

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written
for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MATTHEW 16²

The Demand for a Sign

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus[a] they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' 3 And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.[b] 4 An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

5 When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 Jesus said to them, "Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 7 They said to one another, "It is because we have brought no bread." 8 And becoming aware of it, Jesus said, "You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread? 9 Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many baskets you gathered? 11 How could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" 12 Then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,[c] the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter,[d] and on this rock[e] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was[f] the Messiah.[g]

¹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

² All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance[h] to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

The Cross and Self-Denial

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Footnotes

16.1 Gk *him*

16.3 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) lack *When it is . . . of the times*

16.16 Or *the Christ*

16.18 Gk *Petros*

16.18 Gk *petra*

16.20 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add *Jesus*

16.20 Or *the Christ*

16.23 Or *stumbling block*

GOSPEL COMPARISON³

Pericope ⁴	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
The Pharisees Seek a Sign	8:11-13	16:1-4 12:38-39	11:16 11:29 12:54-56	
The Leaven (Yeast) of the Pharisees	8:14-21	16:5-12	12:1	
Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi	8:27-30	16:13-20	9:18-21	6:67-71
Jesus Foretells His Passion	8:31-33	16:21-23	9:22	
"If Any Man would Come after Me"	8:34-9:1	16:24-28	9:23-27	12:25

³ Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

⁴ An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, "a book of pericopes"

PERSPECTIVE

16:1-4 The Demand for a Sign

The Pharisees and Sadducees represent a cross-party delegation from Jerusalem sent to examine Jesus. They are aligned against Jesus and seek a “sign” from God. For the reader the request seems ludicrous given the healings, feedings and nature miracles that have preceded, and is a symptom of their acute spiritual blindness.

The word miracle can be referred to as *acts of power* (Gk: “dunameis”), *wonders* (Gk: “terata”) or signs (Gk: semeia”) in the NT⁵. Thus, what the Pharisees and Sadducees are demanding is a “sign” or miracle from God before their eyes, on demand.

For the faith that holds the soul also rules one’s perceptions. It is vain to think that hardened hearts will be melted by demonstrations of power. In Matthew’s gospel, miracles, while certainly pointers to God’s presence in Jesus, are always therapeutic or salvific; their object is not convincing sceptics to believe (13:56).⁶ The chief point is that seeing is not believing. Rather one does not see until one believes.⁷

Jesus response is that God will not be put on display, nor will he compel people to believe. The resurrection of Jesus, the sign of Jonah, will be the sign that this generation will receive. Matthew is saying that seeing is not believing. One does not see until one believes.⁸

“Sign of the times” (v. 3) only appears here in the NT, and it does not refer to the future but to the present. It implies that the Pharisees have all the signs they need if they would accept what they have seen and heard.⁹ Their request is rejected by Jesus, he abandons them, and the next stage of the gospel begins.¹⁰

Reflection: The Pharisees and Scribes do not see evidence of God’s authority and power in Jesus actions and the world around them. Jesus says no sign will be given in response to the request. Jesus points them to the sign of Jonah, which could be his death and three days later being raised by God, as the ultimate sign of who he is and God’s role in his story. But they will reject that sign as well. In Matthew, faith does not follow miracle, faith enables one to see and receive miracle.

16:5-12 The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

Three themes dominate the Matthew text: Jesus as a provider of physical needs, Jesus as an instructor of the disciples, and the Jewish leaders as teachers of dangerous error, ie one must take care not to be fooled or misled by the Pharisees and the Sadducees.¹¹ (See Appendix Two for Hebrew Bible sources of Matthean Themes p. 10)

There is a tension in Matthew of Jesus’ views of the Jewish elites¹²:

(16:6, 12) 6 Jesus said to them, “Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”... he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

(23:2-3) “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’s seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it, but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.”

⁵ The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA and “A Theological Word Book of the Bible”, Alan Richardson, 2012

⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

⁸ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

⁹ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

¹⁰ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

¹¹ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

¹² Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

The disciples should listen when what is said is grounded in the authoritative oracles of the OT and is true. Jesus followers must also take heed, for these same leaders' opposition to Jesus means that much of what they teach is false.¹³

The difference between Mark and Matthew's versions of the pericope is that in Mark the disciples are stubbornly unable to understand, whereas in Matthew they initially misunderstand, but understand it eventually.¹⁴

Reflection: Jesus is conflicted on the Scribes and the Pharisees. In chapter 16 he teaches to beware of their teaching and in Chapter 23 he teaches to do what they teach, but not what they do. In addition, their opposition to Jesus tells you they are not in alignment with God. Matthew emphasizes that understanding and faith are integrally entwined and related. (See Appendix One for expanded background on Understanding In Matthew's theology P.9.)

16:13-20 Peter's Declaration about Jesus, and Jesus' declaration about Peter

In Matthew, two things happen in this pericope: Peter answers Jesus' question about his identity by saying Jesus is the Messiah the Son of the living God; and unique to Matthew, Jesus then declares that this insight is from God, and that Peter will be the rock/foundation on which Jesus' ecclesia will be built. The primary purpose of this unique passage is to record the establishment of a new community, one which will acknowledge Jesus' true identity and thereby become the focus of God's activity in history.¹⁵ (See Appendix Three for Peter in Matthew pp. 11-12)

Jesus' identity (16:13-16):

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (16:16). This major theme has its roots in Davidic messianism, above all in Nathan's famous oracle to David (2 Sam 7:12-16).¹⁶ The oracle was believed before Matthew's time to refer to Salomon and a future eschatological king. Matthew now asserts its fulfillment in Jesus.¹⁷

Messiah denoted a human being anointed by God to deliver the people of Israel from foreign domination, restore the temple, and enact justice in the land. Matthew's definition of Messiah, as amended by the words "Son of the living God", plays a central role in Jesus identity since his birth and baptism (facts the reader knows in Matthew, but the disciples may not). "Living God" is a powerful reminder that the God Jesus is connected to is not a philosophical abstraction but the dynamic God of Israel's faith and history.¹⁸ Jesus congratulates Peter on his exceptional insight and acknowledges that this insight is from God (16:17).

Peter's future role (16:17-19):

Jesus' reaction to Peter's proclamation is to announce over Peter a beatitude. He utters three sentences each consisting of three parts, a statement of theme and an antithetical couplet.

1. Interprets the confession as an eschatological secret revealed through divine agency (16:17).
2. Concerns Peter and the ecclesia, the end-time community, the counterpart of the Sinai congregation, which in Deuteronomy is also called an ecclesia (16:18).
3. Peter is given the keys to the kingdom and has the authority to bind and loose. He is a supreme rabbi who is given teaching authority and whose decisions stand (16:19).¹⁹

¹³ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

¹⁴ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

¹⁵ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

¹⁶ 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. 15 But I will not take[b] my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;[c] your throne shall be established forever." 17 In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. (2 Sam 7:12-16)

¹⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

¹⁸ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

¹⁹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

Jesus giving Simon the name Peter and Jesus declaring on this rock, *petra*, he would build his *ecclesia*. The name *Petros* in Greek, or *Kepha* in Aramaic is otherwise unknown as a personal name in the ancient world. Which makes it likely that Jesus chose it for Simon with a view of its literal meaning. Jesus is choosing a rock to build his church on.²⁰

16:18 is one of the most controversial passages in Matthew and the NT. Jesus' revelation that Peter will be the foundation of the new temple Jesus intends to build does not mean that Peter is the first holder of an office that the later Roman church will interpret as the pontificate. But he is more than a representative disciple as many Protestants maintain. Rather he is a man with a unique role in salvation history: his faith, like that of Abraham, is the means by which God brings a new people into being.²¹

There are many arguments over how to interpret this passage and name:

- The Roman Catholic Church interpreted the passage to base the primacy of Peter as the first pope of Rome and the subsequent source of authority for all later popes.
- Another view is that the foundation rock is not Peter himself, but the faith he has in Jesus as the Messiah which he just declared.
- Another view is that the foundational rock is Jesus himself (1 Cor 3:10-11) where Christ is the foundation and Paul's apostolic work the superstructure.

In Matthew, the assertion seems to be limited to Peter himself, in his historical role, who is the foundation rock of the Jesus movement after Jesus' death and resurrection.²²

Ecclesia in the OT was a common Greek term for an assembly of people (political, social, cultural, and religious). In a Jewish context it would be heard as echoing the LXX term for the "assembly" of the people of God, which denotes the national community of the people of Israel.²³ Jesus speaks with incredible boldness of "*my ecclesia*" the Greek word drawing attention to the word "my". The phrase encapsulates that paradoxical combination of continuity and discontinuity which runs throughout the NT's understanding of Jesus and his church in relation to Israel. Whereas the word in the OT denoted the people of Israel as God's chosen people, the coming of Israel's messiah will cause the assembly to be reconstituted, and the focus of the identity will not be the nation of Israel but the Messiah himself, it is *his* assembly. *Ecclesia* never denotes a physical structure in the NT, but always a community of people. The new temple is not a building of literal stones but consists of living stones (1 Peter 2:5).²⁴

"The gates of Hades" is a metaphor for death and implies that the community Jesus is building will never be destroyed. (v. 18)²⁵

The keys show Peter to be a steward in the kingdom of heaven. He has authority over the community and is responsible until the master (Jesus) returns. "Tying up" and "untying" speak of Peter's administrative authority. The same commission is given to all of the disciples in 18:18. Peter, however, remains a first among equals.²⁶ Jesus' demand for secrecy is unlike in his healing miracles. Here the demand is to protect his identity as the Messiah.²⁷

Reflection: The question still matters. "Who do you say I am?" Peter's response as a divine inspiration tells us that Jesus confounded human understanding. Jesus seems to be confirming, to paraphrase the movie *Jaws* "We are going to need a bigger definition of Messiah"²⁸. He also immediately calls for the establishment of "*my ecclesia*", what Paul will call the *Body of Christ*. People who follow Jesus and are in community of believers. So the chapter has called for an expanded understanding of who Jesus is, and the organization and caring for a community to follow him in the world.

²⁰ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²¹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor*, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

²² France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²³ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²⁴ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²⁵ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²⁶ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²⁷ France, R. T., *The Gospel of Matthew* pp. 603-641

²⁸ Spielberg, Steven, *Jaws*, 1975 "You're gonna need a bigger boat," Chief Brody (Roy Scheider).

16:21-23 Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

This pericope, and v 21-23, form the central turning point in Matthew as it did in Mark. They are located in the north outside of Jewish territory, and from here Jesus will turn south to head toward Jerusalem.²⁹

Jesus will go on to predict his death and resurrection three times in Matthew: (Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 8:31–32, and Luke 9:21–22); (Matthew 17:22–23, Mark 9:30–32, and Luke 9:43–45); and (Matthew 20:17–19, Mark 10:32–34, and Luke 18:31–34). This is the first time.

Jesus has the prophetic foresight to see the future including his own death. Peter now falls from the heights of insight to the depths of misunderstanding by disagreeing with Jesus on his prophecy. Peter does not recognize the necessity of messianic suffering. Jesus rebukes him in the strongest terms and shows that the Messiah goes to his death as a free man: he in fact chooses his own destiny.³⁰

The paradoxical declaration is that the Messiah will be met with rejection, suffering, death and raising by God sets the tone for this section of Matthew. With Peter's objection, Jesus is able to discuss the contrast between God's thoughts" and "human thoughts".³¹

The rejection and death of the Messiah are presented as necessary. The necessity will be explained in Chapter 20 as the suffering servant. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) The opposition location is Jerusalem, and the specific opponents will be the Sanhedrin (the chief priests, elders, and scribes). This outcome is presented as divine "necessity" as a result of his mission. Moreover all three predictions of Jesus death are followed by the contrasting predication that he will be raised on the third day. Matthew uses the Greek word *egeiromai* to refer to Jesus resurrection as being *raised* rather than the more active *anistemi* for *rise*. This passive word reinforces the message that God will vindicate Jesus.³²

The disciples responses is twofold: they seem to focus on the suffering and death of Jesus; and they do not seem to understand the idea of individual resurrection by God.³³

v.22 Peter's statement "*God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.*" expresses the horror all of the disciples may have felt at Jesus' predicting of his suffering and death. Moreover this is not what they expect of a Messiah. Peter reveals that Jesus prediction is something to be avoided at all costs, and the very idea of a Messiah being killed is unthinkable.³⁴

v. 23 "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance[h] to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.*" There is no parallel to Jesus response to Peter. It is a remarkable public reproach. For Peter to be referred as Satan means Jesus believes that the ideas that Peter is saying reflect the evil one. Jesus strongly disabuses Peter of his opinion and explains the differences between the thoughts of God and humanity.³⁵

Reflection: Messiah is redefined again. The prediction of rejection, death and being raised is a huge change that will be repeated three times. Just as we needed a bigger definition of Messiah, we now need to recognize and understand that death and resurrection are foretold. The Messiah goes to his death as a free man, who chooses his own destiny. Peter's rejection of this prediction leads Jesus to explain the difference between human thoughts and God's and to reject Satan's influence on his plans.

²⁹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³⁰ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 864-866

³¹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³² France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³³ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³⁴ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³⁵ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

16:24-28 The Cross and Self-Denial

Jesus now goes deeper into the heart of the fears of the disciples about the death of the Messiah. The death of the Messiah could (sooner or later) lead to their own violent deaths. Jesus expands the discussion to the subject of discipleship: if you follow Jesus, you must be prepared to literally take up your cross, as he will, and die on it for him, as he will. Discipleship means potential martyrdom.³⁶

The “cross” and “losing one’s life” are not metaphorical statements. It shows that Jesus expects that at least some of his followers will lose their lives because of their discipleships, which they did.³⁷

“Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (v.28) What will come is judgement, by a vindicated Jesus who is enthroned in glory. The earthly threat of suffering and death is measured against the eternal judgement to come where true life is to be found. The passage reminds one of Daniel 7:13-14 and that enthronement after his suffering and death is given a time imperative: it will occur while some present are still alive.

Possible interpretations of this verse include:

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The transfiguration³⁸;2. The resurrection and ascension;3. Pentecost4. The spread of Christianity5. The internal development of the Gospels6. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple7. The second advent	<p>Or, the eschatological end and judgement:</p> <p>“I saw one like a human being[e] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One[f] and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.” (Dan 7:13-14)</p>
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Reflection: What are the implications of following Jesus? To make it absolutely clear, Jesus tells his followers to “take up their cross and follow me.” If his life is to end in suffering and crucifixion, so may theirs. The benefit of discipleship and martyrdom is to gain true life after eternal judgement. When will this occur? Soon but not yet.

³⁶ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³⁷ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

³⁸ Morris, Leon, The Gospel according to Matthew pp. 412-435

REFLECTION

Are we like the Pharisees and Scribes who demand a sign from God before we will believe?
How do we uphold Matthew's belief that understanding, and faith are integrally entwined and related?
Who do you say Jesus is as an individual and a member of a spiritual community?
Do we still try to control Jesus and diminish him to fit our needs?
Do we understand and accept what the risks are in following Jesus?

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,
for the witness of your apostle and evangelist,
Matthew, to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace
which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;
and we pray that, after his example,
we may with ready wills and hearts obey
the calling of our Lord to follow him;
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun
1.

SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



The Inspiration of St. Matthew, Caravaggio, 1602

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly series for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Prior Slow Religion Classes include the Gospel of According to Mark (2021-22), the Foundations of Christian Faith (2020-21), the Holy Spirit (2020), the Gospel According to John (2019-20), and Paul's Letter to the Romans (2017-8).

For more information, to see class videos, our bibliography or to join the Slow Religion mailing list go to: www.slowreligion.com

APPENDIX ONE THE DISCIPLES' UNDERSTANDING THEME IN MATTHEW

Struggling to Understand ³⁹	Verses
Introduced in 13:11-17	<p>11 He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets[b] of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 13 The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.' 14 With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:</p> <p>'You will indeed listen but never understand, and you will indeed look but never perceive. 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes, so that they might not look with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.'</p> <p>16 "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.</p>
Those who lack it are lost 13:19	19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.
Is the true mark of a disciple 13:23	23 But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."
Jesus accepts and builds on their assurance they have understood 13:51-52	51 "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." 52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."
Disciples show they still do not understand 15:15-16	15 But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." 16 Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding?"
Disciples beginning to understand 16:12	12 Then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
Peter understands Jesus' identity 16:15-16	15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,[c] the Son of the living God."
Peter fails to understand/accept what Jesus' mission is 16:22-23	22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance[h] to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

The disciples wrestle with understanding the meaning of Jesus' identity, teachings, and actions throughout the gospel. The heart of the disconnect is that the disciples did not understand the two feeding miracles and it shows in their concern for not having more bread before their trip. Fundamentally what they had failed to understand is Jesus' identity and power.⁴⁰

Jesus goes on to explain that if the disciples had understood the feeding miracles, they also would have understood his warning about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees teachings. It may be that the feeding miracles had only been understood at the level of the literal, the food provided. Not the deeper implications of how and why Jesus was able to provide it. In the end the disciples connect the dots and realize that Jesus is warning about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.⁴¹

³⁹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

⁴⁰ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

⁴¹ France, R. T., The Gospel of Matthew pp. 603-641

APPENDIX TWO: MATTHEW THEMES AND HEBREW BIBLE SOURCES

Themes	Passages ⁴²
Kingdom	Isaiah 52:7 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
Ministry to outcasts, the poor	Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners,
Jesus as bearer of Spirit	Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me
Jesus as preacher of good news	Isaiah 52:7 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
Jesus as teacher and revealer	Isaiah 42:4 "He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his teaching."
Jesus as Davidic (Matt 9:27 also)	2 Sam 7:4-17 4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, 5 "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders[a] of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel, 9 and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. 15 But I will not take[b] my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;[c] your throne shall be established forever." 17 In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David."
God as Jesus Father in a special sense, and Jesus and God's Son in a special sense	2 Sam 7:14 "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me."
The old temple replaced by the new temple	2 Sam 7:13 "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

Isaiah 61 and 2 Sam 7 provided Jesus with a blueprint for his ministry, and as such is considered messianic. There is one remaining objection: why are there no undeniably authentic sayings of Jesus in which he clearly asserts that he is the Messiah? Threefold answer: 1) Mark 14:62 maybe a genuine logion, a saying attributed to Jesus Christ, especially one not recorded in the canonical Gospels, despite the doubts of many. 2) Jesus may have been reticent to publish aboard his acceptance of a title so much open to misunderstanding: his self-conception did not harmonize with the generally accepted notions of Messiah; 3) it may have been understood that he was to be enthroned as Messiah must to encroach on God's prerogative of making the announcement himself.⁴³

⁴² Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

⁴³ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

APPENDIX THREE PETER IN MATTHEW⁴⁴

Current literature has three general views of Peter in Matthew:

- Peter as chief rabbi⁴⁵ the guarantor of Christian *halakah*, Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud
- Peter as the typical Christian, a symbol of every Christian⁴⁶
- Peter is the “first” (10:1), belongs to salvation history and one should not read more into this⁴⁷

Peter does not play much of a role before chapter 14 and after chapter 18 in Matthew. In essence, Matthew has not added anything of substance to Mark’s portrait of Peter outside of chapters 14-18. Matthew’s ecclesiology, Matthew’s theology as applied to the nature and structure of the Christian Church, in the chapters where Jesus formally establishes the church and gives it instruction is where Matthew adds to the portrait of Peter. Which is to say that Peter’s prominence seems to be a function of Matthew’s ecclesiology – the disciples dominates the chapters that deal with establishing and running the church.

Matthew did carry forward Mark’s tendency to have Peter be the spokesmen of the disciples and ask questions of Jesus. And Matthews omissions of Peter seem mainly to do with his literary style not theological issues. Peter is also presented as having close knowledge of Jesus.

The other way to look at it is Peter is called with others; he is not the only one to pose questions; he is not alone in confessing Jesus to be the Son of God; nor the only one to have a beatitude said over him (13:16-17); nor receiving divine revelations. Further all of the disciple are given the authority to bind and loose. So one could argue as Kingsbury has that Matthew wants to anchor Peter within the 12 disciples, not as a stand-alone figure.

Allison’s view: Peter’s imperfections do not qualify his primacy of unique status. They magnify his greatness, for they demonstrate the obstacles he had to overcome in order to achieve what he did.

Peter, like Paul, seems to have been a controversial figure in the early Jesus Movement. One whose authority and function were debated. Passages such as:

Matthew 10:2 “These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter”;

16:17-19 “17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter,[a] and on this rock[b] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”” and

17:24-27 “24 When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?” 25 He said, “Yes, he does.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?” 26 When Peter[a] said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the children are free. 27 However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me.”

⁴⁴ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 577-683

⁴⁵ Hummel

⁴⁶ Origen

⁴⁷ Kingsbury and Hoffmann

were written in a historical context. They were written and first read in in light of beliefs already held in the late 1st Century CE Jesus movement about Peter.

Lastly in the Book of Acts, clearly the author Luke presents Peter as the most important of Jesus disciples post-Easter. He is the well-defined face in the crowd of the disciples. The key to his primacy is not based on the order in which the disciples were called, but in 16:13-20 where Jesus declares Peter is the rock on which his church will be built. It is also possible that Matthew perceived Peter as having had some role in, or relationship to the emerging structure and hierarchy of the church which would emerge around the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries CE.

Lastly, what we do not know is whether Matthew's emphasis on Peter a reaction to Paul? Was Matthew in opposition to Paul in Matthew's mind? Did elevating Peter, depreciate Paul? We remain in the dark on the competition of the two for primacy in the early Jesus movement and in Matthew's mind.

GOSPEL COMPARISON

Mark 8:27-30	Matthew 16:13-20	Luke 9:18-21	John 6:67-71
<p>27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."^[h]</p>	<p>13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,^[c] the Son of the living God."</p>	<p>18 Once when Jesus^[c] was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" 19 They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen." 20 Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah^[d] of God."</p>	<p>67 So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."^[f]</p>
	<p>17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven."</p>		
	<p>18 And I tell you, you are Peter,^[d] and on this rock^[e] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."</p>		
<p>30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.</p>	<p>20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was^[f] the Messiah.^[g]</p>	<p>21 He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone,</p>	