

## **Dr. David Turner, Matthew**

### **Lecture 7B – Matthew 16: Jesus, the Church, and the Cross-Shaped Life**

Greetings, everyone, this is David Turner again. This is lecture 7b, Christ, the Church, and the Way of Discipleship in Matthew chapter 16. This is a great chapter, and many exegetical and theological issues come up in it, as well as just expository questions.

So, we've chosen, as you can see on page 32 of your supplemental materials, to divide our lecture into two parts. First, an exposition of the chapter includes some expository thoughts. Then we will, in the second half, focus on a few of the exegetical and theological questions which are really big issues there.

So first we look at the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16, 1-12. This passage certainly does not present the disciples at one of their better moments. Although they have affirmed that they understand Jesus' parabolic teaching about the kingdom back in 13, 51, and 52, their thinking here certainly doesn't manifest kingdom values.

They forget Jesus' recent warning about the blindness of the Pharisees in 15:13, and 14, not to mention the two astounding examples of his ability to provide food in a miraculous fashion for the feeding of the 4,000 and the 5,000 in chapters 14 and 15. Their first memory lapse desensitizes them to the danger posed by the Pharisees and Sadducees, so they don't pick up on Jesus' metaphor about yeast. Since the spiritual conflict between Jesus' kingdom and the Jewish leaders does not loom large in their thinking at this time, they're primarily occupied with temporal matters like bread, and they commit the second lapse.

Since they've somehow forgotten to bring bread, they freely yet mistakenly associate Jesus' yeast metaphor with their own empty stomachs rather than with the growing controversy with the Jewish leaders, 15:1 to 14, and the mortal danger those leaders pose to Jesus. Check out chapter 12, verse 14 on that. Once again, Jesus patiently yet firmly deals with the little faith of the disciples.

When he realizes that they have misunderstood his yeast metaphor, he improves their understanding by prodding their memory. If they recall how he twice miraculously fed thousands of people with more left over than he had to start with, they'll realize that food is not the problem. Rather, they must be occupied with the message of the kingdom, which is being increasingly and more and more intensively opposed.

They need to watch out for the teaching of the Jewish leaders. If they do that, the food problem will take care of itself. This rebuke of the disciples is appropriate for disciples of Jesus today, whose preoccupation with temporal and material concerns renders them dull and forgetful of eternal kingdom values.

Today, as then, disciples need to have their memories of God's faithful, even miraculous, provision for their needs refreshed. Such a reminder, coupled with a renewed awareness of the spiritual battle being waged against the kingdom, 11:12, should sharpen the mental and spiritual focus of God's people. And now we move to Peter's Messianic Confession in 16:13 to 20.

This is certainly one of the most important passages in the Gospel of Matthew for its Christology and its view of the church. So we can only briefly comment on an expository manner here at this point, and we'll deal, as you can see in your outline, the bottom half of page 32 quite a bit with this section in the second half of the lecture. But just to lay out the passage for you, you'll notice in 16:13 that Jesus asks the disciples his first question, which they give an answer to in 16:14.

Then he asks another question, 16:15, which they answer in 16:16. The major part of the passage is Jesus' response to that second question in verses 17 through 19. This is the passage where we have the controversy over Peter being the rock of the church.

And this is the passage where the matter of the keys of the kingdom are mentioned. And many books have been written about this, and much ink has been spilled. I'll give you my quick version of it afterwards.

So, after getting the disciples' rendition of the popular view of who Jesus was, the word on the street, so to speak, in verses 13 and 14, Jesus asked them their view. And we find that in verses 15 through 19. After they give their view and they get it right this time, which is always good because in verses 1 through 12 of chapter 16, the disciples are not at their best, but by God's grace, they get it right in verses 15 through 19.

So, we're glad about that. But following that, Jesus warns them that they shouldn't tell anyone he was the Messiah. So, we're back into the messianic secret motif one more time.

We've seen this before in Matthew. It would seem to me that the reason for this is the tendency of the people of that day to want a Messiah who was a political, social, revolutionary type of character who would get the Romans off their backs and solve all their problems overnight. Jesus was not that kind of person, and the central passage on that, of course, is the quotation of Isaiah 42 in Matthew 12, where that's

made abundantly clear that he's not the type to go shout in the street to develop a mob to follow him.

I think that's what's going on there in 16:20. With the increasing opposition of the Jewish leaders, Jesus does not want to stir up the enemy or excite the rabble before the time when he goes to Jerusalem. Now we move on to Jesus' prediction of his death and his teaching of the disciples in 16:21-28.

Matthew 16:21 is indisputably a crucial text in Matthew's narrative. In one view of the structure of Matthew, 16:21 begins the third major section of Matthew with this phrase from then on. This is the view of Kingsbury and David Bower's monograph.

That threefold view of Matthew's structure has not been followed in this commentary, but nonetheless, Matthew 16 remains the first time in Matthew where Jesus unambiguously announces his death and resurrection to his disciples. In other words, this is the first clear passion prediction in Matthew. The rest of Matthew's narrative from chapters 16-28 is encapsulated here.

Just about everything that's going to happen in the rest of the book is laid out in a sort of thumbnail sketch in 16:21. This announcement immediately elicits a strong disagreement from Peter, who despite his previous stirring confession in 16:16, could not be more wrong in 16:22. Peter is rebuked in 16:23 just as strongly as he is blessed in 16:17, because his words in 16:16 were revealed by God to him, and his words in 16:22 were strictly human, if not demonic, in origin.

In 16:24 and following, Jesus turns from Peter, always the model disciple, to address the disciples as a whole with the message of the cross before the crown, suffering before glory, service before reign. Peter has given voice to a way of thinking which evidently was pervasive among the disciples, and all of them must be shown their fundamental error. Well, some summary thoughts on Matthew 16 before we move on to exegetical and theological issues.

Earlier in Matthew, confrontations with the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders occur as they respond to the word and works of Jesus, such passages as 3:7, 9:3, 11:34, 12:2, 10: and 14:24-38. As things proceed, however, the disciples begin to seek Jesus out in order to initiate confrontation. Did I say the disciples begin to seek him out? I meant to say the Pharisees begin to seek Jesus out in order to initiate confrontation.

Look at passages like 15:1, 16:1, 19:3, 21:23, 22:23, and 22:34. The second request for a sign in 16:1-4, compare that with 12:38, necessitates Jesus warning the disciples to beware of their teaching, 16:5-12. This leads to what is perhaps the most crucial pericope in this gospel, where Jesus receives Peter's representative confession of his messiahship and promises to build and empower his church, in 16:13-20.

At this crucial juncture, Jesus clearly announces his death and resurrection for the first time, and then he points his disciples to a self-denying lifestyle which will be rewarded when he comes again in 16:21-30. This chapter continues to underline the theme of opposition from the Pharisees, but now for the first time Jesus clearly tells the disciples that the opposition will lead to his death, 16:21. Once again, the little faith of the disciples is confronted as Jesus prepares them to carry on the kingdom message and mission in his absence, 16:8.

In spite of their weakness, they have received the father's revelation that Jesus is the messiah and they will become the foundation of the messianic community which Jesus will build, 16:16-18. Their future will be tied to that of Jesus. They will likewise bear a cross on their way to future glorious reward, 16:24-28.

All right, now we move on to the exegetical and theological issues we've selected for discussion in Matthew 16. First, we want to just deal with the exegesis of this crucial passage, 16:13-20. In 16:13, and 14, Jesus travels to Caesarea Philippi at the headwaters of the Jordan River, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

As noted previously, it's unclear exactly where he was when he began this trip. Jesus' first query of the disciples concerns the popular consensus about his identity. The answers they give reveal something of the messianic speculation which existed in the first century.

Herod Antipas had already superstitiously identified Jesus with John the Baptist, raised from the dead. The view that Jesus was Elijah was evidently based on Malachi 4:5, which speaks of God sending Elijah before the eschatological day of the Lord. The speculation that Jesus was Jeremiah or another of the prophets is harder to explain.

Perhaps the association of Jesus with Jeremiah is due to Jeremiah's preaching of judgment and opposition to the temple leaders of his own day. There's also an indication that Deuteronomy 18:15-18 was understood messianically by some Jews in Jesus' day. All in all, these views of Jesus are positive, but they prove to be inadequate.

The crowd may view Jesus as a prophetic messenger of God, but as the ensuing narrative sadly shows, their understanding is extremely superficial and fickle. In 16:15-17, Jesus' second query probes the disciples' understanding of his identity. This implies that Peter answers for the group in 16:16, and that Jesus speaks to Peter as spokesman for the group in 16:17-19.

Peter's remarkable answer links Jesus' messiahship with his divine sonship. The likely Old Testament background for the linkage of the terms messiah and son of God is found in 2 Samuel 7:14, 1 Chronicles 17:13, Psalms 2:6-8, and verse 12, and also

Psalms 89:27 and following. When Peter answers in this fashion, Jesus pronounces him blessed.

Peter's awareness of Jesus' true identity in the context of confusion among many Jews is not due to any special brilliance on Peter's part, but due to God's special revelation to him. It's ironic that Peter describes Jesus as the son of the living God, since later in Jerusalem, the high priest demands to know in the name of the living God whether Jesus is the messiah, the son of God. The high priest's question thus reprises the main themes of Peter's confession.

If Peter's faithful confession is the Christological high point of the gospel, the high priest's angry question is certainly the low point. The expression the living God implicitly distances the true God of Israel from the false gods of the nations. Now in 16:18-20, Jesus' response to Peter's resounding confession continues with the pronouncement of Peter's foundational authority in the church, which Jesus will build.

The word church occurs only twice in the gospels, here and in Matthew 18:18. Though many Protestants think otherwise, it seems to me, and we'll discuss this more in a moment, Jesus plays on the name of Peter in order to speak of Peter as spokesman for the disciples, as foundation of the growing church, the church which is about to be born. Much like Paul speaks of the apostles as the foundation of the church in Ephesians 2:20, and John's picture of the New Jerusalem puts the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve gates into the city and puts the twelve apostles as the twelve foundations of the city, Revelation 21:14.

Taking Peter as in some sense the rock is the more natural understanding of Jesus' words, and this is much to be preferred over reactionary views which take the rock to be Jesus or Peter's confession of Jesus. Jesus promises that the church he will build on the foundation of the apostles will not be destroyed by the evil powers arrayed against it. The gates of Hades probably refers to the domain of Satan and death, similar to the gates of Sheol in Isaiah 38:10.

Jesus' linkage of the church and the keys of the kingdom in 16:18-19 indicates that the church is the agency of kingdom authority on the earth. Keys seem to symbolize authority, Isaiah 22:22 is a key passage, and the authority concerns forbidding and permitting, in other words, binding and loosing. An action which is forbidden is described by the rabbis as being bound, an action which is permitted is described as being loosed.

This language is highly unique and controversial. It's debated whether this language refers to evangelism, exegetical or doctrinal pronouncements, that is, official teaching, or church discipline. It's also hard to determine whether Jesus promises

that the church's decisions will be ratified in heaven or that heaven's decision will be ratified by the church.

At any rate, Peter binds or forbids, and he loses or permits, as he, with the other disciples, proves true to the confession he made moments earlier. After this remarkable revelatory moment, it is striking that Jesus forbids the disciples to make him known as the Messiah. Jesus evidently does this in order to lessen the excitement of the crowds who tended to view the Messiah as a merely political figure.

This may also be due to the increasing opposition of the Jewish leaders to the principle of God's sovereignty. Now, some of the exegetical issues with the issue of the rock in 16:18. Through the centuries, there has been a great deal of discussion about Matthew 16:18.

In response to Roman Catholic teaching about Peter as the first pope and an apostolic succession of popes from Peter, Protestants have often argued that Jesus did not mean that Peter was the rock. Instead, it has been suggested that Jesus was speaking of himself, commentators like Lenski, or he was referring to Peter's confession, McNeill's commentary, as the foundation of the church. More recently, Gundry's commentary argues that 16:18 alludes to 7:24 and that Jesus means he will build the church on his own words.

But 7:24 is so far removed from 16:18 that such an allusion is awfully subtle. It's sometimes argued that Peter cannot be in view since the Greek word for Peter, *petras*, is masculine and the Greek word for rock, *petra*, is feminine. But this is a metaphor, and grammatical agreement and precision are not necessary.

It's also argued that since *petra* means bedrock and *petras* means individual stone, Peter is not the foundation of the church. But again, this is an overly subtle lexical distinction, and it would render any sort of metaphorical speech, which involves comparison, impossible. You don't have to have an identity in order to have a comparison.

All you have to have is a similarity. It seems to me that Jesus is just as clearly speaking of Peter in 16:18 as Peter was speaking of Jesus in 16:16. Now the metaphor of a foundation may refer in various contexts to such entities as Jesus' teaching, 7:24, Jesus himself, 1 Corinthians 3.10, and repentance, Hebrews 6.10. The individual context is decisive in coming to a decision about the entity to which the metaphor points.

In this context, Jesus' reply to Peter's confession is a pun. The technical term for that is *paronomasia*. It's a pun on the nickname he has just given Peter, 4:18, and 10:2.

The pun concerns Peter's unique role as the model disciple whose words and deeds frequently represent the disciples as a whole in Matthew.

Peter's future role as preacher to Jews and Gentiles in Acts 2 and 10 is also projected here. Jesus is not speaking of himself as the foundation of the church here, since he describes himself as the builder. Neither is Peter's apostolic confession the foundation of the church.

Rather, he as the confessing apostle is that foundation. And it's not Peter alone that's the foundation, but Peter as first among equals, the other disciples, since the context makes it clear that Peter is speaking for the apostles as a whole in 16:16. This best fits the Matthaean context, and it also coheres with other New Testament texts which speak of an apostolic foundation for the church, texts such as Ephesians 2.20 and Revelation 21.14. The Baptist commentator Broadus way back in 1886 recognized this, check out his commentary, and recent evangelical commentaries concur with this view, Blomberg, Carson, France, Hagner.

The real difficulty Protestants have with Roman Catholic teaching concerning Peter is the notion of a sole apostolic succession emanating from Peter as the first bishop of Rome. This notion clearly injects anachronistic political concerns into the text of Matthew, which says nothing about Peter being the first pope or of the primacy of the Rome over the other Christian churches. Certainly Matthew would not have endorsed the idea of Peter's infallibility or sole authority in the church, since it's often quite clear in Matthew that Peter speaks as a representative of the other apostles and often makes mistakes.

Look at such passages as 15:15, 16:6, 17:4, 25, 18:21, 19:27, 26:33-35, and also Acts 11:1-18, and Galatians 2:11-14. In Peter's own words, Jesus himself was the chief shepherd of the church, that is to say the senior pastor, the Pontifex Maximus. Look at 1 Peter 5:4. Now the matter of the keys and the binding and loosing in 16:19. As noted above, Jesus speaks of Peter as both foundation of the church and as holder of the keys of the kingdom. The linkage of the foundation and the key metaphors makes it clear that one cannot divorce the church and the kingdom, but that the former, the church, is the agency by which the latter, the kingdom, is extended on earth.

The foundational ecclesiastical role of Peter and the other apostles is carried out through their handling of the keys, which is their exercise of kingdom authority. Look at Isaiah 22:15 and 22, and other passages on keys such as Revelation 1:18, 3:7, 9:1-6, and 20:1-3. This authority is exercised through binding and loosing. Scholars differ in their explanations of binding and loosing.

Some stress the idea that keys are a metaphor of authority over who enters the church. Thus, the apostles, through their confession of Jesus, control who is

permitted to enter and who is forbidden entrance. Others compare 16:19 to 18:18 and posit discipline within the church as the area of the authority described as binding and loosing.

In Rabbinic Judaism, the motif of binding or loosing was often applied to careful interpretation of biblical law in areas of personal conduct, the so-called halakha. The rabbis rendered authoritative opinions on what was permitted in conduct and what was forbidden as they exegeted the Torah. It's not easy to decide which of the above interpretations is correct.

Interpreting 16:16 along the lines of 18:18 is problematic because the context of Matthew 18 concerns maintenance of the community, not entrance into it. Further, the binding and loosing in 18:18 is a function of the community. Notice it is the church to which that promise is given, not the apostles.

The problem with interpreting the binding and loosing in terms of the rabbinic usage is that the rabbinic usage is much later by a couple of hundred years, probably at least than Matthew, and it occurs in a different religious context. Matthew's imagery in 16:16 through 19 concerns the building of the church and entrance into it by those who, with Peter and the apostles, confess Jesus as Messiah, Son of God. The apostles, therefore, are in a real sense the gatekeepers of the kingdom, since they are the foundational leaders of the church, the agency of which extends the kingdom on earth.

Their role is to continue the authoritative proclamation of the truth of Matthew 16:16 and in so doing they permit those who confess Jesus to enter the church and through it the kingdom. Those who refuse to confess Jesus find the door locked closed and locked. They are forbidden entrance.

Hagner has a good discussion of this in his commentary. Now we move on to Matthew 16:24 and 25 where there is a crucial lesson for the disciples to learn. Peter's shockingly swift decline from blessed confessor to rebuked adversary in these verses ought to speak loudly to every disciple of Jesus.

For just a moment, Peter's mindset becomes positively satanic since he seeks to dissuade Jesus from following the Father's will. Remember the temptation of Satan back in chapter 4, particularly verses 8 and 9? He promised Jesus a kingdom without a cross, essentially. All these things I will give to you if you'll just fall down and worship me. So, what Jesus was experiencing from Peter, though Peter certainly didn't intend for it to be that way, was much like what he experienced from Satan.

Peter evidently only heard that Jesus would be killed. The words about Jesus' resurrection didn't register with Peter at all, evidently. And so, it is with disciples

today who all too often do not grasp that their present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to come at Jesus' return.

16:27, compare Romans 8:18. The desire of disciples for a comfortable lifestyle and the avoidance of suffering is a hindrance to the kingdom which can only be overcome by divine grace. Look at 19:23-26. Even those who have seemingly overcome the lure of self-aggrandizement and who have followed Jesus still need periodic reorientation to the values of the kingdom, as did the sons of Zebedee and their mother. 20:20-28. The values and models of the rulers of this world always threaten to infiltrate the kingdom, and Jesus' disciples need to constantly reflect on his counsel that among you it will be different.

20:25-26. This is the lesson Jesus taught to his disciples after Peter's lapse in 16:22. You see, Peter speaks for the disciples as a whole when he confesses Jesus earlier in the chapter, and Peter probably speaks for the disciples as a whole in this second half. So, when he is right he is first among equals, and when he is wrong he is first among equals. But Jesus then teaches all the disciples.

Notice 16:24 makes it clear that Jesus is speaking to the whole group, not just to Peter. So, Peter's lapse is an occasion for the rest of the disciples to be taught as well. It's not that glory and reward do not await faithful disciples.

That's clear here and in 19:27-29. But that glory and reward can only be attained after a life of self-denying service, which follows in the steps that Jesus has modeled all the way to the cross. A crucial lesson indeed. Now, finally, in Matthew 16 we need to briefly discuss what Jesus was speaking of when he referred to his coming.

In 16:27 Jesus promises his disciples that their lives of self-denial will be rewarded when he returns in his Father's glory with his angels. This is a clear reference to the coming of Jesus to the earth and the final judgment. 13:40-41, 24:30-31, 25:31, 26:64. But 16:28 is a bit perplexing because it seems to emphasize the certainty of that glorious coming by stating that some of Jesus' contemporaries will live to see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

All of Jesus' disciples died long ago. So, either Jesus and Matthew were wrong, as liberal commentators like Baer will tell you, or the so-called coming spoken of here is something other than that which ushers in the final judgment. Evangelical scholars understandably take the second option and suggest that Jesus was speaking of either his transfiguration, Bromberg suggests that, his resurrection, his sending the Spirit at Pentecost, or the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Some attempt to see 16:28 as a generic prediction of Christ's future glory up to his return to earth, encompassing the resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and the present heavenly session. Carson, France, Hendrickson, and Morris all make good

arguments for that view. Although this last view has some merit, it seems to me that the first is most likely.

Jesus is speaking of his transfiguration as a glorious coming. Seen in the light of 16:28, the transfiguration, which occurred only six days later, according to 17:1, amounts to a foreshadowing of the future glorious coming of Jesus. Perhaps Keener, in his commentary, is correct in saying that the transfiguration proleptically introduces the whole eschatological sphere.

No doubt the transfiguration was a glorious experience, 17:2 and 5, but it was only temporary and could serve only as a preview of what was to come with permanence at Jesus' future return to the earth. And some of those who heard Jesus make the prediction in 16:28, namely Peter, James, and John, did witness the transfiguration, according to 17:1. Peter himself seems to reflect on his participation in the temporary glory of the transfiguration as a confirming anticipation of the truth of Christ's powerful future coming to earth in 2 Peter 1:16-18, a previous text which presents similar difficulties as 10:23. In the commentary on 10:23 and our early lecture on it, it is argued that this passage states that the mission of the church to Israel will continue until Jesus' glorious return to the earth. Well, there you have a shot at some of the issues in Matthew 16, certainly a very important, challenging, and spiritually uplifting chapter.

Jesus Christ will build his church despite faulty folks like us and Peter in it.