view.

While Roman Catholicism acknowledges that “the entire Christian family” is “a kingdom of priests,” nevertheless in practice it denies what the New Testament clearly affirms, namely, that all believers are priests. By making such a strong distinction between the common or universal priesthood and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood they render ineffective the apostle Peter’s teaching that all God’s elect (1 Peter 1:1) are “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (2:9). In fact, there is only one priest necessary in the New Covenant, our great High Priest Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 7–8). The task left for all other priests (namely, all believers) is to minister the gospel (2 Cor. 3–4).

The appeal to the Old Testament to show that all Israelites were called priests (Exod. 19:21–21) even when God had established the Aaronic priesthood as a special ministerial class misses the whole point of Hebrews (“Quick Questions,” This Rock [September 1993], 30). The Aaronic priesthood has been done away with—and every believer has direct access to only one High Priest, Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us!

The fact is that nowhere in the New Testament are church leaders called “priests.” They are called “elders” or “bishops” (overseers) who were exhorted by the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:2) to “shepherd the flock of God among you, [overseeing] not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God.” Peter continues, exhorting overseers to be examples to the flock. “And when the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:4 NASB). The whole hierarchical institution of the Roman Catholic priesthood as a special class of men endowed with special priestly powers to forgive sins and to transform the communion elements into the actual body and blood of Christ is contrary to the teaching of these verses. For in these verses:

(1) no one is described as a priest nor has priestly powers except the Chief Shepherd Christ himself; (2) Peter describes himself as “a fellow elder” (v. 1); (3) the leaders of the flock are called elders, not priests; (4) they are depicted as undershepherds, not overlords (cf. v. 3) of the church; (5) they have no special binding power but are to lead by example, not by constraint (vv. 2–3). The whole spirit of this is contrary to the priestly powers claimed by the Roman Catholic church. (When Cultists Ask)

**Matthew 16:20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.**

- **He warned:** Mt 8:4 17:9 Mk 8:30 9:9 Lu 9:21,36
- **Christ:** Joh 1:41,45 20:31 Ac 2:36 1Jn 2:22 5:1
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Mark 8:30+ And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

Luke 9:21+ But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,

## **WARNING TO NOT DISCLOSE HE IS THE MESSIAH**

**Then He warned ([epitimao](#)) the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ-** This is the "**Messianic Secret**" (see [note on "Messianic Secret"](#)) which simply means that Jesus would not permit Himself to be revealed to the Jewish leaders as the Messiah until the time was ripe. Jesus is not saying that He is not the Christ (Messiah), but just that they are not to disclose that to anyone at this time. Within the next six months, the time would be ripe and Jesus would be brought before Caiaphas the high priest in his second "religious" trial and Mark records the disclosure that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God...

But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ (THE MESSIAH), the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 And Jesus said, "**I am (EGO EIMI)**, and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And **they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.**(Mk 14:61-64+)

Jesus knew that when He was revealed as Messiah, it would bring about His crucifixion and the His time had still not yet come in Matthew 16.

**Barton** - When the disciples saw all this happen to Jesus, they would understand what the Messiah had come to do. They would have a difficult time understanding Jesus' work until his earthly mission was complete. Only then would they be equipped to share the gospel around the world. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary](#))

**Henry Morris** - tell no man. The gospel records give no indication that the disciples ever acknowledged Jesus was the Christ prior to this confession of Peter's, although they almost certainly realized it. By this stage of His public ministry, He evidently planned to concentrate on teaching and training His disciples for their own future ministry. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - Why should Jesus forestall the disciples from openly identifying Him as the Messiah? (1) Already there had been more than sufficient publicity. Additional fanfare would only increase opposition on the one hand, and give encouragement to those who still desired Him to act as a political Messiah on the other. (2) The latter days of His ministry were designed to be less public and more private for the instruction of the disciples. The time would come later for the messiahship of Jesus to be publicly proclaimed.

**Ryrie** - tell no one because the leaders had rejected Him and He did not want to foster revolution against Rome. (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

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### **Norman Geisler - MATTHEW 16:20—Why did Jesus instruct His disciples to tell no one He was the Christ?**

**PROBLEM:** Jesus commissioned His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Yet over and over again throughout His ministry He insisted that His followers "tell no man" (cf. Matt. 8:4; 16:20; 17:9; Mark 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 5:14; 8:56; 9:21). Doesn't this contradict His Great Commission?

**SOLUTION:** The problem is easily resolved if several things are remembered. First, there was often a stated or implied condition on this command to "tell no man." Jesus said clearly to His disciples on one occasion, "tell no one ... till the Son of Man ha[s] risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9; cf. Matt. 17:9). There is no contradiction between this and His pronouncement to tell everyone after He rose from the dead (in Matt. 28:19).

Second, sometimes Jesus was simply trying to keep down the crowds so that He could continue His ministry. Mark writes, "He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it" (Mark 7:36). Likewise, Luke reports that immediately after Jesus instructed the cleansed leper to "tell no one" (Luke 5:14), "then the report went around concerning Him all the more... So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (vv. 15–16).

Finally, Jesus did not wish to parade His messianic claims, especially among the Jews, since they had a false expectation of a political redeemer who would deliver them from the yoke of Rome (see comments on John 4:26). On one occasion, they even wanted to make Him king by force because of the signs which He did (see John 6:14–15). Since that was not His purpose, He withdrew from them, for His purpose was to die on the cross (see Mark 10:45 and John 10:10, 15) (When Critics Ask)

**Matthew 16:21** From 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 be raised up on the third day.

- **began:** Mt 17:22,23 Mt 20:17-19,28 Mt 26:2 Mk 8:31 Mk 9:31,32 Mk 10:32-34 Lu 9:22,31,44,45 18:31-34 24:6,7,26,27,46 1Co 15:3,4
- **chief priests:** Mt 26:47 27:12 1Ch 24:1-19 Ne 12:7
- **and be:** Mt 27:63 Joh 2:19-21 Ac 2:23-32
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:31+ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and \*said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Luke 9:22+ saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

**From that time** - This is an important expression of time and indicates a new stage in His interactions with His disciples to prepare them for the horrible events that were only a few months away. And keep the context in mind. Jesus has just identified Himself as the Messiah, but what had the 12 disciples heard most of their life about the Messiah? They like most of Israel were looking from a glorious and powerful Conquering King, not a Suffering Servant. Jesus will begin to clear their misconceptions which is probably why He had to reveal this truth to them repeatedly.

**Constable** on **from that time** - This is only the second time in the Gospel that Matthew used the phrase *apote erxato*, "from that time" (cf. Mt 26:16). The first time was in Mt 4:17 where Jesus began to present Himself to Israel as her Messiah. Here it announces Jesus' preparation of His disciples for the Cross because of Israel's rejection and His disciples' acceptance of Him as the divine Messiah. Thus the evangelist signalled a significant turning point in Jesus' ministry.

**Broadus** - Being now fully convinced that he was the Messiah, the disciples must be restrained from endeavoring to carry out their erroneous notions of the Messianic reign, and could be taught more correct ideas without destroying their faith. But the instruction here begun had to be continued from time to time. (Mt 17:9. 22 f.; 20:18 f.; 26:2, 12, 31 f.; comp. John 12:23 ff.) Filled with the popular Jewish conceptions, it required frequent repetition to make real to their minds the amazing thought that the Messiah was to be put to death. Indeed, they were unprepared after all; their hopes were crushed by his death, and they forgot his promise of rising again. This point, at which he begins distinctly to foretell his death, constituted a new epoch (Meyer) in our Lord's ministry, like that of 4:17, where the same expression is used, 'from that time began.' This important epoch is considerably more than six months, probably eight or nine months, before the crucifixion.

**Jesus began to show** (Mk 8:31+ says "teach") **His disciples that He must (dei) go to Jerusalem, and suffer (pascho) many things from the elders (presbuteros) and chief priests (archiereus) and scribes (grammateus)** (the three classes which constituted the Sanhedrin), **and be killed, and be raised up on the third day**- Jesus had hinted at His death earlier (9:15; 10:38; 12:40), but this is the first time He openly discusses it with the disciples. Notice the word "**must**" (*dei*) which shows that what He describes a necessity, that which absolutely had to happen, for it was the very reason He had come to earth as a Man (Mk 10:45+, Lk 19:10+). This is Matthew's first clear prophetic prediction of the Passion and it gives very specific details of His murder and then His resurrections. Thereafter, Jesus repeatedly told His disciples of His impending death (Mt 17:22,23 Mt 20:17-19,28 Mt 26:2, cf Mk 8:31+ Mk 9:31,32+ Mk 10:32-34+) **Many things** predicts not just the agony of the Cross but many things done to Him prior to the Cross (unfair trials, spitting, scouring, mocking, etc)

Mark's version (Mark 8:31+) adds that He would "**and be rejected**" (*apodokimazo*) which "means that He would be subjected to an official examination and, like a spurious coin, be disapproved. Because He did not meet its standards for the Messiah, the Sanhedrin as a definite act would reject Him." (Hiebert)

**Show** (1166)(*deiknuo*) means to show, to point out, to show, to make known, to exhibit something. This is the same word used when Satan tempted Jesus showing Him all the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:8; Lk. 4:5) Other uses in the Gospels - Matt. 8:4; Matt. 16:21; Mk. 1:44; Mk. 14:15; Lk. 5:14; Lk. 20:24; Lk. 22:12; Lk. 24:40; Jn. 2:18; Jn. 5:20; Jn. 10:32; Jn. 14:8; Jn. 14:9; Jn. 20:20;

**Must** (1163)(**dei** from **deo** = to bind or tie objects together, put in prison and also root of **doulos**, bond-servant) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. **Dei** refers to inward constraint which is why it is often translated "must". **Dei** describes that which is under the necessity of happening or which must necessarily take place, and as stated above, conveys a sense of inevitability. To express the sense of necessity **dei** is translated "one ought", "one should", "one has to" or "one must".

**Wuest** on **must** in this passage - "**Must**" is **dei** "it is necessary in the nature of the case." The word points to the inevitableness and rationale of the Cross. Since God is love and man is a sinner, He will provide a salvation for him. But since He is also just, it is necessary in the nature of the case, for Him to die on the Cross and thus pay the penalty that would satisfy the demands of that justice which required that sin be paid for. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used by [permission](#))

**Suffer** (3958) **pascho** means essentially what happens to a person experience. It means to undergo something; to experience a sensation, to experience an impression from an outside source, to undergo an experience (usually difficult) and normally with the implication of physical or psychological suffering.

**And be killed** - At this time Jesus does not tell them the mode of murder nor the profound significance of His death. But if they had good memories they might have ponder words like those of John the Baptist who declared "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The knew about sacrificial lambs and knew that they provided atonement only by shedding their blood. They simply failed to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

**Killed** (put to death)(615) **apokteino** from **apó** = intensifies meaning + **kteino** = slay) means to kill outright or to put to death in any manner. To kill someone results in a state of separation and often used of Christ's death (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 21:35, 38, 39)

**Broadus** on **go to Jerusalem** - Go unto Jerusalem. This is mentioned here by Matthew alone; comp. at the transfiguration, Luke 9:31. Jesus is now at the greatest distance from Jerusalem that was possible in Palestine. At Jerusalem the opposition to him was most bitter, through the conservatism of learning and of office. (John 11:48.) Those who had assailed him most fiercely in Galilee came from Jerusalem. (Mark 3:22; Matt. 15:1.) He stayed away from the last preceding Passover because the Jews at Jerusalem sought to kill him. (John 7:1.) From this time on the thought of going to Jerusalem and facing all that awaits him, is prominent in his mind. What is to befall him cannot happen elsewhere, Luke 13:22; comp. also Matt. 20:18, and the parables in Mark and Luke.

**MacArthur** adds - When Jesus spoke of going to Jerusalem, He was in Caesarea Philippi, as far from Jerusalem as He could be and still remain in Palestine. After a brief stay in that remote northern city, He and the disciples would move down again through Galilee and Samaria to Jerusalem, where the Twelve began to fear that death by stoning at the hands of the hostile Jewish leaders awaited Jesus and probably them as well (John 11:16). At that point the disciples saw such a possibility not as the fulfilling of the plan of God but as the hindrance or even destruction of it.

**A T Robertson** - It was a suitable time for the disclosure of the greatest secret of his death. It is now just a little over six months before the cross. They must know it now to be ready then. The great confession of Peter made this seem an appropriate time. He will repeat the warnings (Mt 17:22f. with mention of betrayal; Mt 20:17-19 with the cross) which he now "began." So the necessity (**dei**, must) of his suffering death at the hands of the Jerusalem ecclesiastics who have dogged his steps in Galilee is now plainly stated. Jesus added his resurrection "on the third day" (τ τριτ μερ [tēi tritēi hēmerāi]), not "on the fourth day," please observe. Dimly the shocked disciples grasped something of what Jesus said.

**Guzik** on **raised up the third day** - The disciples were probably so shocked that Jesus said He would be killed in Jerusalem that these words didn't sink in. Later, an angel reminded them of these words (Luke 24:6-8+).

**Broadus** on **the third day** - This prediction of rising the third day had been obscurely given to his enemies, John 2:19; Matt. 12:40, and is now distinctly given to the disciples, and repeated on two subsequent occasions, 17:23 (also Mark); 20:19. (Also Mark and Luke.) He also predicts his resurrection without mentioning the three days in Mt 17:9 (with Mark); Mt 26:32, (with Mark.) Mark 8:32 adds, 'And he spake the saying openly,' as opposed to the previous obscure expressions. The disciples evidently could not take in the idea that he was to rise again. They believed in a resurrection at the last day (John 11:24), but that could not be meant here, for how then should he do the work of Messiah? They had seen persons raised from the dead, as the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain; but this was done by Jesus, and who was to raise him? The only way in which they could conceive of a person's coming to life again was that some miracle-worker should bring him to life. They understood clearly the statement of Jesus that he was to die; the horror of that thought would increase their confusion of mind, and so they did not see what his resurrection could mean (comp. on Mt 17:9), probably thinking it must be figurative, and thus of little personal interest to them in connection with the thought of his death. This state of things appears sufficiently to account for their failing to remember these predictions when his



death and resurrection occurred.

**Henry Morris** - Once the disciples had formally recognized Him as the Messiah, the Lord began to prepare them for His real mission--and theirs. In spite of Jesus' teachings however, His death and resurrection caught them by surprise. Somehow they still felt He would lead them in establishing the messianic kingdom without this very uncomfortable interruption (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Matthew Henry** - Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually. From that time, when the apostles had made the full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, he began to show them of his sufferings. He spake this to set right the mistakes of his disciples about the outward pomp and power of his kingdom. Those that follow Christ, must not expect great or high things in this world. Peter would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that Christ resented so much as this. Whoever takes us from that which is good, and would make us fear to do too much for God, speaks Satan's language. Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not be parleyed with. Those that decline suffering for Christ, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God.

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### **34 THE TRANSFIGURATION Matthew 16:21–28; 17:1–13**

Many want God's glory, but are not willing to suffer for having faith. Others want God's peace, but are not willing to suffer persecution. However, there are many who are willing to follow the Lord all the way!

1. THE DENIAL—Mt 16:21–28
2. THE DIVINE—Mt 17:1–8
3. THE DISCIPLES—Mt 17:9–13

Many Christians are like Peter. They enjoy God's blessings, but want to keep them for themselves. We enjoy the blessings of God more when we share them with others.

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### **The Calvary Road Series on the Cross - Matthew 16:21–28**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. The Retreat at Caesarea Philippi
  1. A quiet place with Jesus
  2. We all need quiet times with our Lord
- B. Life-Changing Lessons for the Disciples
  1. Whom say ye that I am?
  2. Peter's confession and the Lord's revelation of the church
  3. The most difficult lesson of all: the cross
- C. The Disciples Learn That Jesus Is on His Way to Calvary

#### **II. Body**

- A. The Christ of the Calvary Road (v. 21)
  1. The disciples' longing for the kingdom
  2. Their reaction to the events preceding this retreat
    - a. The multitudes listen to Jesus (ch. 13)
    - b. Five thousand fed; Jesus walks on the water (ch. 14)
    - c. Religious leaders rebuked with authority (ch. 15)
    - d. They thought the kingdom would soon be established
  3. Now the revelation of the Calvary Road
    - a. How shocking to these men that Jesus had come to die!
    - b. Street from Pilate's hall to Calvary called "The Via Dolorosa"
    - c. But the Calvary Road is from the manger to the cross
  4. All His life, Jesus walked the Calvary Road
    - a. Our sins took Him to the cross
    - b. This was why He came into the world
- B. The Common Reaction to the Calvary Road (vv. 22–23)
  1. Peter didn't want to hear about the cross

2. The world would like to find another way
  - a. A code of conduct that would save
  - b. A religious ceremony that would cleanse from sin
3. The need of the cross reveals our sinful condition
  - a. Now we learn the seriousness of sin
  - b. Only His blood can wash it away (Rev. 1:5)
4. Jesus would suffer and die at the hands of religious men
5. Religion cannot save: Only Jesus saves

C. The Call to the Calvary Road (vv. 24–27)

1. The Calvary Road is the road of surrender
  - a. Jesus praying in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–46)
  - b. Obedient to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5–8)
2. The Calvary Road is the road of sacrifice (vv. 24–25)
3. The Calvary Road is the road of service (v. 27)
  - a. Our service in the light of His sacrifice
  - b. Our service in the light of His return

III. Conclusion

- A. Your Commitment to the Calvary Road
- B. Christ Has Walked That Road Before You
- C. Will You Follow Him There?

**Matthew 16:22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."**

NET Matthew 16:22 So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: "God forbid, Lord! This must not happen to you!"

NLT Matthew 16:22 But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"

ESV Matthew 16:22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."

NIV Matthew 16:22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

GNT Matthew 16:22 κα προσλαβ μενος α τ ν Π προς ρξατο πιπιμ ν α τ λ γων, λε ς σοι, κ ριε· ο μ σται σοι το το.

KJV 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.

YLT Matthew 16:22 And having taken him aside, Peter began to rebuke him, saying, 'Be kind to thyself, sir; this shall not be to thee;'

ASV Matthew 16:22 And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.

CSB Matthew 16:22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, "Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!"

- began: Mt 16:16,17 26:51-53 Mk 8:32 Joh 13:6-8
- Be it far from thee: Gr. Pity thyself, 1Ki 22:13 Ac 21:11-13
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Mark 8:32+ And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

## PETER CONFRONTS THE MESSIAH HE HAS JUST CONFESSED

**Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him** - This is an amazing passage in which Peter literally, took Jesus to himself. Apparently Peter wanted to give Jesus a private reprimand (**rebuke** is in [present tense](#))! How patient is the Lord? (Rhetorical!)

**Broadus** - **Rebuke** implies distinctly that Jesus is in the wrong. Peter did not appreciate the 'must' in v. 21, as denoting a necessity of the case. He believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and according to all his ideas it was out of the question that the Messiah should suffer and be killed at Jerusalem.

**Henry Morris** - It is surprising that Peter could make such a remarkable (even Spirit-inspired) confession of Jesus as both Messiah and Son of God, then almost immediately deny Christ's word! Jesus recognized that this was really Satan speaking through Peter (Matthew 16:23)--not in the sense of satanic possession, but rather satanic persuasion. The natural man almost instinctively recoils from the idea of the atoning death and resurrection of Christ, and Satan bitterly resists it. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Rebuke** (warn) (2008)(**epitimao** from **epi** = upon + **timao** = to honor) means literally to put honor upon and then to mete out due measure and then to find fault with, to censure severely, to rebuke, to express strong disapproval of, or to denounce as in this passage.

**Robertson** - **Took aside** is Middle voice, "taking to himself," aside and apart, "as if by a right of his own. He acted with greater familiarity after the token of acknowledgment had been given. Jesus, however, reduces him to his level" (Bengel). "Peter here appears in a new character; a minute ago speaking under inspiration from heaven, now under inspiration from the opposite quarter" (Bruce). His sense of leadership and natural impetuosity led him to presume too far. The disciples probably all shared the protest of Peter, but he with his usual impulsiveness took the initiative.

**Saying, "God forbid it, Lord!** - This was a Hebraic formula "*hileos soi*" (only used with this sense here in the NT) meaning may God spare you this! God forbid! May that never happen to you! The idea is "may God in mercy spare you this" and thus "God forbid it." **Broadus** adds "The course contemplated seems so perilous or so wrong as to excite a prayer that God will be merciful and prevent it....Compare. also Paul's favorite expression, *me genoito*, 'may it not be,' rendered 'far be it,' 'God forbid.'"

**NET Note** - Greek = "Merciful to you." A highly elliptical expression: "May God be merciful to you in sparing you from having to undergo [some experience]" (L&N 88.78). A contemporary English equivalent is "God forbid!"

**Brian Bell** says we should not be too hard on Peter - Think about it, what would your 1st response be to your spouse or best friend telling you that they're terminal & will be dying in a month. No Way! This can't be! a) Haven't you ever questioned the Lord on what he was doing? Peter heard & spoke from God/Father (Mt 16:17) and then only 5 vss later he heard and spoke from Satan. Can we admit we can do the same today? Note the voice that says, spare yourself/ourselves is often Satan's. Self-Pleasing ends in destruction. Whereas self-denial & self-sacrifice are the divine path to Life. Be cautious of the voice from a friend, or family, or from the enemy, that says, Surely God doesn't want you to face this!

**God forbid** (2436)(**hileos**) means propitious (Webster 1828 = "Be Disposed to gracious or merciful; ready to forgive sins and bestow blessings; favorable"), benevolent, forgiving or favorably disposed to another as in Hebrews 8:12 (only other NT use of hileos) It pertains to the demonstration of mercy or compassion. "Appeased, merciful, as of gods; cheerful, propitious, favorable, merciful, as of men." (Zodhiates)

**This shall never happen to You** - Peter declares with the strongest negation in the Greek (double negative - ou me), implying there was no way he would allow this to happen to Jesus!

**Josh Black** - It is obvious that the primary reason for this rebuke is due to Peter's misunderstanding of what a Messiah would do, but there is more. Peter couldn't bear the thought of Jesus, who was so dear to him, having to suffer. All of this was more than Peter could take. But Peter's rebuke is too strong. Especially for the guy whom Jesus just called the rock in verse 18. But Peter was only doing what so many of us do with God. We want God in our lives and we want salvation, but we want it on our own terms. When God does things that are outside of our comfort zone or the box we've put Him in, we often rebuke Him with our attitude or our lack of response to his leading. But Jesus shows Peter that the plan God has for salvation is bigger than Peter's worry or expectations.

Compare other strong double negatives (ou me) in Matthew - Mt 5:18; 10:42; 15:5; 18:3; 26:29, 35, Matt. 5:18; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 5:26; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 10:42; Matt. 13:14; Matt. 15:6; Matt. 16:22; Matt. 16:28; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 23:39; Matt. 24:2; Matt. 24:21; Matt. 24:34; Matt. 24:35; Matt. 25:9; Matt. 26:29; Matt. 26:35

**Guzik** - It's not hard to see Peter following these steps:

- Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah.

- Jesus compliments Peter, telling him that God revealed this to him.
- Jesus tells of His impending suffering, death, and resurrection.
- Peter feels this isn't right, and he feels that he hears from God and therefore has some authority or right to speak.
- Peter begins to rebuke Jesus. " 'Began' suggests that Peter gets only so far before Jesus cuts him off." (Carson)

## F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Matthew 16:22

Have mercy on Thee, Lord! This shall never be unto Thee.(R.V., marg.).

Throughout his life these words were perpetually flung at the heart of Christ. Spare Thyself this hunger, the devil said in the wilderness, on the threshold of his public ministry; spare Thyself this agonizing death, he said again in the garden, on the eve of the crucifixion.

It is noticeable that the cross was surrounded by voices that repeated the same words. They that passed by it wagged their heads, and said, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." The chief priests mocked Him, with the scribes and elders, and said, "Can He not save Himself?" The soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him vinegar, and saying, "If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself." And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, "Art not Thou the Christ? save Thy self and us." All these voices spoke after the methods of human wisdom.

This made our Lord turn so quickly on Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me." How often are the same words addressed to us: "Pity thyself. Have mercy on your sensitive human nature; do not be too lavish with your money; give yourself a little more licence." But it cannot be. You cannot save others and yourself as well. Those that would follow Jesus in his steps of redemptive help to mankind must deny themselves, take up the cross, and fellow Him into rejection, shame, spitting, and the grave. They who have mercy on themselves will never show much to others, or receive much; but the merciful are blessed, because they obtain mercy. Thus mercy is "twice blest; it blesses him that gives, and him that takes."

**Matthew 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."**

- **Get:** Mt 4:10 Ge 3:1-6,17 Mk 8:33 Lu 4:8 2Co 11:14,15
- **Satan:** 2Sa 19:22 1Ch 21:1 Zec 3:1,2 Joh 6:70
- **You are a stumbling block** Mt 18:7 Isa 8:14 Ro 14:13,21
- **you are not setting:** Mk 8:33 Ro 8:5-8 1Co 2:14,15 Php 3:19 Col 3:2
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passage:

Mark 8:33+ But turning around and seeing His disciples, He **rebuked** Peter and said, "**Get** behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

**Comment - Rebuked** is [epitimao](#) the same word Mark used to describe Peter's statement! Not only did Jesus physically turn around but He verbally turned around the rebuke on Peter! Lesson? When you cast "verbal boomerangs" watch out!"

## FROM A MESSENGER OF GOD TO A MESSENGER OF SATAN!

**But** - Term of contrast. It is almost like Jesus reacted immediately not giving Peter a chance to finish and certainly not asking Peter "Why?"

**He turned** - Mark adds that "But turning around ([epistrepho](#)) and seeing His disciples, He **rebuked** Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." (Mk 8:33) Comparing with Mark suggests that He turned away from Peter toward the disciples. And just as Peter rebuked Him, Jesus now rebukes Peter calling him Satan.

**A T Robertson** on **turned** - Second aorist passive participle, quick ingressive action, away from Peter in revulsion, and toward the other disciples

**Turned** ([4762](#))([strepho](#)) means to turn, to turn about. The first use is here in Mt 5:39 where a literal turning of the cheek signifies an act of non-retaliation. Jesus made several literal turns (in fact most of the literal uses in

the NT describe Jesus turning), some so dramatic we can picture them in our mind (See Mt 9:22, 16:23, Lk 7:9, 44, 9:55, 10:23, 14:25, 22:61, 23:28, Jn 1:38).

**And said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!** - Peter's rebuke of Jesus was strong, but Jesus' rebuke of Peter is even stronger. Jesus commands Peter **Get behind** ([present imperative](#)) which are the very words He uttered to Satan in Matthew 4:10+ translated "**Go**, Satan!"! As Josh Black says "Early on in Jesus' ministry He was tempted by Satan to abandon God's plan and God's way of bringing salvation to his creation (Matthew 4:9+). At that time Jesus rebuked Satan and told Satan to go away. Satan is the enemy of God and will do anything he can to mess up God's plan."

**Guzik** - We can be sure that Peter was not aware that he spoke for Satan, just as a moment before he was not aware that he spoke for God. It is often much easier to be a tool of God or of the devil than we want to believe.

Josh Black - Jesus tells Peter to get behind him, but he doesn't tell him to go away, like he did Satan. Jesus is putting Peter in his place. He reminds Peter that he is a follower and that his place is behind Jesus. And this is the place where all disciples belong. If we are to be Jesus' disciples we have to follow Jesus and if we're going to follow Jesus we too have to get behind him and surrender our will to him, in the same way that He surrendered his will to the Father.

**Lenski** - Some think that Jesus "turned" his back on Peter in disgust because of his words; others, that he turned away from Peter and faced the other disciples. But to turn and to speak to a person—note that the two actions go together—means that Jesus faced Peter squarely. If Jesus had turned his back on Peter he would himself have placed Peter "behind" him, whereas he tells Peter, "Get thee behind me!" Compare Luke 9:55, where no commentator lets *στραφείς* mean, "having turned his back." So also, "get thee behind me," means, "Get out of my sight!" With a Peter who speaks as he does Jesus will have nothing whatever to do. This peremptory word with the address, "Satan," is identical with the one with which Jesus ordered the devil out of his sight after the third temptation (4:10). For this reason here, too, "Satan" is the archfiend. Unwittingly and though moved by the best intentions Peter had made himself an agent of Satan. What a warning to watch our love, our good intentions, our best acts, lest, perhaps after all, they agree with Satan and not with Christ.

**Broadus** - The ardent disciple was playing the tempter's part, in fact repeating Satan's temptation, in trying to restrain the Son of God (comp. Mt 16:16 with Mt 4:3, 6) from going forward in his appropriate and appointed path. So a few months earlier (John 6:70 f.), our Lord had called Judas Iscariot a 'devil' (*diabolos*), i. e., a Satan. (See Mt 4:1.) To translate Satan by 'adversary' as the meaning here (Mald.), is forbidden by the fact that in New Test. it is always a proper name.—Alas! the rock, Cephias, has become a stone of stumbling; he who had just made the divinely-taught confession (Mt 16:17), is now Satan, tempting him whom he had confessed.

**Robertson** - Just before Peter played the part of a rock in the noble confession and was given a place of leadership. Now he is playing the part of Satan and is ordered to the rear. Peter was tempting Jesus not to go on to the cross as Satan had done in the wilderness. "None are more formidable instruments of temptation than well-meaning friends, who care more for our comfort than for our character" (Bruce). "In Peter the banished Satan had once more returned" (Plummer). The devil had tried to tempt Jesus not to die and will try it again in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here the same temptation comes from Peter. He has let himself be the tool of Satan.

**Gregg Allen** - He told the devil to get out of His way, and take his proper place out of His way and behind Him. And now, as Peter is strongly suggesting to the Lord that these things would never happen to Him, He turns—looks at the other disciples, as it tells us in Mark 8:33; that is, at those for whom He was sent to die—and says the same words to Peter: "Get behind Me, Satan!" I don't believe that Jesus was meaning to say that Peter was Satan. But I do believe that Jesus was realizing that Peter was being used by Satan at that moment; and Jesus spoke directly and sharply to the one who was seeking to tempt Him through Peter.

**Josh Black** - Peter rebukes Jesus because he didn't like his plan. Jesus rebukes Peter because he is getting in the way of God's plan

**Lenski** makes a great point "Peter is not allowed to add that it would not behoove the Son of God to allow himself to be killed, or that he should not go to Jerusalem to place himself into the hands of the Sanhedrin. Jesus does not for one moment entertain the tempting thought or turn it over in his mind. Here is an example for us who frequently dally with the serpent and then find his poisonous fangs lodged in us." (ISMG)

**Satan** (4567) ([satanas](#) transliterated from Hebrew [Satan](#) - see [07854](#) and Aramaic *sātānā*) literally means **Adversary**, the evil antagonist who offers opposition, hostility, resentment, etc. An enemy who that contends with, opposes, resists. An **adversary** is one who hates or opposes another person and tries to harm them or stop them from doing something because of hatred and malice. **Satan** is the [inveterate](#), [implacable](#), relentless, ruthless, remorseless, merciless, heartless, pitiless, cruel, hard, harsh, hardened, incorrigible, dedicated enemy of God and man.

**You are a stumbling block to Me** - Jesus accused Peter with his words of setting a trap, trying to trip Jesus up from walking toward the Cross.

**A T Robertson** - Peter was acting as Satan's **cat paw**, in ignorance, surely, but none the less really. He had set a trap for Christ that would undo all his mission to earth. "Thou art not, as before, a noble block, lying in its right position as a massive foundation stone. On the contrary, thou art like a stone quite out of its proper place, and lying right across the road in which I must go—lying as a stone of stumbling" (Morison).

**Stumbling block** (4625)(**skandalon** from a root meaning jump up, snap shut) was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Outside the Bible it is not used metaphorically, though its derivative *skandalethron* (e.g. a trap set through questions) is so used. The English word **scandal** is derived from the noun via the Lat. **scandalum**. Thus **skandalon** was literally, that movable part of a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched caused the trap to close on its prey. **Skandalon** thus came to mean any entanglement of the foot. Figuratively, as used most often in Scripture, **skandalon** refers to any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or any stumbling-block placed in a man's way to trip him up. 13x in NT - Matt. 13:41; Matt. 16:23; Matt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1; Rom. 9:33; Rom. 11:9; Rom. 14:13; Rom. 16:17; 1 Co. 1:23; Gal. 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:8; 1 Jn. 2:10; Rev. 2:14

**For you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's - Not** in Greek is "absolutely not." Peter lost his vertical vision (**God's interests**) and began to look with "horizontal vision" (**man's** - earthly, natural, demonic). We all do well to note how quickly this happened to Peter after one of the greatest confessions in all of the Bible (read 1 Cor 10:12)! **Setting** is in the **present tense**, describing continuous action (attitude in this case) and denoting what dominated and swayed Peter's thoughts. "He was motivated not by the things of God, things related to God's purposes, but by the things of men, the concerns of fallible human beings. His human desire to spare his Master such sufferings prompted Peter to urge Jesus to avoid the very suffering to which Jesus had committed Himself as the messianic Servant." (Hiebert)

**Guzik** has an interesting comment that " Jesus exposed how Peter came into this satanic way of thinking. He didn't make a deliberate choice to reject God and embrace Satan; he simply let his mind settle on the things of men instead of the things of God, and Satan took advantage of it. Peter is a perfect example of how a sincere heart coupled with man's thinking can often lead to disaster."

**Gregg Allen** on **man's** interest - It's so often true that, to men, the message of the cross is utter foolishness. It doesn't make sense that the King of kings would come to suffer and die.

**Brian Bell** - What was Peter's mistake? He was thinking like a man (we want to escape any suffering & death). i.e. self preservation. He didn't have God's mind in this matter. Have you been mindful of the things of God lately or only your things? Peter had enough faith to Confess that Jesus is the Son of God, but he did not have the faith to believe that it was right for Jesus to suffer & die.

**Josh Black** - Even the people who are on Jesus' side can act as an enemy to the will of God through their behavior. And anyone or anything is a hindrance to God's plan of salvation is of Satan. And Satan's way says there is no success without human greatness.

Peter the rock just became

Peter the "rock" to stumble over, a stumbling block.

**Setting...mind** (5426)(**phroneo** from **phren** = literally the diaphragm and thus that which curbs or restrains. Figuratively, **phren** is the supposed seat of all mental and emotional activity) refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of the mind, rather than to the mind or intellect itself (that is the Greek word **nous**). **Phroneo** includes a person's affections and will as well as his reasoning. In other words **phroneo** refers not simply to intellectual activity but also to direction and purpose of heart. A typical Pauline word used only 2 times in the Gospels - Matt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33; Acts 28:22; Rom. 8:5; Rom. 11:20; Rom. 12:3; Rom. 12:16; Rom. 14:6; Rom. 15:5; 1 Co. 13:11; Gal. 5:10; Phil. 1:7; Phil. 2:2; Phil. 2:5; Phil. 3:15; Phil. 3:19; Phil. 4:2; Phil. 4:10; Col. 3:2

**Believer's Study Bible** - This verse attests that Jesus' death was God's affair, for Jesus rebuked Peter for not understanding God's matters. Satan's purpose would be served if Jesus' death were deterred. This interpretation is supported by 20:28 (cf. Mark 10:45), for in His death the mission of the Suffering Son of Man is realized. 16:28 No expectation of the final return of Christ is involved in these words of Jesus. Historically, three major views have been maintained by biblical scholars: (1) Jesus is speaking of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem a few days hence; (2) the reference is to the resurrection of Christ and His victory over death; or (3) because of the position this verse occupies in the text of Matthew, the reference is to the Lord's transfiguration, which follows immediately in Matthew's Gospel. Proximity of story favors the latter view, which is verified by the description given by Simon Peter

in 2 Pet. 1:16 of the "coming" (parousia, Gk.) of the Lord in power.

**Ryrie** - Satan. Peter is sharply rebuked for aligning himself with Satan's plan to deter Jesus from fulfilling His mission. The harshness of the rebuke stems from Christ's fierce realism about the principal purpose of His coming to earth, which was to die. a stumbling block or "rock of offence" (Rom. 9:33). Perhaps a further play on the word "rock" in verse 18. (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

- **If:** Mt 10:38 Mk 8:34 10:21 Lu 9:23-27 14:27 Ac 14:22 Col 1:24 1Th 3:3 2Ti 3:12 Heb 11:24-26
- **and take:** Mt 27:32 Mk 15:21 Lu 23:26 Joh 19:17 1Pe 4:1,2
- [A Treatise of Self-Denial](#) - Thomas Manton (281 page book!)
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:34-38+ And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Luke 9:23-27+ And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Matthew 10:38+ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Luke 14:27+ "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

## GENUINE DISCIPLESHIP

**Then Jesus said to His disciples** = - Notice that in Mark's parallel Jesus "summoned the crowd with His disciples."

**Broadus** - **Then** would not make us sure that it followed immediately (comp. Mt 3:13), but Mark leaves no doubt: 'And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them,' etc. This also shows that the notable saying which follows was addressed, not to the disciples only, but to a great throng; so Luke 9:23, R. V., 'he said unto all.' He has come away from the place at which he had been praying alone (Luke 9:18), and now a crowd is near; but as to persons or locality we have no information.

**"If anyone wishes to come after Me** - Not "wish" like we use it in English, but an exercise of one's will or desire to follow Jesus.

**Uitley** on **IF** - This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Jesus assumes that people will want to follow Him.

**Broadus** on **if anyone** - Not only is Jesus himself determined to go forward in a path which leads to suffering and death, undeterred by Peter's remonstrance, and not only must his twelve disciples be willing to follow in such a path, but this holds true of any and every one who wishes to be his follower at all.

**Wishes** (Better "Wills") (2309)(**thelo**) refers to exercising of one's will with the underlying sense of to be willing to apply oneself to something. **Thelo** "expresses not simply a desire, but a determined and constant exercise of the will." (W E Vine) As **Vincent** says on Mk 8:34 **thelo** "is more than *is wishful*." In secular Greek use **thelo** as used by Homer spoke of "readiness," "inclination," and "desire," so that when one was ready for an event or inclined to undertake a course of action, **thelo** was the Greek word used.

**Wuest** on **come** - The word is used in John 5:40 where our Lord speaks of the fact that certain will not come to Him that they might have life. The word is used here in the sense of becoming a disciple of Jesus, one who follows His instruction and enters into His fellowship. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**He must deny himself** - Here is the first condition that **must** be met in order to follow after Jesus. **He must deny himself** not a popular topic in our "selfie" generation. The verb must deny is not "maybe" or "might" but speaks of a definite obligation, an absolute necessity to deny self. This is a command in [aorist imperative](#) ("Just Do It!") which necessitates [dependence on the Holy Spirit to obey](#).

**Broadus** on **deny himself** - The familiar use of the phrases deny himself and 'take up his cross,' the frequent application of them to

petty actions and sufferings, has gradually enfeebled their meaning in our conception, and it requires an effort to return to their original force.

**Robertson** on **deny himself** - - Say no to himself, a difficult thing to do. Note reflexive along with the middle voice.

**Wiersbe** has some wise words on what it means to **deny** self -Denying **self** is **not the same as self-denial**. We practice self-denial when, for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities. But we **deny self** when we surrender **ourselves** to Christ and determine to obey His will. This once-for-all dedication is followed by a **daily “dying to self”** as we take up the cross and follow Him. From the human point of view, we are **losing ourselves**, but from the divine perspective, we are **finding ourselves**. When we live for Christ, we become more like Him, and this brings out our own unique individuality. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Brian Bell** - Deny himself - or denies the self. Is your self at the center? or your Jesus the Center of your life? See, it's not about you denying stuff/ things it's about you denying you. It's to dethrone self & to enthrone God. It's living a life where Jesus is the heart, the core, the center of your thinking and actions. By far this aspect of the Christian walk is the hardest for all believers. Every thought/decision we make naturally gets sifted through our self-filter. We are constantly asking ourselves, How will I benefit from this? What's in it for me? How will it effect me? We need to crucify are self, our flesh to the cross. So that, though it be alive, it cannot perform that which it would love to do. And it's about doing it daily. Being deliberate, willful, & intentional. It's the surrender of one's life every day. Great you surrendered on the day of your salvation, but how about daily?

**Constable** - Self-denial as Jesus taught it does not involve denying oneself things as much as it does denying one's own authority over his or her life (cf. Mt 4:19; John 12:23–26). This is the great challenge.

**James Smith** - To go after a self-denying Christ is impossible without the denial of self. We must deny our own thoughts, will, power, interests— everything that would hinder His will, power, and interests from being accomplished in us and by us.

**Jon Courson** - Salvation begins with death. It begins when we say, “I'm dying to self. I no longer demand my own way, but rather give myself completely to You.”

**Must deny** (533)(**aparneomai** from **apó** = from + **arnéomai** = to deny, refuse) means to deny, to refuse to recognize or acknowledge. It is a strengthened form of **arneomai** and thus mean to deny utterly (to completely deny) as used in the context of Peter denying any connection with Jesus. **BDAG** says this verb means "to act in a wholly selfless manner (used in [Mt 16:24](#); [Mk 8:34](#); [Lk 9:23](#))," Thayer says it means "to forget oneself, lose sight of oneself and one's own interests." This is the anti-thesis of our selfish culture as Paul predicted "But **realize** this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be **lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant**, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy," ([2Ti 3:1-2+](#))

Jesus says His followers **must deny** self ([Mt 16:24](#), [Mk 8:34](#)). **Aparneomai** in this context conveys the basic idea of saying “no,” of acting in a wholly selfless manner. It is to disown oneself, to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness, to act in a wholly unselfish manner.

**Aparneomai** is used once of Jesus denying men who deny Him = "He who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God." ([Lk 12:9+](#)) Some evangelical commentators (Constable) make the interpretation that Jesus is referring to loss of rewards, but the passage says absolutely nothing about rewards. This is not loss of rewards but loss of one's life in [eternal punishment](#). The ESV Study Bible says "The eternal consequences for those who deny Christ, in fact, will be far worse than the persecution that they sought to avoid." **Gilbrant** writes Jesus "said that whoever denies Him before men (that is, whoever does not acknowledge that he belongs to Jesus) the Lord himself shall reject before the angels of God. The “good news” is that whoever acknowledges Him before men, him the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God."

**And take up his cross** Jesus gives a second command ([airo](#) in the [aorist imperative](#)) means to pick up at once. This speaks of death to self, for the sake of Jesus. Pick up at once!

**Robertson** on parallel statement in Mt 10:38 - The first mention of cross in Matthew. Criminals were crucified in Jerusalem. It was the custom for the condemned person to carry his own cross as Jesus did till Simon of Cyrene was impressed for that purpose. The Jews had become familiar with crucifixion since the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and one of the Maccabean rulers (Alexander Jannaeus) had crucified 800 Pharisees. (On Mt 16:24 Robertson says) This same saying in 10:38, which see. But pertinent here also in explanation of Christ's rebuke to Peter. Christ's own cross faces him. Peter had dared to pull Christ away from his destiny. He would do better to face squarely his own cross and to bear it after Jesus..

**Broadus** on **take up his cross** - He was going forward, like one marching to crucifixion, appointed to suffering and death; and any one who wished to come after him must prepare himself for the same experience. The disciples and the multitude would not



necessarily infer from this that he was to be crucified. It was not till a few days before its occurrence that he foretold the precise mode of his death. (20:19.) They would understand that he was like a person going to be crucified, and they also must be ready for suffering and death. Chrys: "He saith also how far one ought to renounce oneself, that is, unto death, and that a reproachful death."....It was plain enough at the time, and after he was himself actually crucified it became all the more vivid and solemn, as was the case with many other parts of his teachings. Luke 9:23 adds daily.' Every day must his follower consent and determine afresh to go forward through suffering and even unto death. Chrys; "Bear about this death continually, and day by day be ready for slaughter."

Paul spoke of taking up one's cross when he wrote "may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal 6:14<sup>±</sup>).

**NET Note** - To bear the cross means to accept the rejection of the world for turning to Jesus and following him. Discipleship involves a death that is like a crucifixion.

**Hiebert on take up his cross** -The [aorist imperative](#) again demands the acceptance of the cross as a definite act. Execution by crucifixion was well known in Palestine, and Jesus' figure must have carried startling implications for His hearers. The Romans compelled the condemned criminal to bear the cross-beam to the place of execution; to take up his cross meant that such a one was going out to die. Like his Lord, each disciple must bear his own cross. **The reference is not to the common sufferings experienced in life but to that shame and suffering which the disciple assumes because of his relationship to Jesus and which can be escaped by denying that relationship.** Luke's statement "Take up his cross **daily**" does not mean that a new cross must be taken up each day but that this willingness to accept his cross must characterize the disciple every day. Brooks (NAC) aptly remarks, "The concept should never be cheapened by applying it to enduring some irritation or even a major burden.... It is a willingness to **suffer for Jesus** and for others. Such a concept of discipleship is so radical that many contemporary Christians in the West have difficulty relating to it."

**Josh Black** - There a lot of people who don't believe a cross is a choice, but something that happens to them, making them a victim. When you hear people say, "This is my cross to bear" a lot of times they are talking about their health, or their spouse, or their children, or some kind of circumstance that is a burden to them. These things may be legitimate challenges in a Christian's life, but they are not crosses. Circumstances may be painful like a cross and they may be a burden like a cross, but they themselves are not crosses, for a cross is something that is to be picked up willingly. A cross is something that requires us to deny our way of doing things and to choose God's way of doing things. It is saying no to our stubborn will and surrendering to God's sovereign will. Tough circumstances provide plenty of opportunities to pick up our cross, but the circumstance itself is not a cross, it's only an opportunity to choose one.

There are no crownwearers in Heaven that were not crossbearers here below.

—Spurgeon

**A T Robertson** - Criminals were crucified in Jerusalem. It was the custom for the condemned person to carry his own cross as Jesus did till Simon of Cyrene was impressed for that purpose. The Jews had become familiar with crucifixion since the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and one of the Maccabean rulers (Alexander Jannaeus) had crucified 800 Pharisees. It is not certain whether Jesus was thinking of his own coming crucifixion when he used this figure, though possible, perhaps probable. The disciples would hardly think of that outcome unless some of them had remarkable insight.

**And follow Me - Follow** is [akoloutheo](#), a command in the [present imperative](#) which calls for this to be a disciple's lifestyle. We cannot accomplish this in our own natural strength! It is IM-possible. Indeed, it is only HIM-possible. In other words this command calls for us to continually depend on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#). We would not follow Jesus if left to our natural inclinations, but only as we are supernaturally enabled by the Spirit. And notice that the [present tense](#) calls for a lifestyle, habitually following Jesus. Christian discipleship centers in this personal relationship to Christ, expressed in Spirit enabled persevering obedience to His leadership. He heads the procession as it goes to His death, and all who follow Him must also face death to self, Luke's version

It is always safe to follow where He leads.

**Wuest on Follow Me** - The word "follow" is [akoloutheo](#) "to take the same road as another does." It is used with the associative instrumental case. It is, "Let him follow with Me." The idea is not that of following behind another, but that of accompanying the other person, taking the same road that he takes and fellowshiping with him along that road. The first two imperatives are [aorist](#), giving a summary command to be obeyed at once. The "coming after" and the "taking up" are to be obeyed at once and are to be a once-for-all act. That is, these acts are to be looked upon as a permanent attitude and practice of life. The whole life is to be characterized by an habitual coming after and taking up of the cross. After having once for all given over the life to the Lord, the believer must hence-forward count it ever so given over. He is not his own anymore (1 Cor 6:19-20). He belongs to the Lord (Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:9). He is the Lord's property. The word "follow" however, is in the [present imperative](#), which commands the doing of an action and its habitual, moment by moment continuance. The first two imperatives give direction to the life. The last speaks of the actual living of

that which has been given direction by two once-for-all acts. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Broadus on Follow Me** - There they were to follow with an especial view to instruction; here they must follow in a path of suffering, follow even to dying; comp. John 12:23–26. 'Follow' is also used in Com. Ver. for another word, which Rev. Ver. more exactly renders by 'imitate,' (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1; Heb. 6:12; 13:7; 3 John 11), thus bringing out more distinctly the great duty of imitating Christ

**Manners and Customs - Following after Jesus** - Matthew 16:24. In our culture, to "follow after" a person means to put oneself in a secondary position, but the phrase did not mean that in Bible times. The streets were so narrow that if two people went together, they had to go single file. To follow after a person was to go with them. We would therefore say, "If anyone comes with me..."

**Kingsbury** - Jesus reveals to his disciples, in all he says and in all he does beginning with Mt 16:21, that God has ordained that he should go to Jerusalem to suffer, and that his way of suffering is a summons to them also to go the way of suffering (i.e., the way of servanthood) (cf. 20:28). In other words, Matthew alerts the reader through the key passages Mt 16:21 and Mt 16:24 that suffering, defined as servanthood, is the essence of discipleship and that Jesus will show the disciples in what he says and does that this is in fact the case." (Quoted by Constable)

**MacArthur** writes: This passage sets forth the heart of Christian discipleship and it strikes a death blow to the self-centered false gospels that are so popular in contemporary Christianity. It leaves no room for the gospel of getting, in which God is considered a type of utilitarian genie who jumps to provide a believer's every whim. It closes the door to the gospel of health and wealth, which asserts that if a believer is not healthy and prosperous he has simply not exercised his divine rights or else does not have enough faith to claim his blessings. It undermines the gospel of self-esteem, self-love, and high self-image, which appeals to man's natural narcissism and prostitutes the spirit of humble brokenness and repentance that marks the gospel of the cross.

#### [Jesus calls us o'er the tumult](#)

of our life's wild, restless sea;  
day by day his sweet voice soundeth,  
saying "Christian, follow me."

As, of old, apostles heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

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**Spurgeon** - You have to bear the **cross**, but not the **curse**. Your Lord endured both cross and curse, but to you there is not so much as a drop of divine anger in all that you are suffering. Your Lord sends you a cross, but not a crush. It is meant to bear you down, but not to break you and grind you in the dust. Your cross is proportioned to your strength. Your cross is not a loss

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#### **James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - TRUE SELF-DENIAL**

"Then Peter took Him ... saying, Pity Thyself, Lord."

"Then said Jesus, ... If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:22, 24).

("Let him cross himself out," Burroughs.)

Introduction. Pity thyself—Deny thyself.

DIFFERENCE.

1. What a vast difference between these two statements!
2. Yet all are either doing the one or the other—either pitying and sparing, or denying and ignoring self.

MARVEL.

1. Men often wonder why there are, comparatively speaking, so few disciples of Christ.
2. We ought, instead, to marvel there are so many.
3. For look at the conditions of discipleship—they are not easy.
4. For no teacher or leader had ever proposed such conditions.
5. In profane history we read of many noble acts of self-denial, but no lives of habitual self-denial.
6. Yet that is what our Lord claims of all His followers—it has got to be done every day. St. Luke adds that to his account in Luke 9:23.
7. No holiday but our habitual habit and practice.

FIRST TIME.

1. This is the first time our Lord referred to the denial of self as a condition of discipleship.
2. Cross-bearing and self-denial up to now had not been the badge of discipleship.

#### RESULT.

1. Until our Lord made this declaration He had many followers.
2. Up to this time our Lord had proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom.
3. But He had been rejected.
4. Now He hints at a new order of things: the calling out.
5. For the first time He spoke of the Church.
6. Now it is not the Kingdom, but the Church.
7. And from that time His followers dwindled.

#### EVIDENCE OF HUMANITY.

1. Do you not detect an evidence of His humanity—in the question He asked His disciples? (verses 13 and 15).
2. He was curious to hear from His disciples (of course what He already knew) of the world's estimation of Him.
3. How differently they viewed Him: John, the ascetic; Elijah, the ardent, enthusiastic, and fierce; Jeremiah, the prophet of the tender heart and tears. They saw all three in Him.
4. Then He inquired: "What am I to you?" He desired to know their own views of Him.

#### OPINIONS.

1. But there is in these questions something else besides an evidence of humanity.
2. Is there not manifested here His deep concern respecting the opinions of His disciples?
3. Say some: "It matters not what our opinions are—it's conduct that counts."
4. This is utterly wrong—creed influences conduct.
5. The inquisitors had hearts of flesh, but creeds of iron.

#### WHAT IF HE HAD PITIED HIMSELF?

1. "From that time" He spoke of Cross and self-denial.
2. This was too much for loving and impulsive Peter.
3. If He had pitied Himself we would verily have been in a pitiful condition.

WHAT IF YOU DO? And if we pity and spare ourselves we shall at last be found in a pitiful condition in spite of that atoning death of Christ.

#### WHO SUGGESTS?

1. Note, the suggestion to pity self is from Satan.
2. To deny self, from God.

### **I. The Nature of Self-Denial.**

#### GENERAL IDEA.

1. The general idea is that which is exhibited in weeks of self-denial—denying to ourselves certain things—food or pleasure—pleasant to the natural man.
2. We would that there were more of this.
3. But true self-denial is something much more.
4. Possible for self to be very prominent in self-denial.
5. And so-called self-denial to be really self-glorification.

#### "HIMSELF:"

1. Note these words were addressed to men who had already made great sacrifices in order to follow Jesus.
2. But He asked of them an even greater sacrifice—themselves.
3. Observe, deny, not to himself, but himself.
4. To ourselves is but one aspect of self-denial.

### **II. The Necessity of Self-Denial.** "But," you may inquire, "why should I deny myself?"

#### 1. THERE IS NO SALVATION WITHOUT SELF-DENIAL.

- a. Do not imagine it is a thing of little consequence or merely the high attainment of some few of the saints.
- b. It is a thing all must have that will be saved.
- c. As Baxter, the Puritan, says: "It is a plain contradiction to be saved without self-denial. For as it is self that we must be saved from, so to stick to self is to be lost and miserable, and therefore not to be saved."
- d. Self is the root, tree, and branches of all the evils of our fallen nature.
- e. Every son and daughter of Adam are in the service of self, and what an awful and disastrous service it is.
- f. What hurried Eve headlong upon the forbidden fruit, but that wretched thing herself? What drew that one to kill his brother Abel, but that untamed self? What drove the old world on to corrupt their ways? Who but themselves, their sinful selves.
- g. Listen to Rutherford: "Every man blameth the Devil for his sins, but the great devil, the house-devil of every man, that house-devil

that eateth and lieth in every man's bosom, is that idol that killeth all, himself. Oh! blessed are they who can deny themselves, and put Christ in the room of themselves!

h. Remember this: "Till a man deny himself, he denieth God" (B.).

i. "Deny self or you will deny Christ" (B.), for self is both an Atheist and an idolater, self is an Antichrist, and glories in self-exaltation."

j. The initial act of self-denial that leads to our salvation, must become the habit of our lives.

2. THERE CAN BE NO SUCCESSFUL SERVICE FOR GOD WITHOUT SELF-DENIAL.

a. A man and a boy went fishing. The boy caught plenty, but the man had not a single bite.

b. The man inquired; when the boy replied, "Ah! thee mun lie thee daan, mon!"

c. He was tall, and stood up, and the sun cast his shadow upon the water, frightening the fish.

d. It is the shadow of self that mars our work.

### III. The Example Our Lord Gave to Self-Denial.

1. LOOK AT THE LIFE OF OUR LORD—PONDER OVER THESE SAYINGS.

a. "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30).

b. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30).

c. "I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John 8:28).

d. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10).

e. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19).

2. LEARN.

a. He came to this earth by the Father's wish.

b. Not a word did He speak by His own power.

c. Not an act did He do of Himself.

d. He was moved and controlled by God.

3. IF JESUS THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO DENY A HOLY SELF, WHAT SHALL WE SAY ABOUT OUR SINFUL SELF?

### IV. The Path to a Life of Self-Denial. But how can I possibly live such a life? By walking close to Him.

1. A little boy was walking by the side of a missionary on the way to a meeting. The little fellow amused himself by the shadows they cast upon the path as they walked. After trying in vain to keep the shadow of himself from appearing outside that of his friend, he gave up the attempt, and said, "Please take my hand." In a little while he cried, "Oh, look, you can't find me now; you can't find one bit of my shadow now. I'm lost in you."

2. Exactly.

3. If you try by yourself to deny self, you will fail.

4. It is only companionship with Him that makes such possible.

5. It is only as we walk with our hands gripped in His.

6. Is not this sentence significant: "And Peter followed afar off." If following afar off led Peter to the denial of his Master, surely following very closely will lead to a daily denial of self.

### CONCLUSION.

1. To pity self is to destroy yourself.

2. You cannot "come after" unless you come to Him.

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### IMITATION (Gk. *miméomai*).

A self-sacrificial following after Christ, to be adopted in emulation of the apostles (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9; Heb. 13:7). While he confesses that he himself is not perfect, Paul challenges Christians in the young churches to follow his example (1 Cor. 11:1; cf. Phil. 3:12). One should imitate the model of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:32), the ideal set forth by God (5:13), and emulate good rather than evil (John 11).

The concept is more fully expressed by Gk. *akolouthéō*, with the sense "follow (as a disciple)" or "obey," as used primarily in the Gospels. The term implies more than merely copying Jesus' lifestyle (Matt. 16:24; John 8:12), stressing particularly a readiness to face one's own possible destruction (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). It occurs in those passages where Christ calls his disciples (Mark 1:18) and where the disciples respond (Matt. 4:20; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:11). Such a "coming after" suggests a relationship between master and pupil that also removes the parties from other social ties (Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:61). Even the crowds that followed Jesus demonstrated a form of imitation that showed recognition and relatedness. Such imitation is focused on Christ's messiahship (Mark 10:21; John 8:12). At Rev. 14:4 those who have remained morally pure are the redeemed who follow the Lamb "wherever he goes." (Eerdman's Bible Dictionary)

"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."  
Matthew 16:24

1. The Cross of Christian Discipleship Requires Self-denial
2. The Cross of Christian Discipleship Must Be Freely Taken Up
3. The Cross of Christian Discipleship Prepares Us for the Worst
4. The Cross of Christian Discipleship Equips Us for the Best

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### Tom Blackaby - Deny Yourself

• "The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Anyone finding his life will lose it, and anyone losing his life because of Me will find it" (Matt. 10:37-39; also Luke 14:26-27).

• "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Matt. 16:24).

• "Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, 'If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Mark 8:34).

• "Then He said to them all, 'If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:23).

This command is more of a requirement for each and every person who wishes to follow Christ. It is a prerequisite for discipleship. Unfortunately many people choose to see this as a suggestion, a goal, or something to aspire to when they become more mature as believers in Christ. But it is not a command that follows salvation or that comes after being born again; it is a command and a requirement that accompanies salvation and a decision that precedes your commitment to Christ. In other words, a person cannot truly be a disciple of Christ until he or she is willing to "deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow" Christ. Why is this command preached so seldom? It certainly is referenced in sermons, but it is rarely spoken of as Christ intended. It is as though church leaders realize the average church member is generally incapable of following this command, so we bring it up from time to time as a reminder to what we should aspire to do.

The import of this command is that those Christians sitting in the pews each week who do not daily deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Christ are self-deluded if they think they are disciples of Christ. Yet many churches seem comfortable with that. If we say,

- "I am not ready yet to take up my cross daily."
- "I am too weak to deny myself anything."
- "The Christian life is too hard to follow exactly as Christ commands."
- "He loves me just the way I am."

then we have changed His command from what He intends to what we are comfortable with.

In many countries today and throughout history, becoming a Christian was equivalent to a death sentence. Converting to Christianity, becoming a follower of Christ, was (and in some cases, still is) punishable by death or, at minimum, a lengthy prison sentence. To claim Christ as Lord during the days of the Roman Empire, was to deny Caesar was lord, which could literally mean facing death on a cross. To give your life to Christ was to take it away from other gods who previously held claim over you. To claim Christ as your Savior could mean to pack your bags and leave your family, friends, relatives, job, and security because you are rejecting their religious beliefs in other gods. Becoming a disciple of Christ means dying to an old way of life and living with a new Lord, in a new kingdom, with a new spiritual family, and separating from those things that are offensive to God. A father in the Middle East today, if found to be a Christian, can have his family taken from him, his job taken away, and be sent to prison until he recants his faith in Christ. Such is the cross many believers today must take up if they choose to be a disciple of Christ.

The Western church knows little about such sacrifice and commitment to Christ. We think we are mistreated if we have to give up a golf game on Sunday in order to go to church. We resent that we cannot sleep in on our only day off. We complain if the preacher goes fifteen minutes overtime in the service. We know little of true denial of self or sacrifice in order to accept the lordship of Christ.

Application: What did you give up when you became a disciple of Christ? What does it mean for you to deny self? Has God's Spirit pinpointed anything in your life that you know He wants you to release so that (The Commands of Christ - What it Really Means to Follow Jesus)

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself” (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). The Christian life is not an easy life. We cannot, as Carlyle said, slackly wander into the kingdom of heaven. We carry with us a body prone to much that is evil, to sloth and pleasure, to spiritual idleness, to lust and envy. If a great apostle, like St. Paul, felt himself bound to keep his body under subjection (see 1 Cor. 9:27), how can we dispense so airily with the common forms of self-control in which Christians have always believed? It is plain that at the present day self-control is out of fashion. Children are brought up to know scarcely anything about it as a virtue. Of the many Christian virtues discounted by popular novelists and playwrights, self-control is the one least thought of as even desirable, much less as a necessary foundation of Christianity. Unlike Felix we do not tremble at the thought of it (see Acts 24:25).

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**Oswald Chambers - Self-Realization v. Christ-Realisation** Matthew 16:24 (Address given at the annual Autumnal Gathering of the League of Prayer in Caxton Hall, London, November 5, 1913.)

Self-realisation is a modern phrase—“Be moral, be religious, be upright in order that you may realise yourself.” Nothing blinds the mind to the claims of Jesus Christ more effectually than a good, clean-living, upright life based on self-realisation (see 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The issue with us to-day is not with external sins, but with the ideal of self-realisation, because Jesus Christ reveals that that ideal will divide clean asunder from Him. If we are going to be His disciples our ideal must be Christ-realisation.

### **The Desire**

**If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself . .**

There is no man awake to life but feels the attraction of Jesus Christ. There He stands, and all men are attracted to Him, whether or not they accept statements about His Deity or theories about the Atonement. What is your desire? Is it to be a fine, sterling, moral, upright character? A grand and noble desire; but watch how Jesus Christ sifts it. Two of the early disciples had the desire to follow Jesus, it was the consuming passion of their lives to come after Jesus, and when He asked them if they were able to drink of His cup and be baptised with His baptism, they said, “We are able.”† They were not conceited or proud, they were devout, humble-minded men, but they were perfectly ignorant about themselves. There are many people to-day who say, “Yes, Lord, I’ll go with Thee all the way.” But there are conditions: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.”†† What is the meaning of these words from the lips of Jesus? He is not teaching us to deny one part of ourselves in order to benefit another part of ourselves, which is what self-denial has come to mean. The full force of our Lord’s words is—“let him deny his right to himself; let him give up his right to himself to Me.” Jesus laid down that condition to a clean-living, sterling young man of His day, with what result? His countenance was sad, and he went away grieved; for he had great possessions. “If any man will come after Me,” said Jesus, “the condition is that he must leave something behind,” viz. his right to himself. Is Jesus Christ worth it, or am I one of those who accept His salvation but thoroughly object to giving up my right to myself to Him?

### **The Devotion**

**and take up his cross . .**

There is a difference between devotion to principles and devotion to a person. Hundreds of people to-day are devoting themselves to phases of truth, to causes. Jesus Christ never asks us to devote ourselves to a cause or a creed; He asks us to devote ourselves to Him, to sign away the right to ourselves and yield to Him absolutely, and take up that cross daily. The cross Jesus asks us to take up cannot be suffering for conviction’s sake, because a man will suffer for conviction’s sake whether he is a Christian or not. Neither can it be suffering for conscience’ sake, because a man will go to martyrdom for his principles without having one spark of the grace of God in his heart. Paul says, “Though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing.” What then is our cross? Our cross is something that comes only with the peculiar relationship of a disciple to Jesus. It is the sign that we have denied our right to ourselves and are determined to manifest that we are no longer our own, we have given away for ever our right to ourselves to Jesus Christ.

The characteristic of the cross we carry daily is that we have been “crucified with Christ.” Galatians 2:20 does not refer merely to the fact that our “old man” has been crucified with Christ; it refers to the glorious liberty we have of sacrificing ourselves for Jesus Christ every day we live. What is sacrifice? Giving back to God the best I have in order that He may make it an eternal possession of His and mine for ever.

But something must happen first. The meaning of salvation and sanctification is not only the removal of the wrong disposition, but the radical alteration of identity. Paul says that his destiny is no longer self-realisation, but Christ-identity: I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me. We need to remember that we cannot train ourselves to be Christians; we cannot discipline ourselves to be saints; we cannot bend ourselves to the will of God: we have to be broken to the will of God. There must be a break with the dominant ruler. We may be clean and upright and religious, we may be Christian workers and have been mightily used of God; but if the bedrock of self-realisation has not been blasted out by our own free choice at the Cross of Christ, shipwreck is the only thing in the end. We enter into the Kingdom of God through the Cross of Jesus Christ, and self-realisation cannot get through with us, it must be left outside. We must be broken from self-realisation, immediately that point is reached the reality of the supernatural

identification with the death of Jesus Christ takes place, and the witness of the Spirit is unmistakable—"I have been crucified with Christ" (rv).

Jesus Christ can take the man who has been broken by sin and twisted with wrong-doing and can reinstate him, not as an angel, thank God, but as a man, and present him before the throne of God without blemish, through the sheer omnipotence of His Atonement.

### **The Direction**

**. . . and follow Me.**

We must not dictate to Jesus as to where we are going to serve Him. There is a theory abroad to-day that we have to consecrate our gifts to God. We cannot, they are not ours to consecrate; every gift we have has been given to us. Jesus Christ does not take my gifts and use them; He takes me and turns me right about face, and realises Himself in me for His glory. The one dominant note in the life of a disciple is—

Jesus only, Jesus ever,  
Jesus all in all I see.

There is no devotion to principles or to a cause there; nothing but overwhelming, absorbing love to the Person of Jesus Christ. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

God grant we may answer—

I have made my choice for ever,  
I will walk with Christ my Lord;  
Naught from Him my soul shall sever  
While I'm trusting in His word.  
I the lonely way have taken,  
Rough and toilsome though it be,  
And although despised, forsaken,  
Jesus, I'll go through with Thee.

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### **Andrew Murray - LIKE CHRIST: In His Self-Denial**

"We then that we strong ought to bear the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received us to the glory of God."—Rom. 15:1–3, 7.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. 16:24.

Even Christ pleased not Himself: He bore the reproaches, with which men reproached and dishonoured God, so patiently, that He might glorify God and save man. Christ pleased not Himself: with reference both to God and man, this word is the key of His life. In this, too, His life is our rule and example; we who are strong ought not to please ourselves.

To deny self—this is the opposite of pleasing self. When Peter denied Christ, he said: I know not the man; with Him and His interests I have nothing to do; I do not wish to be counted His friend. In the same way the true Christian denies himself, the old man: I do not know this old man; I will have nothing to do with him and his interests. And when shame and dishonour come upon him, or anything be exacted that is not pleasant to the old nature, he simply says: Do as you like with the old ties of the Adam, I will take no notice of it. Through the cross of Christ I am crucified to the world, and the flesh, and self: to the friendship and interest of this old man I am a stranger; I deny him to be my friend; I deny his every claim and wish; I know him not.

The Christian who only thinks of his salvation from curse and condemnation cannot understand this; he finds it impossible to deny self. Although he may sometimes try to do so, his life mainly consists in pleasing himself. The Christian who has taken Christ as his pattern cannot be content with this. He has surrendered himself to seek the most complete fellowship with the cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit has taught him to say, I have been crucified with Christ, and so am dead to sin and self. In fellowship with Christ he sees the old man crucified, a condemned malefactor; he is ashamed to own him as a friend: it is his fixed purpose, and he has received the power for it too, no longer to please his old nature, but to deny it. Because the crucified Christ is his life, self-denial is the law of his life.

This self-denial extends itself over the whole domain of life. It was so with the Lord Jesus, and is so with every one who longs to follow Him perfectly. This self-denial has not so much to do with what is sinful, and unlawful, and contrary to the laws of God, as with what is lawful, or apparently indifferent. To the self-denying spirit the will and glory of God and the salvation of man are always more

than our own interests or pleasure.

Before we can know how to please our neighbour, self-denial must first exercise itself in our own personal life. It must rule the body. The holy fasting of Him who said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; and who would not eat until His Father gave Him food, and His Father's work was done, teaches the believer a holy temperance in eating and drinking. The holy poverty of Him who had not where to lay His head, teaches him so to regulate the possession, and use, and enjoyment of earthly things, that he may always possess as not possessing. After the example of the holy suffering of Him who bore all our sins in His own body on the tree, he learns to bear all suffering patiently: even in the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, he desires to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus; with Paul he keeps under the body and brings it into subjection; all its desires and appetites he would have ruled by the self-denial of Jesus. He does not please himself.

This self-denial keeps watch over the spirit too. His own wisdom and judgment the believer brings into subjection to God's word: he gives up his own thoughts to the teaching of the Word and the Spirit. Towards man he manifests the same self-denial of his own wisdom in a readiness to hear and learn, in the meekness and humility with which, even when he knows he is in the right, he gives his opinion, in the desire ever to find and to acknowledge what is good in others.

And then self-denial has special reference to the heart. All the affections and desires are placed under it. The will, the kingly power of the soul is specially under its control. As little as self-pleasing could be a part of Christ's life, may Christ's follower allow it ever to influence his conduct. "We ought not to please ourselves. For even Christ pleased not Himself." Self-denial is the law of his life.

Nor does he find it hard when once he has truly surrendered himself to it. To one who, with a divided heart, seeks to force himself to a life of self-denial, it is hard indeed; but to one who has yielded himself to it unreservedly, because he has with his whole heart accepted the cross to destroy the power of sin and self, the blessing it brings more than compensates for apparent sacrifice or loss. He hardly dare any longer speak of self-denial, there is such blessedness in becoming conformed to the image of Jesus.

Self-denial has not its value with God, as some think, from the measure of pain it causes. No, for this pain is very much caused by the remaining reluctance to practise it. But it has its highest worth in that meek or even joyful acquiescence which counts nothing a sacrifice for Jesus' sake, and feels surprised when others speak of self-denial.

There have been ages when men thought they must fly to the wilderness or cloister to deny themselves. The Lord Jesus has shown us that the best place to practise self-denial is in our ordinary intercourse with men. So Paul also says here, "We ought not to please ourselves, let every one please his neighbour unto edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself. Therefore receive ye one another, even as Christ has received you." Nothing less than the self-denial of our Lord, who pleased not Himself, is our law. What He was we must be. What He did we must do.

What a glorious life will it be in the Church of Christ when this law prevails! each one considers it the object of existence to make others happy. Each one denies himself, seeks not his own, esteems others better than himself. All thought of taking offence, of wounded pride, of being slighted or passed by, would pass away. As a follower of Christ, each would seek to bear the weak and to please his neighbour. The true self-denial would be seen in this, that no one would think of himself, but live in and for others.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." This word not only gives us the will, but also the power for self-denial. He who does not simply wish to reach heaven through Christ, but comes after Him for His own sake, will follow Him. And in his heart Jesus speedily takes the place that self had. Jesus only becomes the centre and object of such a life. The undivided surrender to follow Him is crowned with this wonderful blessing, that Christ by His Spirit Himself becomes his life. Christ's spirit of self-denying love is poured out upon him, and to deny self is the greatest joy of his heart, and the means of the deepest communion with God. Self-denial is no longer a work he simply does as a means of attaining perfection for himself. Nor is it merely a negative victory, of which the main feature is the keeping self in check. Christ has taken the place of self, and His love and gentleness and kindness flow out to others, now that self is parted with. No command becomes more blessed or more natural than this: "We ought not to please ourselves, for even Christ pleased not Himself." "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and FOLLOW ME."

Beloved Lord, I thank Thee for this new call to follow Thee and not to please myself, even as Thou didst not please Thyself. I thank Thee that I have now no longer, as once, to hear it with fear. Thy commandments are no longer grievous to me; Thy yoke is easy, and Thy burden light. What I see in Thy life on earth as my example, is the certain pledge of what I receive from Thy life in heaven. I did not always so understand it. Long after I had known Thee, I dared not think of self-denial. But for him who has learned what it is to take up the cross, to be crucified with Thee, and to see the old man nailed to the cross, it is no longer terrible to deny it. Oh, my Lord! who would not be ashamed to be the friend of a crucified and accursed criminal? Since I have learned that Thou art my life, and that Thou dost wholly take charge of the life that is wholly entrusted to Thee, to work both to will and to do, I do not fear but Thou wilt give me the love and wisdom in the path of self-denial joyfully to follow Thy footstep. Blessed Lord, Thy disciples are not worthy of this grace; but since Thou hast chosen us to it, we will gladly seek not to please ourselves, but every one his neighbour, as



Thou hast taught us. And may Thy Holy Spirit work it in us mightily. Amen.

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**David Garland** gives an excellent discussion of the **The Demands of Discipleship** (Note this is from his comments on Mk 8:34–9:1 but clearly relevant to Matthew's parallel passages on Discipleship).

WHEN JESUS LAYS out the demands and expectations of discipleship, he calls the crowd along with the Twelve and therefore opens it to anyone willing to accept his conditions. He presents them with three demands (8:34), a rationale for accepting these demands (Mk 8:35–37), a solemn warning (Mk 8:38), and a confident promise (Mk 9:1).

### **Three demands.**

#### **(1) Jesus insists that if the disciples want to follow him, they must deny themselves**

He does not ask disciples to deny something to themselves but to deny the self and all self-promoting ambitions. Discipleship is not part-time volunteer work that one does as an extracurricular activity. God refuses to accept a minor role in one's life; he requires a controlling place. Those who deny themselves have learned to say, "Not my will but thine be done."

#### **(2) Jesus demands that his disciples take up a cross.**

This vivid imagery must have sounded strange before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection but would have communicated danger and sacrifice. Public executions were a prominent feature of life. Cicero described crucifixion as a cruel, disgusting penalty, the worst of extreme tortures inflicted on slaves and something to be dreaded. The Romans made the condemned carry the transverse beam of the cross to the place of execution, where they affixed it to the execution stake. By requiring disciples to carry their cross, Jesus expects them to be willing to join the ranks of the despised and doomed. They must be ready to deny themselves even to the point of giving their lives.

#### **(3) Jesus tells his disciples to follow the way he has chosen, not the way they would choose for themselves.**

Jesus does not want a convoy of followers who marvel at his deeds but fail to follow his example. The procession he envisages is a rare sight: disciples following after their Master, each carrying a cross. The imagery means that disciples must obey his teaching, including what he says about giving their lives.

### **The rationale.**

Jesus appeals to the basic human desire to secure one's life as the rationale for making such a sacrifice. Humans seek to guarantee their lives but usually choose ways destined to fail. Jesus offers a paradoxical principle for successfully saving one's soul: To save one's life, one has to lose it. Human beings make futile attempts to safeguard their lives by storing up goods in bigger barns, but nothing that one acquires in this life can ransom one's soul from God. If we give up our lives for his sake and the gospel, we will be given the only life that counts, life from God.

### **A solemn warning.**

Jesus next warns his disciples about the judgment, when each one will have to give an account before the Judge. The warning implies that when the Son of Man comes in the glory of his Father, he will come as the Judge (see Matt. 25:31–32). He warns disciples not to retreat from his present shame in the eyes of this world as the crucified Messiah. They must side with him now in his suffering and humiliation, or they will not be at his side in the glorious age to come. The individual's stance toward Jesus will determine the final verdict.

Jesus uses the threat of judgment to induce his followers to be faithful. To be put to shame is the opposite of divine vindication (Pss. 25:3; 119:6; Isa. 41:10–11; Jer. 17:18). Those who may be frightened by the edicts of earthly courts (represented in this Gospel by Herod Antipas, the high priest's Sanhedrin, and the Roman governor, Pilate) should fear even more the decision of the heavenly tribunal, which determines their eternal destiny. The petty tyrants, who for a fleeting moment hold the whip hand, can inflict fearful punishment. But one cannot appease them or straddle the fence. To win the favor of the world and its despots means to lose the favor of heaven. To win the favor of heaven means to lose the favor of the world.

In the judgment, the utter powerlessness of God's hostile adversaries will be manifest as they are brought to the bar to answer to God. Those who have thrown in their lot with them will find that they have made a fatal choice. They have bartered a few more years of life on earth with this wicked and adulterous generation for an

eternity with them in hell. Giving one's life in service to God may mean losing a few years on earth, but the result will be spending eternity with the glorified Son of Man. Jesus does not say that confessing him will make us happier but that it will save us from God's judgment. The better part of wisdom is to follow Jesus' way, even if it leads to earthly humiliation; the only other choice leads to divine condemnation. This warning hits home when Peter cannot make the same bold confession in a hate-filled courtyard (Mk 14:66–72; see also Mk 13:9).

### **A confident promise.**

Jesus concludes this first lesson on discipleship requirements with a solemn promise that some of them will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God coming in power (Mk 9:1). The suffering will not go on forever. The resurrection of the Son of Man (Mk 8:31) and his coming in glory with the holy angels (8:38) removes the sting from the humiliation of a cross. (Source: [NIVAC-Mark](#))

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## **It's Not A Game**

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. — Mark 8:34

My former neighbor often talked about “**the game of life**,” and I can understand why he did. It's part of human nature to approach life as one big game made up of a lot of little games. Competing can be fun, exciting, and stimulating.

But life is a whole lot more than a game—especially for a follower of Jesus Christ. When a believer needs to own the biggest house, drive the largest SUV, get the promotion first, and win every argument, something's terribly wrong from God's point of view. It's not right to run over people's feelings, bend or break the rules, and gloat over victories.

To approach life as one big game that you always have to win is to live in hopeless delusion and fantasy. While material possessions, professional success, and personal victories are enjoyable, they last only for this life. Then they're all left behind.

Jesus instructed His disciples to deny themselves, identify with His cross, and follow Him in self-denial, and for some that even meant death (Mark 8:34-35). He made it clear to His disciples that artificial victories in “the game of life” don't count for much. What really counts is what's done for the Lord. By: David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **Follow Me**

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. —Mark 8:34

During World War II, B-17 bombers made long flights from the US mainland to the Pacific island of Saipan. When they landed there, the planes were met by a jeep bearing the sign: “Follow Me!” That little vehicle guided the giant planes to their assigned places in the parking area.

One pilot, who by his own admission was not a religious man, made an insightful comment: “That little jeep with its quaint sign always reminds me of Jesus. He was [a lowly] peasant, but the giant men and women of our time would be lost without His direction.”

Centuries after our Savior walked the streets and hills of Israel, the world with all its advances still needs His example and instruction. When His ways aren't followed, numerous problems and evils arise in our world—including immorality, crime, and greed.

How do we follow Jesus' ways? First of all, we turn from our sin and entrust our lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. Then, we seek His will in His Word each day and put it into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We learn to deny our selfish desires and give ourselves completely to following Jesus (Mark 8:34-35).

If you want to get in line with the purposes of God, respond to Jesus' invitation: “Follow Me!” By: Vernon Grounds [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### THINKING IT OVER

For help on your Christian journey,  
read the online booklet *What Does It Take To Follow Christ?*

To find your way through life, follow Jesus.

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## **Subtle Wisdom**

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. —John 12:26

When I was in college, my co-worker Bud, a fork-truck driver, often enriched my life with his pithy wisdom. We were eating lunch one day, sitting on the back of his fork truck, when I announced that I was transferring to another school.

"Why?" he asked.

"All my friends are transferring," I answered.

Bud chewed his sandwich for a moment and then replied quietly and with subtle irony, "I guess that's one way to pick a school."

His words struck me with rare force. Of course, I thought. But is this the only way to choose a school? Will I follow my friends for the rest of my days, or will I follow Jesus? Will I seek His face and His will and go where He wants me to go?

Twenty-five times in the New Testament, Jesus said to His disciples, "Follow Me." In Mark 8:34, He said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." No matter what others do or what direction their lives may take, we must do what He asks us to do.

The words of an old song come to mind: "My Lord knows the way through the wilderness; all I have to do is follow!" By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## Cafeteria Christianity

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. —Mark 8:34

In his book **Thinking in the Future Tense**, Edward B. Lindaman refers to "the cafeteria culture of our age." It's the tendency to shy away from life's unpleasant disciplines and seek only what brings immediate pleasure.

Christians are not exempt from this tendency. Some persuasive preachers promote an "abundant life" of success and prosperity through positive thinking, more faith, or giving money to get God's blessing in return.

The Bible, of course, teaches us to think positively (Phil. 4:8) and to give liberally (2 Cor. 8:2). But much "prosperity preaching" lacks the nourishing truths of Christ's sacrifice for sin and His demand for godly living. Our God is not only loving, good, and generous; He is also righteous, holy, and demanding. He hates sin and will not compromise with evil.

It's wonderful to hear about the blessings Christ offers, but we also need to experience repentance and self-denial. The picking and choosing of a cafeteria-style Christianity is no substitute for a well-rounded diet, which includes the tough truths of taking up Christ's cross and following Him (Mark 8:34). That kind of nourishment stimulates the growth of spiritual muscle and Christlike character. And I need all of that I can get, don't you? By Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

From subtle love of softening things,

From easy choices, weakenings;

Not thus are spirits fortified,

Not this way went the Crucified.

—Carmichael

To be conformed to Christ, let God's Spirit form Christ in you.

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**Alan Carr** has a great **illustration** about "costs" in his sermon on the related passage Mark 8:34-38 - **NO CHEAP SEATS** - Intro: Last Sunday was Super Bowl Sunday. Millions of Americans watched the New York Giants shatter the New England Patriots' dreams of finishing a perfect 19-0 season. While I'm not much of a football fan, I was curious to know what it would cost to see the game. After a few moments of research I discovered that there are no cheap seats for the Super Bowl. The tickets I found ranged from \$1,674.00 in the nosebleed section all the way up to \$11,668.00 for a pretty good seat near the 50 yard line. No matter how you slice it, it costs some big bucks to go to the Super Bowl. There are no cheap seats! If you want to see Celine Dion in concert, expect to pay between \$100.00 and \$2,000.00. If you want to see an old rock band named Journey expect to pay between \$100.00 and \$500.00. It will cost you at least \$250.00 to go to trace in Daytona next week. It would cost you nearly a hundred bucks to see either Dolly Parton or Willie Nelson! There are no cheap seats! Jesus wants to teach us the same thing about being His follower. He wants us to know that there are No Cheap Seats in His service....**Many believe they can have Jesus and the world too.** Many believe they can claim to be followers of Christ, while they live their lives as they please. Jesus lets us know in no uncertain terms that such notions are utterly false. If a person is going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, there is a very high price to pay. This passage (Mark 8:34-38) makes it clear that there are **No Cheap Seats for followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

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**James Earley** - Jesus said, "**Follow Me.**" Jesus did not say, "Follow a set of rules" or "Follow a series of rituals." He said, "Follow Me." Discipleship is an intensely personal pursuit. Make no mistake about it. Being a disciple of Jesus is more than adding a new set of activities to your already busy life. Being a disciple of Jesus is first and foremost a response to His call to pursue Him passionately. The call "**Follow Me**" is the essence, heartbeat, challenge, and adventure of discipleship. It is a formal challenge to live with, learn from, and study under Rabbi Jesus. It is a call to be close to Him, obey His teachings, take the same path He takes, and walk the same road He walked. It involves daily growth and development **at the expense of personal comfort. It demands absolute abandonment** (Ed: see Oswald Chambers' comments below) **of all else in order to pursue Jesus fully.** This chapter (In his book [Disciple Making Is...](#)) will go deeper into stage two of the discipleship process (development), exploring what it means to follow Jesus. The common command in Jesus' initial encounter with His disciples was "**Follow Me.**" In chapter 6, we discussed how Jesus opened His relationship with His future disciples with the challenge "Follow Me" (John 1:43). In chapter 7, when Jesus formally invited Simon, Andrew, James, and John into a rabbi/disciple relationship, He did so with the words "Follow Me, ... and I will make you fish for people!" (Mt 4:19). Jesus issued the same call again, tying it with the proclamation that the Father was leading Him to the cross. He said, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23-note)...The point is to be certain that you follow Jesus, no matter the cost. I agree with Oswald Chambers, who said, **Be reckless for Jesus!**" ([Disciple Making Is...](#))

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**Adrian Rogers** - Now, what does it mean to take up your cross? It doesn't mean to put a cross around, across your back and walk around with it....Now, many people have a cross, a gold ornament, around their neck, and there's nothing wrong with that that I can see. But, friend, a cross is not a thing of beauty. A cross is a thing, ultimately, of shame and reproach. That's what it meant in Jesus' day when He said, "Pick up your cross."

When I was in college, I took a course in criminology, and we visited our penitentiary there in Florida, Raiford Penitentiary. And I went into the room there where they had the electric chair. I sat down in the electric chair. I checked the switch and everything to see no one was standing over there. But I sat down in the electric chair. Got up and looked at it, tried to image what it would be like to sit in that chair knowing that someone behind that panel is ready to pull the switch. And that chair was hideous. It was ugly. Can you image somebody with an electric chair on a chain around their neck, a little miniature electric chair?

Well, the cross, we have made it sort of a piece of jewelry, but when a person comes to Jesus Christ, he is a worshiper who will worship at any cost, personal relationships, personal reputation. To take up your cross is a mark of shame. Personal realization. Now, somebody says, "Well, my sickness is my cross." Not unless you got it by serving Jesus. You say, "My mother-in-law's my cross." She may be cross, but she's not your cross. A cross is something that you willingly take up. You don't have to bear it. Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself."

To follow Jesus is a worshiper who worships at any cost, above the cost of personal relationships, above the cost of personal reputation, above the cost of personal realization.

Somebody asked Dr. Tozer, "What does it mean to take up your cross? What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?" He said, "Three things. Number one: a man who is crucified is facing only one way. Number two: a man who is crucified is not going back. He has said goodbye. He is not going back. And number three: he has no further plans of his own." **Take up your cross, facing one way, not going back, no further plans of his own.** Can you say it, "I'm crucified with Christ?" We say it glibly. Do you mean it? That's what it means to be a disciple. Still want to be a disciple? Take up your cross. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ said. My precious friend, when you gave your heart to Jesus Christ and said, "I will take up my cross," that's the last legitimate, independent decision you ever make. There, from now on, your life belongs to Jesus Christ. You're not your own. You are bought with a price. Now, what a disciple is, number one, is a worshiper who worships at any cost. Got it?

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**Louis Cassels** - Obey . . . **take up your cross . . . deny yourself . . .** it all sounds very hard. It is hard. Anyone who tells you differently is peddling spiritual soothing syrup, not real Christianity. And yet, in a strangely paradoxical way, it is also easy. With every cross that we lift in obedience to Christ comes the strength to carry it. It is always a package deal.

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**Question** - [What Did Jesus Mean When He Said, "Take up Your Cross and Follow Me"](#) (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23)?

**Answer** - Let's begin with what Jesus didn't mean. Many people interpret "cross" as some burden they must carry in their lives: a strained relationship, a thankless job, a physical illness. With self-pitying pride, they say, "That's my cross I have to carry." Such an interpretation is not what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." When Jesus carried His cross up Golgotha to be crucified, no one was thinking of the cross as symbolic of a burden to carry. To a person in the first-century, the cross meant one thing and one thing only: death by the most painful and humiliating means human beings could develop.

Two thousand years later, Christians view the cross as a cherished symbol of atonement, forgiveness, grace, and love. But in Jesus'

day, the cross represented nothing but torturous death. Because the Romans forced convicted criminals to carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion, bearing a cross meant carrying their own execution device while facing ridicule along the way to death.

Therefore, “Take up your cross and follow Me” means being willing to die in order to follow Jesus. This is called “dying to self.” It’s a call to absolute surrender. After each time Jesus commanded cross bearing, He said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:24–25). Although the call is tough, the reward is matchless.

Wherever Jesus went, He drew crowds. Although these multitudes often followed Him as Messiah, their view of who the Messiah really was—and what He would do—was distorted. They thought the Christ would usher in the restored kingdom. They believed He would free them from the oppressive rule of their Roman occupiers. Even Christ’s own inner circle of disciples thought the kingdom was coming soon (Luke 19:11). When Jesus began teaching that He was going to die at the hands of the Jewish leaders and their Gentile overlords (Luke 9:22), His popularity sank. Many of the shocked followers rejected Him. Truly, they were not able to put to death their own ideas, plans, and desires, and exchange them for His.

Following Jesus is easy when life runs smoothly; our true commitment to Him is revealed during trials. Jesus assured us that trials will come to His followers (John 16:33). Discipleship demands sacrifice, and Jesus never hid that cost.

In Luke 9:57–62, three people seemed willing to follow Jesus. When Jesus questioned them further, their commitment was half-hearted at best. They failed to count the cost of following Him. None was willing to take up his cross and crucify upon it his own interests.

Therefore, Jesus appeared to dissuade them. How different from the typical Gospel presentation! How many people would respond to an altar call that went, “Come follow Jesus, and you may face the loss of friends, family, reputation, career, and possibly even your life”? The number of false converts would likely decrease! Such a call is what Jesus meant when He said, “Take up your cross and follow Me.”

If you wonder if you are ready to take up your cross, consider these questions:

- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing some of your closest friends?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means alienation from your family?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means the loss of your reputation?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your job?
- Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your life?

In some places of the world, these consequences are reality. But notice the questions are phrased, “Are you willing?” Following Jesus doesn’t necessarily mean all these things will happen to you, but are you willing to take up your cross? If there comes a point in your life where you are faced with a choice—Jesus or the comforts of this life—which will you choose?

Commitment to Christ means taking up your cross daily, giving up your hopes, dreams, possessions, even your very life if need be for the cause of Christ. Only if you willingly take up your cross may you be called His disciple (Luke 14:27). The reward is worth the price. Jesus followed His call of death to self (“Take up your cross and follow Me”) with the gift of life in Christ: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:25–26). (from [Gotquestions - highly recommended resource](#))

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#### **ILLUSTRATION** - You Mind if I Look Over these Crosses?

Well, here I am, Lord. You said “Take up your cross,” and I’m here to do it. It’s not easy, you know, this self-denial thing. I mean to go through with it though, yes sir! I’ll bet you wish more people were willing to be disciples like me. I’ve counted the cost and surrendered my life, and it’s not an easy road.

You mind if I look over these crosses? I’d kind of like a new one. I’m not fussy, you understand; but a disciple has to be relevant these days.

I was wondering—are there any that are vinyl padded? I’m thinking of attracting others, see? And if I could show them a comfortable cross, I’m sure I could win a lot more. Got to keep up with the population explosion and all.

And I need something durable so I can treasure it always. Oh, is there one that’s sort of flat so it would fit under my coat? One shouldn’t be too obvious.

Funny, there doesn’t seem to be much choice here. Just that coarse, rough wood. I mean that would hurt. Don’t you have something more distinctive, Lord? I can tell you right now, none of my friends are going to be impressed by this shoddy workmanship. They’ll

think I'm a nut or something. And my family will be just mortified.

What's that? It's either one of these or forget the whole thing? But Lord, I want to be your disciple, I mean, just being with you; that's all that counts; but life has to have a balance, too. But you don't understand—nobody lives that way today! Who is going to be attracted by this self-denial bit? I mean, I want to; but let's not over do it. Start getting radical like this, and they'll have me off to the funny farm. Know what I mean?

I mean being a disciple is challenging and exciting and I want to do it; but I do have some rights, you know. Now let's see—no blood—OK? I just can't stand the thought of that, Lord... Lord? Jesus?

Now where do you suppose He went?

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**Carrying the Cross of Words** - I am afraid we modern Christians are long on talk and short on conduct. We use the language of power but our deeds are the deeds of weakness. We settle for words in religion because deeds are too costly. It is easier to pray, "Lord, help me to carry my cross daily" then to pick up the cross and carry it; but since the mere request for help to do something we do not actually intend to do has a certain degree of religious comfort, we are content with repetition of the words.

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**F. B. Meyer** once shared a room with C. T. Studd. Meyer woke up one morning at seven and saw the bent figure of C. T. Studd etched against the light of a flickering candle, his university scarf wrapped around his neck. "How long have you been up, Charlie?" asked Meyer. He replied, "Since four o'clock." "What on earth have you been doing for three hours?" Studd answered, "I've been going through the New Testament afresh, in the light of the command of my Savior, 'If you love Me, keep My commandments,' and I've been checking off every commandment that I've obeyed." Meyer asked, "How can I be like you?" Studd pointed out the need to be fully surrendered to Christ in every area of life, in order that the Holy Spirit might radiate through his life. It was then that Meyer realized that he had handed over every key of his life except one his ability to preach. Studd reminded him, "If you don't trust the Lord in all, you don't trust Him at all." Norman Grubb, C. T. Studd

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**Alan Carr on taking up your cross** - When Jesus spoke of the cross, everyone in His audience knew what He was referring to. Some have estimated that over 30,000 Jews were crucified during the lifetime of Jesus alone. When Jesus says that we are to take up our cross, He is saying that we are to live as dead men! You see, to take up one's cross was to start upon a "death march". Their walk under that cross always ended up with them on that cross. They began a process from which there was no retreating and no turning back. To take up your cross was to embrace the death of self! This is just what Jesus did when He came to this world - Matt. 16:21-23; John 19, Mark 10:45. He set the example that we are to follow.

To understand what this cross Jesus refers to is, we need to talk about what it isn't. It isn't your lost husband or wife. It isn't your wayward children. It isn't your mother-in-law. Your cross isn't your difficulties or the bad situations you face in life. The cross is not just a place of suffering, it is a place of death! To take up one's cross means to willingly pick up and carry the shame (⇒ People mocked men who carried the cross. Unlike today when a person will carry one across America and draw cheers. A man under a cross in Jesus' day drew jeers!), the rejection, the suffering and the death that Jesus Himself willingly carried for us. To take up your cross means that you are willing to identify yourself with Jesus Christ, His death and His word, regardless of what it costs you personally, publically or financially! (Note: That's not a side of Christianity you hear very often! It isn't popular to talk about sacrifice, death and suffering, but that is what Christianity is all about! The sooner we learn that truth, the sooner God can and will send revival to His church and use us again for His glory!)...We are called upon to take up that cross, once for all, and go after Jesus. We are not to back out, turn around, or lay down the cross. We are to die on that cross, giving our all for His glory! This phrase has the idea of being willing to go all the way for Jesus - no holds barred and no turning back - just a steady, humble walk that follows His footsteps and His path through this world. Jesus said it as simply as it could possibly be said, John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." ([How to Experience the Heart of Real Christianity](#))

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**Ray Pritchard paraphrases** the words of Jesus in Mark 8:34-38 (similar to His words in Lk 9:23-26) - Now that you know who I am, are you ready to take up your cross and follow me? Before you answer, let me warn you that to follow me will seem, in the eyes of the world, as if you are wasting your life. The people of the world will never understand what you are doing. It will seem to them that by following me, you are throwing your life away.

You always have another option. You can try to save your life by following your own desires. Lots of people do that. They live as if their careers were all that mattered. But the people who live only for this life in the end will find that they wasted it on things that don't really matter. They tried to save it by living for themselves, but in the end they will lose it. They have wasted their lives on trivial pursuits.

After all, what good will it do if you become the richest man in the world, or climb to the top of the corporate ladder, or rise to the

highest salary level in your company, or win the applause of the world? What good will all that do if in the end you find out it was all wasted? What good will that shiny new sports car do for you then? Will you be able to trade it in for another life? No, you won't. But if you want to live that way, go ahead. Millions of people do. In the end they will be sorry, but by then it will be too late to do anything about it.

So what will it be, men? The way of the cross or the way of the world? You've got to invest your life somewhere. What's the best deal you can make?

The martyred missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

If you live for your career, what difference will it make ten seconds after you die? If you spend your life in the service of the [kingdom of God](#), the road may not be easy, but 10,000 years from now you'll never regret your decision.

Lord Jesus, you have called me to follow you, and now I must give an answer. Clear the cobwebs of confusion from my heart so that I might answer your call gladly, freely, completely, immediately, and say, "Here am I, Lord, ready to do your will." Amen.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - **R Kent Hughes** - This call to a crucified life demands a willingness to pour out one's life for Christ. The biography *The Shadow of the Almighty* records a beautiful prayer uttered by Jim Elliot:

Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it, for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar.

Young Jim Elliot went on to willingly shoulder his cross in missionary service, literally sealing it with his own blood at the hands of primitive spearmen deep in the jungles of Ecuador. (Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth)

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**Robert Morgan on [Luke 9:23-26](#)** - God uses temptation to cultivate obedience. Look at [Luke 9:23-26](#): In other words, if we're Christ's disciples, we're going to be in hostile territory and we're going to have to make hard moral decisions every day. The world will try to tempt us. The world will try to intimidate us. The world will try to make us ashamed of being Christians. But Jesus can use that temptation to cultivate obedience in our lives. I think one of the best things that I read in the purpose-driven materials we've been going through is this paragraph. I want to read it to you, because it is so well-stated:

"Temptation always tests whether you love God more than the temptation. Let me give you a tip about temptation. When you're tempted, don't resist it. Because as you're resisting it, guess what you're doing? You're just thinking about the temptation! You're getting into a spiritual tug-of-war with Satan, and he always wins. You don't resist it, you just drop the rope and walk a different direction and you think about something different. This is a verse that I've used literally hundreds and hundreds of times in my life [[Philippians 4:8](#): "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."] When I'm tempted it's my favorite verse to use to turn my thoughts from what's wrong to what's right, so I've memorized it very well, because I have been tempted a lot. If you'll take a verse like this and let it turn your mind from what's wrong to what's right, you'll find the temptation starts to drop away."

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**ILLUSTRATION** Missionary Amy Carmichael worked with children in India, and one day she took them on a field trip to see a goldsmith refine his gold after the ancient manner of the East. He was sitting beside a little charcoal fire, and in the fire was a little curved roofing tile. Another tile covered it as a lid. This was the crucible. The goldsmith had concocted a solution, put it in the tile crucible, placed the lump of gold in the solution, and put the whole thing in the fire. As the fire did its work, the impurities in the gold began to leak into the solution and the gold become more pure. The goldsmith would occasionally take the gold out of the crucible with a pair of tongs, let it cool, and rub it between his fingers. Then he put it back into fresh solution in the tile and heated it up again. Every time this happened, the goldsmith blew the fire hotter than before. Looking up at the children, the goldsmith said, "The gold could not bear the fire this hot to begin with; it would have destroyed it. But now it helps it." One of the children asked, "How do you know when the gold is purified?" Here was the man's answer: "When I can see my face in it (the liquid gold in the crucible) then it is pure." Of course, Amy Carmichael couldn't miss the lesson for her own life. When our Great Refiner sees in us His own image, He has brought us to maturity and wholeness.

He uses truth to cultivate wisdom; trials to cultivate faith; tasks to cultivate faithfulness, and temptation to cultivate obedience until He can see His face to us and we have grown into the image of Christ. Is that process happening in your life? Fanny Crosby put it:

O to be more like Jesus,  
Earnest when 'ere I pray,

Into His perfect likeness  
Growing from day to day.

Oh, that we might all be growing into the image of Christ, growing up into Him in all things, letting Christ be formed in us. And then one day all shall be fulfilled. As the old apostle John told us in the third chapter of his first epistle: Beloved, we are now children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

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### **Sermon Starters - John Butler - Three Distasteful Requirements Matthew 16:24**

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Christ never watered down the requirement of being His disciple, or of serving Him. In fact, He seemed to emphasize the hardships more than the rewards. Today, we do just the opposite. We tell people about the peaches and cream but seldom about the thistles and thorns. We talk much about the resurrection to a new life but little about the scorn and suffering on the cross which preceded the resurrection. We speak more of the glory than of the qualifying groaning. Christ mentioned three aspects of service, of being a good disciple, and none of the three are popular in our day.

#### **FIRST—THE DENYING**

"Deny himself." If you are going to do any kind of worthy service for the Lord, it will involve denial of self. This is where many quickly drop out. They cannot deny themselves for spiritual matters. They will deny themselves for sports or business or their work but not for spiritual matters. They do not want to sacrifice or go without in order to serve Christ. Try enlisting these folk in service at church, and they will refuse because it might inconvenience them or cause them to have to sacrifice some time and energy which they would rather give to carnal pursuits. To hear these folk talk, it seems almost a crime to have to deny oneself of some legitimate pleasure in order to do some work at church. But self-denial is essential if you would serve Christ.

#### **SECOND—THE DUTY**

"Take up his cross." We like taking up our crowns but not the cross. The cross was the main work of Christ. He came to earth primarily to on the cross for our sins. If we would serve Him, it will mean a cross of some sort. A cross involves, suffering, pain, scorn, blood, sweat and tears. Many like to be in God's army when it involves a parade, recognitions, and medals, but not when it involves bullets and guns and danger. We like the game and its cheering spectators but not practice and its sweat and strain. But when the cross is involved, many will be draft dodgers and look for exemption excuses.

#### **THIRD—THE DEVOTION**

"Follow me." This speaks of devotion to Jesus Christ. "Follow" means obedience, faithfulness, and fellowship. Few people are interested in any of these things especially if it involves Jesus Christ. If you would be a good servant of Jesus Christ you must be devoted to Him. Paul was for He said, "For me to live is Christ." (Philippians 1:21). Christ must be number one in your life. There is nothing between "Follow" and "me." You must not let anything come between you and Jesus Christ. If your devotion to Christ is lacking, your service will be lacking also. The church at Ephesus was rebuked because "thou hast left thy first love." (Revelation 2:4). Their affection for Christ had diminished and it would soon destroy their testimony. (John Butler)

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#### **A FIGHT, NOT A FROLIC**

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Matthew 16:24.

Today we are beset by easy ways to do everything: playing the piano becomes a game, mathematics is fun, you can learn without work, become a master of anything without drudgery, become an instant artist, a virtuoso overnight. But our Lord did not call us to a sanctified picnic and a glorified hayride. We do not become saints in our sleep. The old masters of the deeper life found the way straight and narrow with a cross now and a crown hereafter. In position, one becomes a saint instantly, but in condition the being is followed by the becoming and that is not fun.

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#### **The Cross of Self-Denial**

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."—Matt. 16:24

A European was once taken prisoner in a Mahometan land. During his captivity he amused himself by sketching. His enemies saw his handiwork. As they gazed at his skilful and curious productions, it struck them that they might turn his talent to profitable account. He was promised his liberty, on condition that he would design a new mosque. He agreed to the proposal. An elegant and



substantial building was planned. At first it pleased them, and the hour of his emancipation seemed near. Some keen eye, however, made a discovery. It was found that the mosque was drawn in the shape of a cross. Disappointed and angry, they put the architect to death. Thus do some reject the gospel. They are well pleased with the plan of salvation, until they discern in it the cross of self-denial.

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### **The First "Prospect"—Yourself!**

If my people... shall humble themselves... 2 Chronicles 7:14.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself. Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23.

The churches of Macedonia... first gave their own selves to the Lord. II Corinthians 8:1, 5.

Dr. Torrey's first rule for revival was, "Let a few members of any church get thoroughly right with God themselves." Then they might go after others, but not until then. In their zeal for new members too many churches urge old members into visiting and canvassing "prospects," when first they need to get right with God themselves. We have no business going out to win others until we have faced our own condition first. Such activity may keep us from first giving ourselves to God. We may become occupied with others and thus dodge our own need. When Christians are right with God they will win others. Our revivals are stressing an "ingathering" of others, when God wants us to humble ourselves, deny ourselves, give ourselves. A drive for "prospects" before we do that is no revival at all.

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### **"ME FIRST!"**

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself Matt 16:24

The three men described by Luke in chapter 9, who showed an interest in following the Savior, never really did so because of "I" trouble. In Lu 9:59 we hear Jesus saying to one of them, "Follow Me." But notice the man's answer: "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." In Lu 9:61 another said, "I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house." And in Lu 9:57 we see that the other individual must also have had "me first" trouble, since, when faced with the discomforts of the "Jesus way" and the self-sacrifice required of those who would follow after Him, he suddenly lost all interest. After Jesus' words to him, this one just seems to disappear from the scene. Yes, all three men in Luke 9 had "I" trouble. Confronted with the challenge of serving Christ and the demands He placed upon them, it was their "me first" attitude which robbed them of the joys and rewards of disciple-ship.

We don't have to go back into ancient history to find "me firsters." One of the greatest drawbacks to the spread of the Gospel today is that large number of believers who put them-selves first and Christ last. For some, the idea of serving Christ is frightening, the inconvenience involved is repelling, and the "offense of the cross" embarrassing. There seem to be many who are willing to come to Christ for salvation, for that costs them nothing as Jesus has paid the complete price of redemption. Few, however, are ready to follow after Christ, simply because this involves self-sacrifice and saying no to selfish desires. Discipleship is not for the "me firsters."

When called upon for service — whether it be on the mission field, in the pulpit, or just to minister to our next door neighbor—may we never be guilty of saying "me first." Christ must always have "first place" in our lives! "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

The first lesson in the school of Christ is that of SELF-denial!

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### **Acts 20:22-35 Tough Or Easy? By Dave Branon**

. . . nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy. —Acts 20:24

The Christian life—is it tough or easy? Which is it supposed to be? Does our faith in Jesus Christ cause us difficulty, hardship, suffering, and loss? Or does it pave for us an easy road to heaven?

These aren't easy questions. But if we look at some of the people in the Bible—the ones we admire and respect for their obvious faithfulness to the Lord—we see that they didn't have a life of ease. Paul, for example, faced difficulties that would make most of us wonder where God is: shipwrecks, imprisonments, beatings, and other kinds of abuse (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). It seems he was better off before he started following Jesus.

In his book *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, social critic Neil Postman wrote, "Christianity is a serious and demanding religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether." He's right. Jesus Himself said, **"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"** (Matthew 16:24). **That's a clear call for self-denial.**

Paul was given a task, and he did it wholeheartedly for God's glory, no matter what the cost (Acts 20:24). Are we willing to do what God has called us to do with the same dedication, whether it is easy or tough? —JDB

I do not ask for easy paths  
Along life's winding roads,  
But for the promised grace and strength  
To carry all its loads.  
—Meadows

Following Jesus is always right—but seldom easy

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You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:3

The knights in King Arthur's court had to be men of valor. Any soldier returning from battle without a wound heard this stern order: "Go get your scar!" The monarch expected his men to be so committed to him and his cause that they would willingly throw themselves into the thick of the conflict—risking injury or death. Only the brave met with his approval.

Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). This means we willingly obey Christ, disregarding our own desires and comforts. It means accepting ridicule, rejection, and even physical persecution. But Jesus takes note of it all. Peter said, "But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

We will not have physical scars when we stand before Jesus someday But everyone who has suffered in serving Him will be richly rewarded. —R.W.D.

No SACRIFICE WE MAKE IS TOO GREAT FOR THE ONE WHO SACRIFICED HIS ALL.

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## **DON'T MAKE IT TOO EASY**

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. Matthew 16:24.

Some make the Christian life too easy. To them, casting their care on the Lord means dismissing and disregarding serious responsibilities under the pretense of trust. Our Lord made discipleship hard and lost many prospective followers because He called them to a pilgrimage—not a parade, to a fight—not to a frolic. We are to endure hardness, overcome the world, and not merely endure it. We must strive to enter in at the strait gate, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Few there be who travel the narrow way and those who do will often be the objects of scorn. There is Scripture on both sides, making it too hard and making it too easy. A proper view of both will make for balanced living. The Saviour gives us the perfect example. A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He offered joy and peace.

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## **Discipleship**

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"

Would you be a follower of Jesus Christ? Our text gives the basic price and qualifications for following Christ. Christ never watered down the requirements of discipleship. Rather, He seemed to do just the opposite. He wanted no 'band-wagon' disciples. We, on the other hand, talk mostly of the rewards and do not tell about the hardship responsibilities of discipleship. This results in many spiritual dropouts. Our text mentions three basic requirements to be a follower of Christ, to be a disciple of Christ and a servant of Christ. And all three requirements will be very hard on the flesh.

## **FIRST—THE SELFLESSNESS IN THE REQUIREMENT**

**"Let him deny himself."**

The first requirement hits us where it hurts, for we do not like to deny ourself of anything. But to follow Christ and to serve Christ requires that we deny self and therefore submit wholly to the Lord's wishes. This is where many folk drop out. They do not want to deny themselves anything for spiritual matters. Try enlisting these folk in service at church, and they will refuse because it might inconvenience them or cause them to have to deny themselves of some TV program. To hear these folk talk, it seems almost a crime to have to deny oneself of some legitimate pleasure in order to do some work at church. But if you would follow the Lord and serve Him it is essential to deny self.

## SECOND—THE SUFFERING IN THE REQUIREMENT

**"Take up his cross."**

The cross is our work, our task our job that the Lord gives those who would follow Him. The cross speaks of great suffering, mocking, blood, tears, and sweat. The cross is not peaches and cream, but it involves much suffering. This is something few of God's people care to do. If suffering is involved, they opt out of the duty. Christ came to earth primarily to die on the cross of Calvary. It was a very painful experience. He suffered much slander, beatings, injustice, blood and cruelty but He did not dodge the cross because of the suffering. He went to the cross in submission to God's will. If you would be a follower of Jesus Christ and serve Him faithfully, you will become acquainted with the cross in all of which it speaks.

## THIRD—THE SAVIOR IN THE REQUIREMENTS

**"Follow me."**

There is nothing between follow and me. This means we are to be close to Jesus and devoted to Him. To follow Christ faithfully you must submit to His will. The Apostle Paul determined to follow the Lord and so said, "For me to live is Christ." (Philippians 1:21). If you do not follow the Lord you are not devoted to Him and will not be His disciple. The price of being a disciple and a servant of the Lord is high. "Follow" covers all the cost. It covers the deny part and the cross part.

**Matthew 16:25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."**

- Mt 10:39 Es 4:14,16 Mk 8:35 Lu 17:33 Joh 12:25 Ac 20:23,24 Rev 12:11
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 8:35+ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

Luke 9:24+ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

Luke 17:33+ "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

John 12:24-25 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

## DO YOU WISH TO FOLLOW JESUS?

**Adrian Rogers** - When I was a child, we used to play a little game called *'Finders, Keepers, Losers, Weepers'* But our Lord is saying, *"Losers, Finders, Keeper's, Weepers."*

**For** - Term of explanation. The previous charge was a strong message, a "hard saying", but now Jesus explains why it was so firm. Jesus is explaining why He placed supreme value on obedience to His commands to deny self, take up your cross and follow Him. In comparison everything else was of minimal significance when viewed from an eternal perspective. Lose some of your "self rights" temporarily now (which is the behavior a believer would practice, and being enabled to do so ONLY by the supernatural enabling power of the Holy Spirit) or lose your soul eternally forever.

**Broadus** points out "the repeated **for** (Mt 16:25, 26, 27), each sentence supplying that which precedes with a proof or a motive. In Mt 16:25 our Lord passes from bodily to spiritual life, from temporal to eternal life. There is a similar transition in 'leave the dead to bury their own dead,' 8:22; comp. John 4:10; 6:27. He also passes in v. 25 f., from the vital principle of the body to the immortal principle.

**Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it** - **Wishes** ([thelo](#)) speaks of an exercise of the will from a motive of desire (and so to wish). The [present tense](#) describes this as this person's lifestyle. This is what they live for so to speak. They live to save their life! They treasure the temporary and lose the eternal. **Wishes** is in the [active voice](#) which signifies that this person makes a choice of their will to reject Jesus' call to discipleship -- he is not forced to reject it!

**Broadus** - Whosoever wishes to save his bodily, temporal life shall lose his spiritual, eternal life.

**NET Note** - The point of the saying whoever wants to **save his life will lose it** is that if one comes to Jesus then rejection by many will certainly follow. If self-protection is a key motivation, then one will not respond to Jesus and will not be saved. One who is willing to risk rejection will respond and find true life.

**Save** (4982) (**sozo**) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. They fight in vain to keep their life (and all its "goodies"), and to fill the "God shaped" hole in their soul whole by filling their life with pursuits and pleasures of this world which is passing away and even its lusts (1 John 2:17+).

**Life** (**soul**)(5590)(**psuche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. It means the whole person (cf. James 1:21; 5:20).

**Lose** (622)(**apollumi** from **apo** = away from or wholly + **olethros** = state of utter ruin <> **ollumi** = to destroy) means to destroy utterly but not to caused to cease to exist. The ultimate idea is to lose all worth to accomplish anything of eternal value. It describes that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose. Uses in Matthew - Matt. 2:13; Matt. 5:29; Matt. 8:25; Matt. 9:17; Matt. 10:6; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 10:39; Matt. 10:42; Matt. 12:14; Matt. 15:24; Matt. 16:25; Matt. 18:11; Matt. 18:14; Matt. 21:41; Matt. 22:7; Matt. 26:52; Matt. 27:20

The point Jesus is making is if one lives merely for this temporal life, their future life will be lost forever!

**THOUGHT - Jesus is not saying works by us (self-effort) can save** In fact seeking to save yourself by good deeds will result in eternal loss of your soul! So what does Jesus mean? **The only person who would willingly lose his life for Jesus is a person who has been born again by the Spirit of Jesus. He then has the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Who gives him supernatural desire to die to self and his innate selfishness** (e.g., by serving others, giving to others, spending time with Jesus in His Word and prayer, etc). **No man would die to self by himself! In other words the natural tendency of our flesh is to survive and to pamper self. But in our day to day life we encounter many opportunities to die to self interests (enabled by the Spirit) and to put the interests of God and others before our interests. This is absolute antithesis of the way the world works!** The world's motto is "Look out for number one!" Jesus' motto is deny number one! And dying to self and living to God is the only way to a truly happy and fulfilling life in this world and the world to come. Selfless investment in time will yield priceless returns in eternity (cf Lk 19:11-27; Mt. 6:19-21; 19:27-30).

Father, let it be so for all who read these words, that enabled by Thy Spirit, we would daily supernaturally seek to die to self (and selfishness) and live for Christ, for His Kingdom and His glory (and Thy Glory), in His Name. Amen

**William MacDonald** - The natural tendency is to **save** our lives by selfish, complacent, routine, petty existences. We may indulge our pleasures and appetites by basking in comfort, luxury, and ease, by living for the present, by trading our finest talents to the world in exchange for a few years of mock security. But in the very act, we **lose** our lives, that is, we miss the true purpose of **life** and the profound spiritual pleasure that should go with it! On the other hand, we may **lose** our lives for the Savior's sake. Men think us mad if we fling our own selfish ambitions to the wind, if we seek first the **kingdom of God** and His righteousness, if we yield ourselves unreservedly to Him. But this life of abandonment is genuine living. It has a joy, a holy carefreeness, and a deep inward satisfaction that defies description. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Stephen Olford** - Anyone who hoards life selfishly will lose it. Life is like sand: the harder one tries to grasp it, the faster it flows through one's fingers. There must be selfless sacrifice.

**Hiebert** - A man may decide "to save his life," to preserve his personal interests by keeping aloof from Christ and His self-sacrificing demands. The sure result will be that he will "lose his life," more literally, "destroy" it. His self-preserving action will result in the destruction of his higher welfare.

**Wuest** - The "whosoever will come after Me" of verse 34, is in the indicative mode and uses the conditional particle ei (ε). The expression assumes as true that some do desire to come after Jesus. It is, "If, as is the case, anyone is desiring, etc." But the "whosoever will" of this verse is a future unfulfilled hypothetical condition. It is "For whosoever would desire to save his life." The word "life" here is not bios (βίος) referring to one's physical existence and its needs but psuchē (ψυχή), referring to the soul, that part

of man which wills, and thinks, and feels, or in other words, to the will power, the reason, and the emotions, to the personality with all his activities, hopes, and aspirations. That is, the person who desires to so live that these will find self-gratification, will lose that which alone makes the activity of these things, worthwhile and satisfying. God has so created man, that he does not find complete rest and satisfaction until his entire being is swallowed up in the sweet will of God. This is Jesus' teaching here. Our Lord is not here giving the terms upon which God will give salvation, for self-denial never saved a soul from sin. Only Jesus' blood can do that. Jesus is here giving His philosophy of life. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used by [permission](#))

**But** - Term of contrast. This contrast is radical because it is between eternal death and eternal life. Or to state it another way a change of direction in attitude (and actions) marks a change in one's eternal destiny.

**Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it - Loses his life** does not earn or merit salvation. When we believe in Jesus, we in a real sense do lose the old self-life in Adam and are supernaturally transferred from Satan's kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light, from in Adam (old, selfish life) to in Christ (Who becomes our life - Col 3:4).

**Guzik** - We must follow Jesus this way, because it is the only way that we will ever find life. It sounds strange to say, "You will never live until you first walk to your death with Jesus," but that is the idea. You can't gain resurrection life without dying first.. You don't lose a seed when you plant it, though it seems dead and buried. Instead, you set the seed free to be what it was always intended to be.

**For My sake** means simply that we live for Jesus, not for ourselves, His eternal glory, not our fleeting glory! Mk 8:35 adds "and the gospel's." **For My sake** means Because of His Name. Because we openly, proudly "wear" His Name. It will cost! See related passages on for the sake of Jesus and His Name (His Name equates with all that He is, His essence, His attributes, etc)...

Matthew 10:22 "You will be hated by all **because of My name**, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Matthew 19:29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms **for My name's sake**, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

Luke 6:22; 23+ "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, **for the sake of the Son of Man** 23 "Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

John 15:20; 21 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you **for My name's sake**, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

Acts 9:16+ (JESUS SPEAKS OF PAUL) for I will show him how much he must suffer **for My name's sake**."

**Wiersbe** adds that "To lose yourself is not an act of desperation; it is an act of devotion. But we do not stop there: personal devotion should lead to practical duty, the sharing of the Gospel with a lost world. "**For My sake**" could lead to selfish religious isolationism, so it must be balanced with "**and the Gospel's**." (in Mk 8:35) Because we live for Him, we live for others. [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

No other saying of Jesus is given such emphasis as shown by the repetition of this idea in the Gospels. (see Lk 14:26-27; 17:33; Mt 10:38-39; 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Jn 12:25).

Dying to self and living unto God is the very essence of a truly blessed and fulfilling life in this world and that to come.

The Lord is saying that whoever lives only to save his earthly, physical life, his ease and comfort and acceptance by the world, will lose his opportunity for eternal life. But whoever is willing to give up his earthly, worldly life and to suffer and die, if necessary, for Christ's sake, will find eternal life. Every person has a choice. He can "go for it" now and lose it forever; or he can forsake it now and gain it forever.

**Cornerstone Biblical Commentary** on losing temporarily paradoxically means gaining eternally – Perhaps this is what Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, meant when, after a life of tremendous sacrifice, he solemnly declared, "I never made a sacrifice." He had truly lost all for Christ but in return found his all in Christ. Like Paul, he could say, "I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him" (Phil 3:8-9).

**John MacArthur** - The Lord is saying that whoever lives only to save his earthly, physical life, his ease and comfort and acceptance by the world, will lose his opportunity for eternal life. But whoever is willing to give up his earthly, worldly life and to suffer and die, if

necessary, for Christ's sake, will find eternal life. Every person has a choice. He can "go for it" now and lose it forever; or he can forsake it now and gain it forever.

Jesus also identified the false believer who makes initial gestures of following the gospel, but will not let go of the world and all its trinkets, as bad soil full of weeds that choke out true spiritual life (Matt. 13:22).

The true disciple is willing to pay whatever price faithfulness to the Lord requires. The price may mean suffering martyrdom as Paul did or enduring physical exhaustion and illness in Christ's service as Epaphroditus did. Whatever the particulars of a believer's cross-bearing may be, it requires the willingness to abandon safety, security, personal resources, health, friends, job, and even life.

The story is told of a plantation slave in the old South who was always happy and singing. No matter what happened to him, his joy was always abounding. One day his master asked him, "What have you got that makes you so happy?"

The slave replied, "I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He has forgiven my sin and put a song in my heart."

"Well, how do I get what you have?" his master asked.

"You go and put on your best Sunday suit and you come down here and work in the mud with us and you can have it," came the reply.

"I would never do that," the owner retorted indignantly as he rode off in a huff.

Some weeks later, the master asked the same question and was given the same answer. A few weeks later, he came a third time and said, "Now be straight with me. What do I have to do to have what you have?"

"Just what I've told you the other times," came the answer.

In desperation, the owner said, "All right, I'll do it."

"Now you don't have to do it," the slave said. "You only had to be willing."

It is not that a disciple has to be a martyr, but that he is willing to be a martyr if faithfulness to Christ demands it. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

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**David Turner** has an interesting analysis of Mt 16:25-27 - Three reasons support the point in 16:24 about Christlike self-denial. All three focus on the prospect of final judgment, although the first two do so implicitly.

The first is a parallel oxymoron stating that self-preservation in the present life leads to ultimate self-destruction, and self-denial leads to ultimate self-fulfillment (16:25; cf. 10:39). Those who think they may avoid the cross and save their lives will in the end lose their lives, but those who accept the cross will find their lives after all.

The second reason for self-denial speaks of the folly of gaining material wealth in the present life and ultimately losing one's own soul (16:26; cf. 4:8; 6:19-24; Ps. 49:7-9; Eccles. 1:3; Luke 12:13-21; 1 Tim. 6:6-19; Rev. 3:17-18; m. 'Abot 4.17; 2 Bar. 51.15; Sir. 11:18-19; 1 En. 108.10). The implication is that one does not experience true humanness in the present life or find ultimate acceptance with God by acquiring goods but by sacrificing one's own interests while serving others. The stress on self-denial here should be contrasted with its polar opposite, the denial of Jesus, in Matt. 10:33; 26:34-35, 70-75.

The third reason for taking up one's cross is the near prospect of future reward at the glorious return of Jesus with his angels (13:40-41; 24:30-31; 25:31; 26:64; cf. Zech. 14:5). The language of Matt. 16:27b echoes several OT passages, including Pss. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 24:12 (cf. Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12; 22:12; Sir. 35:24; Ps. Sol. 2.16; 17.8-10; T. Job 17.3; L.A.B. 3.10). (BECNT-Mt)

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**J C Ryle** - THE words of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage are peculiarly weighty and solemn. They were spoken to correct the mistaken views of His disciples, as to the nature of His kingdom. But they contain truths of the deepest importance to Christians in every age of the Church. The whole passage is one which should often form the subject of private meditation.

**We learn, for one thing, from these verses, the absolute necessity of self-denial, if we would be Christ's disciples, and be saved.** What saith our Lord? "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Salvation is undoubtedly all of grace. It is offered freely in the Gospel to the chief of sinners, without money and without price. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephes. 2:8, 9.) But all who accept this great salvation, must prove the reality of their faith by carrying the cross after Christ. They must not think to enter heaven without trouble, pain, suffering, and conflict on earth (Acts 14:22). They must be content to take up the cross of doctrine, and the cross of practice,—the cross of holding a faith which the world despises, and the cross of living a life which the world ridicules as too strict and righteous overmuch. They must be willing to crucify the flesh, to mortify the deeds of the body, to fight daily with the devil, to come out from the world, and to lose their lives, if needful, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's.—These are hard sayings, but they admit of no evasion. The words of our Lord are plain and unmistakable. If we will not carry the cross, we shall never wear the crown.

**Let us not be deterred from Christ's service by fear of the cross.** Heavy as that cross may seem, Jesus will give us grace to bear it. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) Thousands and tens of thousands have borne it before us, and have found Christ's yoke easy, and Christ's burden light. No good thing on earth was ever attained without trouble. We cannot surely expect that without trouble we can enter the kingdom of God. Let us go forward boldly, and allow no difficulty to keep us back. The cross by the way is but for a few years. The glory at the end is for evermore.

**Let us often ask ourselves whether our Christianity costs us anything?** Does it entail any sacrifice? Has it the true stamp of heaven? Does it carry with it any cross?—If not, we may well tremble and be afraid. We have everything to learn. A religion which costs nothing, is worth nothing. It will do us no good in the life that now is. It will lead to no salvation in the life to come.

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#### Related Resource:

- [Spiritual Paradox in the Christian Life](#)

Jesus presented to the disciples two approaches to life:

1. deny yourself            live for yourself
  2. take up your cross      ignore the cross
  3. follow Christ            follow the world
  4. lose your life for His sake    save your life for your own sake
  5. forsake the world        gain the world
  6. keep your soul          lose your soul
  7. share His reward and glory    lose His reward and glory
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**ILLUSTRATION** - John Sung, the apostle to China from 1928–1951, lost his faith in an American seminary. His liberal friends, thinking he had lost his mind, had him placed in a mental institution for 193 days. He was very sane, however, and with his brilliant mind he gave himself to unhurried Bible study and declared that the day of his release was his true graduation. Enroute home apart from a trophy kept to please his father Sung threw his academic prizes overboard. He died to the promise of a lucrative academic career and determined to live only for Christ. He had a profound influence on his generation.

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**ILLUSTRATION** On Tuesday April 20, 1999, Cassie Bernal was in the Columbine Colorado high school library reading her Bible when the two students burst in carrying guns. According to one of the witnesses, her friend Josh, one of the killers pointed his gun at Cassie and asked, "Do you believe in God?"

"She paused," Josh stated later, "like she didn't know what she was going to answer, and then she said 'yes.' She must have been scared, but her voice didn't sound shaky. It was strong. Then they asked her why, though they didn't give her a chance to respond. They just blew her away."

Cassie's martyrdom was even more remarkable when you consider that just a few years ago she had dabbled in the occult, including witchcraft. She had embraced the same darkness that drove her killers to such despicable acts. But two years earlier, Cassie dedicated her life to Christ and turned her life around.

According to the Boston Globe, on the night of her death, Cassie's brother Chris found a Scripture she had written out just two days prior to her death. It read:

Now I have given up on everything else—I have found it to be the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought him back to life again, and to find out what it means to suffer and to die with him. So, whatever it takes I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. (Phil 3:10-11TLB)

#### Would you die for Jesus?

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**ILLUSTRATION**: **Dave Earley** writes - "What else is better in this life? I have heard of nothing better." Jim Elliot was a promising student at Wheaton College in Illinois. He was a champion wrestler, honor student, amateur poet, and was warmly admired by students at Wheaton. He dated and married the prettiest girl at the school. He was truly the "big man" on campus.

In his studies, he read the words of Luke 9 and took them seriously. During his senior year, he wrote in his journal these now famous words: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

God called him to take the gospel to an unreached tribe, the Waodomi people, called the Auca or Savage Indians in Ecuador. Elliot wrote, "Glad to get the opportunity to preach the gospel of the matchless grace of our God to stoical, pagan Indians. I only hope that He will let me preach to those who have never heard that name Jesus. What else is better in this life? I have heard of nothing better. 'Lord, send me!'"

Unfortunately, he and his four associates were killed by the warriors before they could share with them. Jim gave up what he could not keep. He gave up his earthly life to gain what he could not lose: eternal life.

Due to the publicity generated by the martyrdom of the missionaries, thousands of other young men and women committed to missions to take their place. Beyond that, the widows of the martyred missionaries went back to that tribe and led those warriors to Christ.

"Jim Elliot did not die in Ecuador." Years later, a young man traveling in Ecuador flew in a small plane over the country. The pilot knew of Jim Elliot's ministry.

"When we fly over the place where Jim Elliot and the others died, show me," the man said to the pilot.

"I can't take you there," replied the pilot.

"Why not?"

"Because Jim Elliot did not die in Ecuador."

Perplexed, the young man remarked, "Yes, I know Jim Elliot died here in Ecuador."

"Jim Elliot's body died in South America," the pilot said, "but Jim Elliot died while a college student at Wheaton College several years before when he yielded his life to God no matter the consequences."

Being a disciple requires that we follow Jesus to the cross. Would you be willing to die for Jesus Christ? Not unless you are living for Jesus right now. ([Disciple Making Is...](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - One hundred and eighty years after the death of Charlemagne, about the year 1000, officials of the Emperor Otho opened the great king's tomb, where in addition to incredible treasures they saw an amazing sight—the skeletal remains of King Charlemagne seated on a throne, his crown still on his skull, a copy of the Gospels lying in his lap with his bony finger resting on the text, "**What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?**" (Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth)

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**ILLUSTRATION OF SAVING ONE'S LIFE BUT LOSING ONE'S SOUL** - The most famous living author of the 1930s was William Somerset Maugham, "Willie." He was an accomplished novelist, playwright, and short story writer. His novel *Of Human Bondage* is a classic. His play *The Constant Wife* has gone through thousands of stagings. He was a man who lived for his own refined tastes, his comfort, and his sexual perversions. In 1965, at the age of ninety-one, he was still a fabulously rich man, although he had not written a word in years. He still received over three hundred fan letters a week.

What had life brought W. Somerset Maugham? The *London Times* carried this excerpt by his nephew, Robin Maugham:

I looked round the drawing room at the immensely valuable furniture and pictures and objects that Willie's success had enabled him to acquire. I remembered that the villa itself, and the wonderful garden I could see through the windows—a fabulous setting on the edge of the Mediterranean—were worth £600,000.

Willie had 11 servants, including his cook, Annette, who was the envy of all the other millionaires on the Riviera. He dined off silver plates, waited on by Marius, his butler, and Henri, his footman. But it no longer meant anything to him.

The following afternoon I found Willie reclining on a sofa, peering through his spectacles at a Bible which had very large print. He looked horribly wizened and his face was grim.

"I've been reading the Bible you gave me... And I've come across the quotation, **What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?** I must tell you, my dear Robin, that the text used to hang opposite my bed when I was a child... Of course, it's all a lot of bunk. But the thought is quite interesting all the same."

Robin Maugham goes on to describe an empty, bitter old man who repeatedly fell into shrieking terrors, crying, "Go away! I'm not ready... I'm not dead yet... I'm not dead yet, I tell you..." He was a man who had gained the whole world and lost his own soul, a



"keeper" who lost. On the other hand, there are "losers" who are the ultimate keepers. (R Kent Hughes - Preaching the Word - Mark, Volume I: Jesus, Servant and Savior)

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"What can a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mk 8:37) The answer is nothing. On April 17, 1998, Linda McCartney, wife of Paul McCartney of the Beatles, died. Newsweek concluded its article on her death by saying, "The McCartney's had all the money in the world.... Enough to afford their privacy. Enough to give them a beautiful view. But all the money in the world wasn't enough to keep her alive" (Giles, "Lady McCartney," 64).

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**ILLUSTRATIONS OF INVESTING ONE'S LIFE** (from [SERMON](#) by Steven Cole) The famous evangelist George Whitefield once told of seeing some criminals riding in a cart on their way to the gallows. They were arguing about who should sit on the right hand of the cart with no more concern than children who are going somewhere with their parents. It seems absurd that men who are about to die would be arguing about who gets the best seat in the cart! Yet isn't that an indictment of us all? We're all about to die! This life is so fleeting and uncertain. Eternity is ahead. Yet we devote ourselves to gaining position and possessions in this world, with no thought of the world to come!

The irony of Jesus' perceptive statement is magnified by the fact that few of us ever come close to gaining the whole world. But even if we could do it, Jesus says, what good is it if we forfeit our own soul? **Alexander the Great** conquered vast territories and even ordered that he be worshiped as god, but he caught a fever and died at age 33. What good did his conquests do him in light of eternity? Just over 50 years ago, **Adolf Hitler** tried to conquer the world, but he ended up committing suicide when his plans failed. Some business tycoons, like **Ted Turner**, reject God and commit themselves to amassing a fortune. He owns more land than almost any other human being. But he soon will die and face God's judgment with nothing to cover his sin.

How much wiser was **Jim Elliot**, who was killed at 28 trying to take the gospel to the fierce Auca tribe in Ecuador. At age 22 he had written in his journal, "**He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose**" (Shadow of the Almighty [Zondervan], p. 15). Two years earlier he had prayed, "**Lord make my way prosperous, not that I achieve high station, but that my life may be an exhibit to the value of knowing God**" (ibid., p. 13).

The Christian life must be lived daily by keeping in view the shortness of this life and the insignificance of the things of this world in light of eternity. When he was just 19, Jonathan Edwards wrote down 34 resolutions that he committed himself to practice for God's glory. Number 9 was, "**To think much, on all occasions, of my dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death**" (The Works of Jonathan Edwards [Banner of Truth], 1:xx). That may strike you as a bit morbid for a young man, but Edwards was seeking to live in the light of eternity. A few months later he wrote, "**I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: Resolved, That I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age**" (ibid., 1:xxii).

To apply this, think about being at the end of your life. None of us knows how long we'll live, but assume that the Lord gives you 80 years. In light of eternity, what would you want to accomplish as you look back on your life from that point? In light of this, write out a purpose statement that sums up what you want God to do through you in the years He gives you. Then write out some specific goals for the coming year in light of that overall purpose. Then, whether you live to be 80 or 40, you won't spend your time trying to gain the world while losing your soul.....

**ILLUSTRATION** In 1777, Dr. William Dodd, a well-known London clergyman, was condemned to be hanged for forgery (the penalties were a bit more severe back then!). When his last sermon, delivered in prison, was published, a friend commented to Samuel Johnson that the effort was far better than he had thought the man capable of. Dr. Johnson's classic reply was, "Depend upon it, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."

If we would keep in mind that life is very short and that eternity is just ahead, it would concentrate our minds wonderfully! Even though it is difficult and painful, we would daily put self on the cross and follow Jesus because we will soon stand before Him on judgment day. Instead of getting caught up with the things of this world, we would live in view of the world to come. The reality of eternity is the motivation for living obediently now, even though it means a slow, painful death to self.

An Italian legend tells about a man who had a servant who was rather stupid. One day the master became exasperated and told the servant, "You're the stupidest fellow I've ever known. I want you to take this staff and carry it with you. If you ever meet a man who is more stupid than you are, give him the staff."

The servant took the staff. He met some pretty dumb men, but he wasn't sure if they were dumber than he was, so he never gave away the staff. Then one day he was called back to the castle. He was ushered into the master's bedroom, where the master was on his deathbed. He told the servant, "I'm going on a long journey." The servant asked, "When will you be back?" The master replied that he would not return.

The servant asked, "Well, sir, have you got everything prepared for your journey?" The master said, "No, I've not really made much preparation for it." The servant asked, "Could you have made preparation? Could you have sent something on?" The master said, "Yes, I guess I had a lifetime to do that, but I was just busy about other things." The servant went on, "Then you won't be back to the castle, to the lands, to the animals?" The master said he wouldn't be back.

The legend says that the servant took the staff which he had carried for all those years and said to the master, "Here, you take the staff. I finally met a man who was more stupid than myself."

We're all going to take that journey. Jesus tells us how to prepare. Trust Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord, denying self even when it's hard. One day you will see Him smile and say, "Well done!" Then it will be worth it all! (from [SERMON](#) by Steven Cole)

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## **Russell Spray - YOU WIN BY LOSING**

Text: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

### **I. Find Faith—Lose Doubts**

"If ye have faith, and doubt not, ... it shall be done" (Matt. 21:21).

- A. Some people are doubters. They doubt God's Word, His creation, His salvation, and even God Himself. Doubters never win.
- B. We should not be naive, nor should we mistrust everyone. Suspicion and doubt are self-destructive.
- C. We must have faith—faith banishes doubt. Faith pleases God and enables us to win others.
- D. We win by losing our doubt. Faith brings the victory (1 John 5:4).

### **II. Find Hope—Lose Despair**

"Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him ..." (Ps. 42:5).

- A. Many people are in despair. They have lost hope. Uncertain riches and sinful pleasures fail to satisfy.
- B. We must hope in God. Helping the needy, comforting the discouraged, and sharing Christ with others helps us lose despair.
- C. We win by losing despair. Hope in God brings the joy of salvation and the assurance of everlasting life (Ps. 51:12).

### **III. Find Love—Lose Discord**

"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

- A. Christians often live in discord. They hold resentment and hostility toward others. Their witness is ineffective.
- B. Love makes the difference. When we are totally committed to God, the Holy Spirit cleanses and fills us with His love.
- C. Love is a built-in psychological need. Everyone needs to love and be loved; therefore, we should reach out in love to work, witness, and win.
- D. We can win by losing. Lose the worst—hatred, misery, strife (Gal. 5:19–21)—and win the best—love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:22–23).

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## **James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - SAVING BY LOSING**

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for My sake, shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

In other words, if we are to save either soul or life we must lose them. What, save my life by losing it! This does, indeed sound strange! Who would have thought this? Every one of the evangelists record this utterance, and this is both a proof of its importance and of the effect it had upon them. Verily, God's way of salvation is altogether different to man's. Here a great principle is enunciated: What I keep I lose; what I lose I retain.

"But how can this be?" you exclaim. We would like to associate John 12:24 with this Scripture: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Here is a farmer who has a good store of precious grain. He desires to save it, but in order to save it he must lose it. What the farmer sows he keeps; what he keeps in his barn deteriorates by keeping, or is eaten by vermin. If a corn of wheat be not cast into the ground it will for a time abide alone, and then presently cease to exist. The only way of saving the corn of wheat is by losing it. As in the vegetable world, so in the moral and spiritual world. In Luke 17:33 our Lord applies this principle to the subject of our salvation, and in Matt. 10:39 to the subject of Christian service.

I. To Save my Soul I Must Lose It. No one seems to know where the word "soul" came from. Some think it to be an Icelandic word for the sea, meaning that, like the sea, it is mighty, mysterious, unfathomable, and perhaps, billowy. Others say it is from the verb "to see," suggesting that it is the part of our being that thinks, reasons, loves. The soul is that immortal and eternal part of my being; it is "my think;" it is myself.

In the old days of the pirates, when pursued by those sea-pests, to save gold, silver, and valuables, the captain and passengers threw them overboard, where they would be able to find them again; they lost them in order to save them. In times of danger, precious treasures are deposited in banks, and diamonds in transit are put into the captain's care for safety; lost, in order to be saved. Friend, have you yet discovered that you possess a Jewel of immense value? That jewel is your soul. Many treat their souls as the people of the transvaal formerly treated diamonds, when, not knowing their value, they gave them to their children to play with, and even built them into the mud walls of their farmsteads. The soul is a precious jewel, indeed, and for safety must be lost in God. As the farmer, in order to save his corn, commits it to the keeping of God by placing it in the earth, so we, in order to save our souls, must in the words of Peter, "Commit the keeping of their souls to Him as unto a faithful Creator."

Of course we commit our souls to God, not to be lost in Him in the sense that the Buddhists and Pantheists believe, viz., to be entirely absorbed in Deity, for we ever retain our personality and identity.

Many things lost are never found; not so with our souls. But they are not found as they were lost. The lost seed is found in a glorious harvest. This is also true in respect to our bodies. If the Lord tarries, we may have to lose them in the grave, but on the Resurrection morn we shall have a glorious find (see 1 Cor. 15:42-44). But quite as great a change now takes place in the soul hidden in God. Pearls, when they have lost their lustre, regain their brilliancy by being buried in the sea. When we are hidden in God, the lustre of whiteness and purity is regained, by His grace.

II. To Save my Life I Must Lose It. There is the dread possibility of a saved soul and a lost life. That was the case with the dying thief—his soul was saved, but his life had been wasted in the service of sin, and was therefore irretrievably lost. What a grand thing it is for young lives to surrender to the Lord Jesus, and to be lived in His blessed service for His glory! Yet many who turn to the Lord in their youth lose their lives because that, though their souls are saved, their lives have not been fully yielded up to God. Do you know the difference between a piece of coal and a costly diamond? The latter receives the light and then gives it forth, whereas the former takes in and absorbs all the light, and gives none. Our Lord said that John was a "burning and a shining light." We cannot shine without burning, that is, without losing. Samson's wife, in order to save herself and family from burning, betrayed her husband, but the very evil she wished to avoid overtook her. And so, in His application of this principle to service, the Lord, in effect says: "If to follow Me seems to you, as it is, very dangerous, and you decide in order to save your life, not to deny self and take up the Cross and follow Me, the very evil you wish to avoid will overtake you."

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## Willing To Jump

Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. —Luke 9:24

Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin spoke of communists as "dead men on furlough." Those dedicated followers of the atheistic philosophy were willing to die for the cause, and each new day was simply a reprieve.

If people were willing to risk everything for a cause based on a lie, how much more should we who know Christ be willing to do so for the truth! Jesus told those who wanted to be His disciples that they had to be willing to follow Him to death. It was to be a commitment of their entire life, no matter what the cost.

In his book *One Crowded Hour*, Tim Bowden describes an incident in Borneo in 1964. Nepalese fighters known as Gurkhas were asked if they would be willing to jump from airplanes into combat against the Indonesians. The Gurkhas didn't clearly understand what was involved, but they bravely said they would do it, asking only that the plane fly slowly over a swampy area and no higher than 100 feet. When they were told that the parachutes would not have time to open at that height, the Gurkhas replied, "Oh, you didn't mention parachutes before!"

Jesus calls us to follow Him with a similar kind of commitment and courage, willing to risk all for His sake. By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Halfhearted! Master, shall any who know Thee  
Grudge Thee their lives, who hast laid down Thine own?  
Nay! We would offer the hearts that we owe Thee,  
Live for Thy love and Thy glory alone.  
—Havergal

We may not walk to the martyr's stake,  
but we must walk in the Master's steps.

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## A Life That Satisfies

Whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. —Mark 8:35

In his book *Facing Loneliness*, J. Oswald Sanders writes, "The round of pleasure or the amassing of wealth are but vain attempts to escape from the persistent ache. . . . The millionaire is usually a lonely man, and the comedian is often more unhappy than his audience."

Sanders goes on to emphasize that being successful often fails to produce satisfaction. Then he refers to Henry Martyn, a distinguished scholar, as an example of what he is talking about.

Martyn, a Cambridge University student, was honored at only 20 years of age for his achievements in mathematics. In fact, he was given the highest recognition possible in that field. And yet he felt an emptiness inside. He said that instead of finding fulfillment in his achievements, he had "only grasped a shadow."

After evaluating his life's goals, Martyn sailed to India as a missionary at the age of 24. When he arrived, he prayed, "Lord, let me burn out for You." In the next 7 years that preceded his death, he translated the New Testament into three difficult Eastern languages. These notable achievements were certainly not passing "shadows."

Real fulfillment comes in following Christ. A life lived fully for the Lord is a life that truly satisfies. By Richard DeHaan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we commit ourselves to Christ  
And follow in His way,  
He'll give us life that satisfies  
With purpose for each day.  
—Sper

A fulfilled life is a life full of love for the Lord and others.

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## **Risky Business**

Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. —Luke 9:24

As the worldwide financial crisis deepened in 2010, executives of a global banking firm were investigated for deceiving their customers about the risk involved in certain investments they were selling. While promising a high rate of return, the banking firm knew that the investments were destined to fail, leaving those who purchased them with nothing.

Deception is nothing new. Jesus described Satan as one who "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him . . . for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). The enemy of our souls tells us, "Live only for the present," when he knows it will result in our eternal loss.

Jesus, on the other hand, did not offer His disciples a life of prosperity and ease but called them to self-sacrifice and identification with Him. After telling them that He would be killed and raised from the dead, Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

There are two voices telling us where to invest our lives. It's risky business to follow the wrong one. -- David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you hear the Shepherd's voice  
As He calls you, "Come to Me,"  
In your life make Him your choice  
And His faithful follower be.  
—Hess

If we hold on to God's truth, we won't be trapped by Satan's lies.

**Matthew 16:26 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

- **what** is: Mt 5:29 Job 2:4 Mk 8:36 Lu 9:25

- **gain:** Mt 4:8,9 Job 27:8 Lu 12:20 16:25
- **or:** Ps 49:7,8 Mk 8:37
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Mark 8:36-37+ "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Luke 9:25+ . "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"

Luke 12:19; 20+ 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

Luke 16:19-23+ "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20"And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23"In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

## THE VANITY OF WORLDLY WEALTH

**For (gar) - [Term of explanation](#)** - Jesus continues to explain the value of His command to **follow** Him (discipleship) by explaining the priceless value of losing one's life versus the incredible loss of trying to save it. If our goal is to gain the whole world, we are clearly not going to be individuals who deny our selfish desires and take up our cross because the cross speaks of death to self and those selfish desires (which we all have because we all have the fallen flesh we must battle daily, a battle Jesus called for in Lk 9:23+). Hiebert adds that **for** "elucidates by contrasting the higher life with the world, all that it stands for as estranged from God."

**William MacDonald** - As the Savior talked with the twelve, He realized that the desire for material riches might be a powerful deterrent against full surrender. And so He said, in effect, "Suppose you could stockpile all the gold and silver in **the whole world**, could own all the real estate and property, all the stocks and bonds—everything of material value—and suppose that in your frantic effort to acquire all this you missed the true purpose of life, what good would it do you? You would have it for only a short while; then you would leave it forever. It would be an insane bargain to sell that one, short life for a few toys of dust." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?** There may be short term, temporal "profit," but long term, eternal loss! A financial adviser would call this a very bad "investment!"

**Utley** on "IF" - This IF is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant probable future action. Some do gain worldly things but forfeit spiritual, eternal things.

**Profit** (5623) ([opheleo](#) from [ophéllō](#) = heap up or from [ophelos](#) = increase, profit) means to provide assistance, with emphasis upon the resulting benefit. It is used usually with the sense of gain, profit in both a material and non-material sense.

**Gains** (wins) (2770) ([kerdaino](#) from [kerdos](#) = gain) means literally to procure an advantage or profit, to acquire by effort or investment (as in the parable of the talents Mt 25:16,17, 20, 22; James 4:13 = "make a profit"). The synoptic Gospels use [kerdaino](#) to emphasize the tragic state of a man who **"gains"** the whole world (Mt 16:26, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:25), this use speaking literally of money, possessions, investments, etc, but also figuratively of the position, power, acclaim, etc ("boastful pride of life" 1 Jn 2:16). The Spirit must consider this truth of great importance, to reiterate it in all three Gospels! Note also that **world** in each of these three passages is **kosmos**.

**World** (2889) ([kosmos](#)) refers to the world system of evil of which Satan is the head, all unsaved people his servants, together with the pursuits, pleasure, purposes, people, and places where God is not wanted. **Kosmos** defines the world not as a neutral influence but as an "evil force", the inveterate, incorrigible, intractable, intransigent, irrevocable enemy of God and of every believer. This begs the question "Why would any believer ever desire to befriend or be friends with such a 'ferocious' foe?" **Bishop Trench** summarizes the

definition of the **kosmos**, the anti-God world system as "All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale."

**Forfeits** (2210)(**zemioo** from **zemia**) means to affect with damage or to do damage to, to suffer injury, to suffer loss, to sustain damage, to forfeit or to fine. It means to experience the loss of something, with implication of undergoing hardship or suffering. **Zemioo** was a business term meaning to "punish by exacting a forfeit" (Vincent). **A T Robertson** writes that **zemioo** "occurs in the sense of being fined or mulcted (penalized by fining or demanding forfeiture) of money. **Marvin Vincent** agrees noting that **zemioo** was "Often in the classics, of fining or mulcting in a sum of money.

**Hiebert** - The thought is presented under a commercial metaphor, and the question implies that there is not profit in the suggested transaction. The present gain is pictured in its highest form, "gain the whole world," a clear impossibility for any individual. But granting the impossible, if a man should accomplish it and thereby forfeit his life, what is the profit in it? The argument is valid whether life be taken in its lower or higher meaning.

**Guzik** - What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Avoiding the walk down death row with Jesus means that we may gain the whole world, and end up losing everything. Jesus Himself had the opportunity to gain all the world by worshipping Satan (Luke 4:5-8), but found life and victory in obedience instead (Ed: Obedience is a reflection of one's faith. No obedience, no faith in Jesus and His Gospel). Amazingly, the people who live this way before Jesus are the (only) ones who are really, genuinely happy (blessed). Giving our lives to Jesus all the way, and living as an others-centered person does not take away from our lives, it adds to it. (Enduring Word Commentary)

**Wuest** - On the other hand, while self-denial will not save a person in the sense of making him a child of God, yet, lack of self-denial, together with self-satisfaction will result in his going into eternity, a lost sinner. "World" here is kosmos (κοσμος), and refers to the world system of evil of which Satan is the head, all unsaved people his servants, together with the pursuits, pleasure, purposes, people, and places where God is not wanted. The word "lose" is zemioō (ζεμιοω) "to sustain damage, to receive injury, to suffer loss." ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**D L Moody** - As you love your soul, beware of the world; it has slain its thousands and ten thousands. What ruined Lot's wife? The world. What ruined Judas? The world. What ruined Simon Magus? The world. And "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

**Henry Morris** - gain the whole world. This is a remarkable profit and loss statement! The Greek word for "soul" is psuche, from which we have our English word "psychology," meaning "study of the soul." Although it can also mean "life," depending on context, the emphasis and comparison here seems clearly to refer to one's eternal soul. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**J C Ryle** - THE words of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage are peculiarly weighty and solemn. They were spoken to correct the mistaken views of His disciples, as to the nature of His kingdom. But they contain truths of the deepest importance to Christians in every age of the Church. The whole passage is one which should often form the subject of private meditation.

**We learn, for another thing, from these verses, the unspeakable value of the soul.** What saith our Lord? "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" These words were meant to stir us up to exertion and self-denial. They ought to ring in our ears like a trumpet, every morning when we rise from our beds, and every night when we lie down. May they be deeply graven in our memories, and never effaced by the devil and the world!

We have all souls that will live for evermore. Whether we know it or not, we all carry about with us something which will live on when our bodies are mouldering in the grave. We have all souls, for which we shall have to give account to God. It is an awful thought, when we consider how little attention most men give to anything except this world. But it is true.

Any man may lose his own soul. He cannot save it: Christ alone can do that. But he can lose it, and that in many different ways. He may murder it, by loving sin and cleaving to the world.—He may poison it by choosing a religion of lies, and believing man-made superstitions.—He may starve it, by neglecting all means of grace, and refusing to receive into his heart the Gospel.—Many are the ways that lead to the pit. Whatever way a man takes, he, and he alone, is accountable for it. Weak, corrupt, fallen, impotent as human nature is, man has a mighty power of destroying, ruining, and losing his own soul.

**The whole world cannot make up to a man the loss of his soul. The possession of all the treasures that the world contains, would not compensate for eternal ruin.** They would not satisfy us, and make us happy while we had them. They could only be enjoyed for a few years, at best, and must then be left for evermore. Of all unprofitable and foolish bargains that man can make, the worst is that of giving up his soul's salvation for the sake of this present world. It is a bargain of which thousands, like Esau, who

sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, have repented,—but many, unhappily, like Esau, have repented too late.

**Let these sayings of our Lord sink deep into our hearts. Words are inadequate to express their importance.**

- May we remember them in the hour of temptation, when the soul seems a small and unimportant thing, and the world seems very bright and great.
- May we remember them in the hour of persecution, when we are tried by the fear of man, and half inclined to forsake Christ.
- In hours like these, let us call to mind this mighty question of our Lord, and repeat it to ourselves, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

No man can by any means redeem his brother Or give to God a ransom for him— (49:8) For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever (Psalm 49:7-8<sup>+</sup>)

**Spurgeon** - With all their riches, the whole of them put together could not rescue a comrade from the chill grasp of death. They boast of what they will do with us, let them see to themselves. **Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave.** The poor are their equals in this respect; let them love their friend ever so dearly, they cannot give to God a ransom for him. A king's ransom would be of no avail, a Monte Rosa of rubies, an America of silver, a world of gold, a sun of diamonds, would all be utterly [contemned](#). O ye boasters, think not to terrify us with your worthless wealth, go ye and intimidate death before ye threaten men in whom is immortality and life. **For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.** Too great is the price, the purchase is hopeless. For ever must the attempt to redeem a soul with money remain a failure. Death comes and wealth cannot bribe him; hell follows and no golden key can unlock its dungeon. Vain, then, are your threatenings, ye possessors of the yellow clay; your childish toys are despised by men who estimate the value of possessions by the shekel of the sanctuary.

**Or what will a man give in exchange ([antallagma](#)) for his soul? ([psuche](#))** The answer is that a sinner can give no payment for his soul, "For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever." (Ps 49:8) He is a debtor "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 6:23+). There is only one acceptable payment and it is the precious blood of Jesus Christ which alone provides full, forever atonement for all of a man's sins. The price is higher than any human being can pay, but it was paid by Christ. No sinner could atone for the sins of fellow sinners, so Christ the perfect One paid the price of divine justice and bore the sins of the whole world. The death of Christ then was not only an act of grace, it was an act of justice.

for this is **My blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. (Mt 26:28)

Knowing that you were not redeemed with **perishable things like silver or gold** from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with **precious blood**, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, **the blood of Christ**. (1 Peter 1:18-19<sup>+</sup>)

REDEEMED-how I love to proclaim it!

REDEEMED by the blood of the Lamb;

REDEEMED through His infinite mercy-

His CHILD, and forever I am.

-Fanny Crosby

In Him **we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7<sup>+</sup>)

**A T Robertson** - The soul has no market price, though the devil thinks so. "A man must give, surrender, his life, and nothing less to God; no [antallagma] is possible" (McNeile).

**Utley** - Life selfishly lived ends in death, but life given away for Christ's sake results in eternal life. Believers are responsible stewards of the gift of physical life and spiritual life!

**Exchange** (465) ([antallagma](#) from **anti** = over against + **allasso** = to change) is a noun describing that which is given in exchange or equivalent, substitute. "That which is given in place of another thing by way of exchange; what is given either in order to keep or to acquire anything":(Thayer) The only other use is in Mt 16:26 ""For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" **Broadus** says "The noun [antallagma](#) denotes that which by exchange takes the place of something else, whether as substitute (Ecclus 6:15; 26:14), or as a ransom (Isa. 43:3); here it is more generally a purchasing equivalent."

**Barclay - Antallagma** is an interesting word. In the book of Ecclesiasticus we read: "There is no antallagma for a faithful friend," and, "There is no antallagma for a disciplined soul" (Ecclesiasticus 6:15; 26:14). It means that there is no price which will buy a faithful friend or a disciplined soul. So then this final saying of Jesus can mean two things.

(a) It can mean: Once a man has lost his real life, because of his desire for security and for material things, there is no price that he can pay to get it back again. He has done something to himself which cannot ever be fully obliterated.

(b) It can mean: A man owes himself and everything else to Jesus Christ; and there is nothing that a man can give to Christ in place of his life. It is quite possible for a man to try to give his money to Christ and to withhold his life. It is still more possible for a man to give lip-service to Christ and to withhold his life. Many a person gives his weekly freewill offering to the Church, but does not attend; obviously that does not satisfy the demands of church membership. The only possible gift to the Church is ourselves; and the only possible gift to Christ is our whole life. There is no substitute for it. Nothing less will do.

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## The Treasure Myth

Read: Psalm 37:7-20

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul. —Mark 8:36

When the great ocean liner Titanic sank in 1912, it was rumored to have gone down with a fortune in jewels and gold. That longstanding myth was dispelled, however, by the discovery of the ship's manifest, which showed that the ship was carrying raw feathers, linen, straw, hatter's fur, tissue, auto parts, leather, rabbit hair, elastics, hair nets, and refrigerating equipment.

There is another persistent rumor about riches. It is widely believed that a wealthy person should be honored and valued, even though he may be ungodly. On the other hand, a godly, self-disciplined person is considered by some to be of little worth if he is not wealthy.

David, the author of Psalm 37, cautioned the poor and needy not to be envious of the rich and prosperous. In time, the cargo manifest of the ungodly will be uncovered, revealing that their lives contain nothing of enduring value.

This life is only the beginning of an everlasting existence. So don't look longingly at the ungodly and their riches. They have no lasting treasures. Instead, be like those who wait with patience for their eternal God (vv.7,9)—no matter what their economic situation may be. They alone know where to find real treasure. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Some people think they have it all  
When riches come their way;  
But their great loss will be revealed  
On God's accounting day.  
—Bosch

It's better to be poor and walk by faith than to be rich and walk by sight.

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**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (1906-1945) understood what the normal Christian life should look like. The way may be hard, but the path and the end are glorious.

The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.... But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. Jesus' summons to the rich young man was calling him to die, because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life. The call to discipleship, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ means both death and life. (Bonhoeffer, *Cost*, 99) (Quoted by Daniel Akin in Christ-Centered Exposition – Exalting Jesus in Mark)

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## Burris Butler - Is It Worth the Cost? Matthew 16:26.

### Introduction

**ILLUSTRATION:** Farmer insisted that tenant divide hay crop without supervision: "If you want to go to hell for a few bales of hay, I'll furnish the hay."

1. You laugh at that fellow for selling out cheap.
  2. Yet Jesus said the man who gains the whole world at the loss of his own soul loses in the end.
- I. Some Have Tried to Gain the World as Their Own, but All Have Failed.
- A. Many have attempted world conquest.
    1. Pharaoh.
    2. Belshazzar.
    3. Alexander the Great.
    4. The Caesars.
    5. Charlemagne.
    6. Napoleon.
    7. Mussolini.
    8. Hitler.
  - B. The ambitions of most people are smaller than world conquest.
  - C. Most ambitions run toward definite ends.
- II. What Does It Profit If You Fulfill Your Ambition and Lose Your Soul Doing It?
- A. World of wealth.
  - B. World of success in business.
  - C. World of pleasure.
  - D. World of romance.
  - E. World of political power.
    1. ILLUSTRATION: "Rather be right than be president." Henry Clay.
    2. Poem: "God, Give Us Men."
  - F. World of sinful indulgence.
- III. What Horrible Thing Must I Do to Be Lost?
- A. Neglect. (Hebrews 2:3)
  - B. Reject. (John 3:36)
- IV. What Has It Cost to Save Your Soul?
- A. It cost God His Son.
  - B. It cost Christ His life by a shameful death on the cross.
  - C. It cost the blood of the martyrs.
  - D. It cost a faithful line of missionaries and ministers their life's devotion.
- V. What Will It Cost You?
- A. Denying self.
  - B. Bearing your cross.
  - C. Following Christ.
  - D. Believing, repenting, obeying.

### Conclusion

Is it worth the cost to follow Christ? Ask Nero ... or Paul.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Adrian Rogers tells this story about Ernest Hemingway - Ernest Hemingway was a remarkable man. He won a Pulitzer Prize. He won a Nobel Prize. He was a young reporter—already a news reporter—when World War I began. And, he went to the front and was wounded in Italy. He came back and had an exciting life as a big game hunter. He was a bullfighter. He was a sports fisherman, who would fish for marlin. And, when World War II came, he didn't want to be left out, so he took his fishing boat

and rigged it with two 50-caliber machine guns, bazookas, hand grenades, and would cruise off the coast of Cuba, hoping that a German U-boat would surface. If he could see the conning tower or the periscope, or if he could see the water breaking over that steel skin of that U-boat, he would move toward it, expecting them to surface and get a boarding party to come and board his ship. And, he would remain about 50 yards away. And, when it would come up, and they would open the tower and come out on the deck, then he would increase speed and move toward them with machine guns firing, hoping to lob a grenade down the conning tower into the U-boat and to sink it. A daring man! He was in an airplane accident. He was hit by a taxi. He had all kinds of escapades. He was wounded in war. He lived in France. He lived in Italy. He lived in Cuba. He lived in Key West. He lived in Idaho. He was a man that did everything. But, he abused himself with alcohol and became just a slave to alcohol. He went through four marriages. He said, finally, at the end of all of this, thinking of his life—this great novelist, this great author—he said, "It seems that we are ants"—a-n-t-s—"ants on the end of a burning log." Do you know how he ended it all? With a shotgun to his head. Ernest Hemmingway—he did so much, seeking, everywhere, adventure. You talk about a man who had a full life and an empty life at the same time! His life was filled with futility—no purpose. "We're like ants—ants on the end of a burning log." An empty life.

**ILLUSTRATION** - Bob Hope was one of the most beloved comedians in American history. He had everything ([just glance at his home which sold for \\$13 million](#)). He had the **world**, but the question is did he have Jesus as His Savior? You be the judge - Here are two distinctly different critiques of his life to help you decide (and of course you and I are NOT the final judge - that right is God's alone!) - (1) [Stories of Faith: Bob Hope Finds Real Hope in Jesus](#) (2) [The Death of Bob Hope - R L Hymers](#) Finally see [this article in Wikipedia](#) regarding Hope's lifestyle. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?

**Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS."**

- **the Son:** Mt 24:30 25:31 26:64 Mk 8:38 14:62 Lu 9:26 21:27 22:69
- **with:** Mt 13:41,49 Da 7:10 Zec 14:5 2Th 1:7-10 Jude 1:14
- **and then:** Mt 10:41,42 Job 34:11 Ps 62:12 Pr 24:12 Isa 3:10,11 Jer 17:10 Jer 32:19 Eze 7:27 Ro 2:6 1Co 8:8 2Co 5:10 Eph 6:8 1Pe 1:17 Rev 2:23 22:12-15
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 24:30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Psalms 28:4 Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; Requite them according to the deeds of their hands; Repay them their recompense.

Ps 62:12 And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12 If you say, "See, we did not know this," Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?

Romans 2:6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: (Quoting Pr 24:12)

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

2 Corinthians 5:9; 10 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Jeremiah 17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

### PAYDAY AT THE PAROUSIA

The Greek word [parousia](#) is a combination of two Greek words **para** = with, alongside + **ousia** = being (**ousia** is the participial form of the verb **eimi** = to be) which together literally mean to be alongside. **Parousia** then literally means a being beside or a presence.

The word denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with. So one day in His presence there will be a payday for every soul of man. **Robert Lee** a well known pastor in the past had a famous sermon "[Payday, Someday](#)" Every soul will receive appropriate "payment!"

**For** - Term of explanation. Jesus has just talked about the futility of earthly profit and now explains why it is meaningless in eternity.

As [Broadus](#) says "We see that this great balancing of accounts is not a mere figure of speech, but will actually occur."

**The Son of Man is going (present tense) to come (present tense)** - This coming payday is certain, the verb **going** (mello) means it is at the point of coming, and even conveys a sense of imminence. This of course is clearly a prophecy of Jesus' Second Coming. [Broadus](#) adds that going to come is "not the mere future tense (KJV has "shall come"), but a strong expression like **'is going to come,' 'is about to come,'** and in the Greek made emphatic by its position at the head of the sentence (**going** - mello is first word in Greek); He is coming, and there is no mistake about it. This is believed to be the first distinct intimation of his Second Coming."

**In the glory of His Father with His angels (aggelos/angelos)** - This is the same glory that surrounds His Father. [Broadus](#) adds that "This **glory** he had with his Father before the world was (John 17:5); he had voluntarily left it to come on his present lowly mission (Phil. 2:6 ff.), but he would return to share it again, and in that glory he would hereafter come."

**With His angels** - First notice Who is "Owner" of these angels. Their accompanying Jesus is mentioned several times in Matthew Mt 13:41 describing their role in "harvesting" souls of unbelievers and Mt 24:31 describing their role is "harvesting" souls of believers. Mt 25:31 describes His return to judge the sheep and the goats.

**William MacDonald** has a good exhortation - The only way to have a successful life is to project oneself forward to that glorious time, decide what will really be important then, and then go after that with all one's strength. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**and WILL THEN REPAY (apodidomi) EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS (praxis)** - In simple terms Jesus is declaring that there will be a day of judgment for every one, no exceptions. John 5:22 says "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son." Jesus went on in John to describe a division of His judgment declaring "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (Jn 5:28-29) Paul adds "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God." (Ro 14:12+). **Deeds** (see [praxis below](#)) refers to the action, practice, course of life as in Col. 3:9+ "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil **practices (praxis).**"

**Utley** - This judgment of **deeds** is seen in Job 34:11; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-6; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12. Our life shows our allegiance! I John and James assert that how we live gives evidence of the validity of our profession of faith. No root—no fruit!

**John MacArthur** - As the Lord reviews the life of each person who has ever lived, He will say, as it were, "There is a believer. I can tell by his works, because they are the product of My Holy Spirit. There is an unbeliever, as I can also tell by his works, because they are the product of the flesh." It is not that works save, but that they are the product of salvation. James teaches that the only kind of faith that saves is the kind that results in righteous behavior (James 2:14-26+; cf. Eph. 2:10+). Those whose works are pleasing to the Lord are those who, by God's sovereign grace and power, have trusted in Christ as saving Lord, while denying self, taking up their crosses, and following Him. They will receive everlasting life and all the blessings of heaven. Those whose works are rejected by the Lord are those who put their hope and trust in the ephemeral things of this life. They will receive eternal damnation and all the torments of hell. The call to salvation is a call to discipleship as described in this passage. When God saves, He produces this kind of follower. (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

Jesus has much to say about **rewards** in Matthew - see Mt 5:12, Mt 6:2, 4, Mt 10:41, Mt 16:27, Mt 19:29, Mt 20:15, Mt 25:34.

**Broadus** - The fact of this coming retribution shows the importance of saving the soul; but there is special reference to the thought of reward for doing and suffering in his service (Mt 16:24f.). Mark 8:38+ and Luke 9:26+, give the additional point that when he comes he will be ashamed of every one that has been ashamed of him. Matthew has before recorded this thought as uttered on a different occasion (Mt 10:33+), and so he omits it here.

**Barton** - Jesus Christ will judge each person's life. As we are reviewed and evaluated for how we utilized the resources God has given us, we will be rewarded. This is not something we can earn, but a by-product of faithful obedience. (Borrow [Life Application Commentary](#))

**Albert Barnes - Reward** - The word "reward" means recompense. He will deal with them according to their character. The righteous he will reward in heaven with glory and happiness. The wicked he will send to hell, as a reward or recompense for their evil works. This fact, that he will come to judgment, he gives as a reason why we should be willing to deny ourselves and follow him. Even though it should be now attended with contempt and suffering, yet then he will reward his followers for all their shame and sorrow,

and receive them to his kingdom. He adds [Mark 8:38](#), that if we are ashamed of him here, he will be ashamed of us there. That is, if we reject and disown him here, he will reject and disown us there.

**Carson** - "Not only Jesus' example, but the judgment he will exercise is an incentive to take up one's cross and follow him."

**Repay** (reward, sold) (591)(**apodidomi** from **apó** = from + **didomi** = give and so to "give off" from one's self) literally means to give back, then to put away by giving and then in a more figurative sense to pay back or recompense.

**Deeds** (practices) (4234)(**praxis** from **prasso** = to practice) is an act, deed or practice. In the plural, **praxis** refers to one's acts or works and by extension to one's conduct. **Praxis** has the basic meaning of a doing of something, i.e., a deed.

**J C Ryle** - Let us learn, in the last place, that the second coming of Christ is the time when His people shall receive their rewards. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." There is deep wisdom in this saying of our Lord's, when viewed in connection with the preceding verses. He knows the heart of a man. He knows how soon we are ready to be cast down, and like Israel of old to be "discouraged by the way." (Num. 21:4.) He therefore holds out to us a gracious promise. He reminds us that He has yet to come a second time, as surely as He came the first time. He tells us that this is the time when His disciples shall receive their good things. There will be glory, honor, and reward in abundance one day for all who have served and loved Jesus. But it is to be in the dispensation of the second advent, and not of the first. The bitter must come before the sweet, the cross before the crown. The first advent is the dispensation of the crucifixion. The second advent is the dispensation of the kingdom. We must submit to take part with our Lord in His humiliation, if we mean ever to share in his glory. And now let us not leave these verses without serious self-inquiry as to the matters which they contain. We have heard of the necessity of taking up the cross, and denying ourselves. Have we taken it up, and are we carrying it daily?—We have heard of the value of the soul. Do we live as if we believed it?—We have heard of Christ's second advent. Do we look forward to it with hope and joy?—Happy is that man who can give a satisfactory answer to these questions.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the purpose of there being rewards in heaven? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Does God reward us for being obedient to His Word? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Matthew 16:28** "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

- **there are some of those:** Mk 9:1 Lu 9:27
- **taste:** Lu 2:26 Joh 8:52 Heb 2:9
- **see:** Mt 10:23 24:3,27-31,42 26:64 Mk 13:26 Lu 18:8 21:27,28
- **Matthew 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Mark 9:1-2+ And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 2 Six days later, Jesus \*took with Him Peter and James and John, and \*brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them

### A "TASTE" OF HIS GLORY BEFORE TASTING DEATH

**Truly** - **amen**. Only Jesus used this word to preface His statements. It serves as a strong affirmation of the veracity of His following statement. **Broadus** notes that **amen** 'as in Mt 5:18, introducing a very important utterance. His coming will occur before some of those present will die."

**I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not(ou me = strong double negative) taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom** - Compare this with the next words in Mt 17:1-8 (which I interpret to be a poor chapter break) which describes a "preview" (if you will) of the glory of the Son of Man when He returns in the future at His Second Coming.

**Ryrie on they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom** - This was fulfilled when the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8), which was, in miniature, a preview of the kingdom, with the Lord appearing in a state of glory (Dan. 7:9-14). (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Gregg Allen** - The simplest way to understand this verse, then, is as a promise from the Lord Jesus to His disciples of that remarkable event that Matthew tells us about next. Some of the disciples standing there—three of them, to be precise—would be taken aside and be given a private glimpse of the glory of the One who was calling them to follow Him by way of the cross. They would be given a vision of His kingly majesty before they themselves left this earth; so that they could testify to His glory as eye-witnesses; and could then pass on the assurance of His kingly reign to those of us who would yet live, and who would also hear His call to "follow" and lay down our lives for Him. As it turns out, this promise from our Lord was fulfilled only six days after it was given—and the "preview" of the majestic glory of King Jesus, in which He will one day come to this earth and reign, was granted to witnesses who would then pass it on to us.

**William MacDonald** - The problem, of course, is that those disciples have all died, yet Christ has not come in power and glory to set up His kingdom. The problem is solved if we disregard the chapter break and consider the first eight verses of the next chapter as an explanation of His enigmatic statement. These verses describe the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration. There Peter, James, and John saw Christ transfigured. They were actually privileged to have a preview of Christ in the glory of His kingdom. We are justified in viewing Christ's transfiguration as a prepicture of His coming kingdom. Peter describes the event as "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16). The power and coming of the Lord Jesus refer to His Second Advent. And John speaks of the Mount experience as the time when "... we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Christ's First Coming was in humiliation; it is His Second Coming that will be in glory. Thus, the prediction of verse 28 was fulfilled on the Mount; Peter, James, and John saw the Son of Man, no longer as the humble Nazarene, but as the glorified King. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Henry Morris** - not taste of death. The disciples were to see Him "coming," not actually reigning, in His kingdom. This clearly referred to the remarkable vision which three of His disciples were about to see on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Morris** - coming in his kingdom. Peter confirms that they saw the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ, and were "eyewitnesses of his majesty...when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18). (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

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**Question - [Was Jesus' statement to the disciples in Luke 9:27 \(also Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1\) incorrect?](#)**

**Answer** - Luke 9:27 says, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God." See also Matthew 16:28 and Mark 9:1 for the parallel quotes. In each of the synoptic Gospels, the next event immediately after this promise from Jesus is the transfiguration. Rather than interpreting Jesus' promise as referring to His coming to establish His kingdom on earth, the context indicates that Jesus was referring to the transfiguration. The Greek word translated "kingdom" can also be translated "royal splendor," meaning that the three disciples standing there would see Christ as He really is—the King of heaven—which occurred in the transfiguration.

The "transfiguration" refers to the event described in the above cited passages when Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of the mountain, where He met with Moses and Elijah—representing the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament—and spoke with them. The disciples saw Jesus in all His glory and splendor, talking with a glorified Moses and Elijah. This is a glimpse of what will occur in Jesus' kingdom. The disciples were dumbstruck at the sight and "fell on their faces" (Matthew 17:6).

It seems most natural to interpret this promise in Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; and Luke 9:27 as a reference to the transfiguration, which "some" of the disciples would witness only six days later, exactly as Jesus predicted. In each Gospel, the very next passage after this promise from Jesus is the transfiguration, which shows Jesus in all His glory which will be seen again in the Kingdom of God. The contextual links make it very likely that this is the proper interpretation. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Norman Geisler - MATTHEW 16:28—Did Jesus make a mistake about His disciples seeing the kingdom come in their lifetimes?**

**PROBLEM:** Jesus told His disciples that some of them would not see death until they saw Him coming in His kingdom. Yet during the life of the apostles, Jesus never returned to set up His kingdom.

**SOLUTION:** This is a question of when this was going to take place, not whether it would. There are three possible solutions.

First, some have suggested that this may be a reference to the Day of Pentecost where Christ's Helper, the Holy Spirit, came to descend upon the apostles. In John's Gospel (14:26), Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, and, in the beginning of Acts (1:4–8),

He tells them not to leave Jerusalem until they have received the Holy Spirit. But this hardly seems to fit the description of seeing Christ coming in His kingdom (Matt. 16:28).

Second, others believe this might be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. This would mean that He would return to bring judgment upon the city that rejected Him and crucified Him. While this is a possible explanation, it does not seem to account for the fact that Jesus appears to be coming for believers (those “standing there” with Him), not simply coming in judgment on unbelievers. Nor does the judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70 adequately express seeing the “Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (v. 28), a phrase reminiscent of His second coming (cf. 26:64). Nor does it explain why Jesus never appeared in A.D. 70.

A third and more plausible explanation is that this is a reference to the appearance of Christ in His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration which begins in the very next verse (17:1). Here Christ does literally appear in a glorified form, and some of His apostles are there to witness the occasion, namely Peter, James, and John. This transfiguration experience, of course, was only a foretaste of His Second Coming when all believers will see Him come in power and great glory (cf. Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). (See page 297 [When Critics Ask](#))