

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

### **Thursday Night Bible Study**

#### ***The Gospel of Matthew***

(Thurs\_Matt15-16)

#### ***DEFINITION OF TERMS***

Pharisees – a non-priestly group of uncertain origin, generally learned, committed to the oral traditions, and concerned with developing *Halakah* (rules of conduct based on deductions from the law). The Pharisees in the Sanhedrin were laymen in the sense that they were not priests; however, many of them were scribes (i.e. teachers of the law) and thus different from the elders. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees arose from the ranks of the scribes and priests of Israel after the Babylonian captivity (i.e. after the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in 516 B.C.). The Pharisees believed in the immortality of the soul through a resurrection. They also believed in the existence of angels and the providential sovereignty of God.

Sadducees – arose from the ranks of the priests of Israel after the return from captivity and were viewed as more aristocratic in nature than the Pharisees. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection and did not believe in angels. They acknowledged only the written law (the Pentateuch) as binding and rejected the oral tradition developed over the centuries. As a result, on many occasions, the Sadducees took a stricter interpretation of the Law than did the Pharisees. The Sadducees put great stress upon human freedom and minimized God's sovereignty in relation to man's free will.

Sanhedrin – a Jewish council that arose during the Hellenizing period of Jewish history and was translated into a form of puppet rule under Rome. The Sanhedrin included Pharisees, Sadducees (Acts 23:6) and elders.

Elders – this group was mostly lay nobility and most likely consisted largely of Pharisees.

#### ***SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND***

The priests and scribes after the Babylonian captivity were very instrumental in the development of Israel. Under the influence of Greece (especially Antiochus IV), Jewish society and religious life became Hellenized and the priests and scribes arose as defenders of the accurate observance of the Law. During the Maccabaeen (Hasmonean) period (ca. 167 BC to ca. 37 BC), the priests and the scribes became more and more separated until two distinct groups emerged known as the Sadducees and the Pharisees. During the later portion of the Maccabean period, the Maccabees began to focus more on extending their political power. The Pharisees, who had arisen from the laity, won the bulk of the nation to their side. Queen Alexandra (a later period Hasmonaean) abandoned power to the Pharisees in the interest of peace. Eventually, all of the decrees of the Pharisees which had been eliminated during the later, political period of the Maccabean rule, were reintroduced and the Pharisees ruled the public life of the nation.

Later, amid all of the changes of government under the Romans and the Herodians, the Pharisees maintained their spiritual authority. Although the Sadducean high priests were at the head of the Sanhedrin the decisive influence upon public affairs was in the hands of the Pharisees and they had the bulk of the nation as their ally. Their sway over the masses was so absolute that they could obtain a hearing even when they said something against the king or the high priest.

The Pharisees were not a political party, at least not in a direct sense. Their aim was the strict observance of the Law. As long as nothing interfered with this objective, they could be content with any form of government. It was only when the secular power prevented the practice of the law in that strict manner which the Pharisees demanded, that they gathered together to oppose it and then they became a political party in a certain sense. Even though the Pharisees and Sadducees could fight each other fiercely on certain issues to the point of being enemies, their political circumstances required that they work together at many levels.

### ***JESUS AND THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS (15:1-20)***

1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 "For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' 5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," 6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

7 "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:  
8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,  
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.  
9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,  
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. 11 "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man." 12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?" 13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." 15 Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17 "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

The fact that the scribes and the Pharisees had traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee to see Jesus indicates that Jesus' reputation was becoming widespread. The fact that this group came from Jerusalem meant that they were most likely held in special esteem by the leadership in Jerusalem.

*3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) (Mark 7:3-4)*

The parallel gospel account in Mark 7:3-4 provides additional clarification that Matthew omits since Matthew didn't need to explain Jewish customs to his readers. Mark explains these Jewish customs. The tradition of the fathers to which Mark refers is that body of oral tradition that

had been passed down through several generations and which the Pharisees viewed as having the force of the written Law. Later it became codified and known as the Mishnah. An example:  
If a man poured water over the one hand with a single rinsing, his hand is clean;  
but if over both hands with a single rinsing, R[abbi] Meir declares them unclean  
unless he pours over them a quarter-log or more. (M *Yadaim* 2:1)

As we have seen on previous occasions (e.g. the raising of Jarius' daughter in 9:18-26 where Matthew doesn't record the arrival of the messengers who announce the death of the daughter) Matthew's style of writing is to condense the narrative of certain events.

Jesus points out to the Pharisees that they have broken the written Law through clever maneuverings with their oral tradition.

*9 'Now if it is an animal of the kind which men can present as an offering to the LORD, any such that one gives to the LORD shall be holy. (Lev 27:9)*

*16 'Again, if a man consecrates to the LORD part of the fields of his own property, then your valuation shall be proportionate to the seed needed for it: a homer of barley seed at fifty shekels of silver. (Lev 27:16)*

In Leviticus 27:9 & 16, a son could dedicate certain assets as *korban* or a gift devoted to God and set aside for the temple treasury. Later such a vow could be annulled in various ways based upon tradition. In this manner, the Pharisees could cleverly maneuver to withhold assets from the parents. This was tantamount to having broken the fifth commandment – honor your father and mother (Ex 20:12). Therefore, a needy set of parents would not have their needs met simply because the son's assets had been declared *korban*.

In Matthew 15:7, we find the first recorded instance of Jesus calling the Pharisees and teachers of the law hypocrites. While they made a show of devotion to God, their religious traditions took precedence over God's will.

In verses 8-9, Jesus says that Isaiah was right when he prophesied about "you." However, Isaiah's audience was hundreds of years before. Jesus' point is not that Isaiah prophesied about the people of Jesus' day in a direct sense. Rather, since the Pharisees saw themselves as the preservers of ancient oral tradition, Jesus criticizes them for preserving the spirit of those whom Isaiah criticized long before. Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 to make the point that the Pharisees and teachers of the law have displaced humility with mere form that makes their worship vanity (emptiness).

A parallel application to the Christian believer: Paul dealt with a similar issue in Galatians 1:14 and Colossians 2:8 where he recounts his religious accomplishments in the former and in the latter he warns believers regarding the traditions of men.

*14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. (Gal 1:14)*

*8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Col 2:8)*

Several principles emerge: 1) religion (verses true humility) is a subtle form of rationalism based upon one's own selfish interest; 2) the truly humble person is honest with him/herself in all matters; 3) the humble person is discerning regarding his/her status before the Lord and does not use anything or anyone as an excuse for failure or lapse; 4) honesty is the basis for humility; 5) religious people (as opposed to truly humble people) are blind (vv. 13-14).

The Lord desires honesty in our assessments of own behavior before Him. We will have no excuses when we stand at the Bema Seat judgment and are evaluated as to the quality of our lives. Don't deceive yourself now only to miss out on all that God has in store for you in eternity.

*16 Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17 "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." (Matt 15:16-20)*

In verses 16-20, we see Jesus teaching the principle that the eyes are the window to a man's soul, i.e. what a man takes into his mind affects the manner in which he thinks. This principle is recognized throughout the Bible in such passages as Psalm 101:3; 119:11; and 2 Corinthians 10:5.

3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;  
I hate the work of those who fall away;  
It shall not fasten its grip on me. (Psa 101:3)

11 Your word I have treasured in my heart,  
That I may not sin against You. (Psa 119:11)

5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor 10:5)

#### ***A GENTILE WOMAN DEMONSTRATES FAITH (15:21-28)***

21 Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." 23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once. (Matt 15:21-28)

No doubt, this Gentile woman appeared to be nothing more than another miracle seeker and not necessarily a true believer. However, she passes the test of her true intentions in verse 26-27 when she acknowledges her true status as a Gentile in relation to the covenant people, the Jews.

This passage provides additional insight into the Jewish-centric paradigm of Jesus – a paradigm that is obviously consistent with God's program at this point in history. Jesus continued to present the kingdom gospel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This requires us to interpret chapter 13 consistent with chapter 10 where Jesus commissions the Twelve Apostles to Israel. Jesus' ministry was Jew-centric – a fact that is contrary to the view taken by

### **JESUS HEALS GREAT MULTITUDES (15:29-31)**

*29 Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. 30 And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. 31 So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. (Matt 15:29-31)*

In these verses, Jesus has traveled from Tyre and Sidon on the coast to the Sea of Galilee. However, this area is still in Gentile territory. The Gentiles in this area believed and glorified Israel's God, while many in Israel remained blind to their Messiah.

### **JESUS FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND (15:32-39)**

32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." 33 The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?" 34 And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." 35 And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; 36 and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 37 And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. 38 And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan. (Matt 15:32-39)

This is a different event than the feeding of the five thousand in 14:13-21. Jesus Himself identifies it as a separate event in Matthew 16:9 & 10. In this situation, it appears that Jesus' preaching and miracles so captivated the people that they refused to leave him until he dismissed them. However, since some had come a long distance, He was concerned that they might collapse because of hunger on their way home. In spite of the disciples having previously observed Jesus' miracles, they have no clue as to the source of their provision.

[Note of parallel application: even when we have seen the Lord deliver on previous occasions, we are still tempted to not see Him as the source of our provision. The disciples were no different.]

### **ENEMIES IN PURSUIT OF A COMMON FOE – THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES SEEK A SIGN (16:1-4)**

1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' 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? 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. (Matt 16:1-4)

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some that chapter 13 is a chapter where Jesus begins to present truths related to the interregnum – the period between the Advents which includes the present age.

In these verses, Jesus is still on the west side of the Sea of Galilee in the area known as Galilee. In chapter 15, a group of Pharisees from Jerusalem had traveled north to investigate Jesus. Here in chapter 16, Pharisees and Sadducees question Jesus. Their questioning is not from an attitude of seeking the truth, rather the sign they sought was a sign consistent with their view of what the *true* Messiah would be and do. They sought a sign like that of the plagues on Egypt (Exod 7-12), or having the sun stand still (Josh 10:12-14) which involved Israel's victories over its enemies.

In a veiled way, Jesus prophesies His own death. This is the second time in which Jesus has prophesied about His death with reference to Jonah (see Matt 12:39-41). On both occasions, the prophecy was in response to the religious leaders seeking a sign.

### **The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)**

5 And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 7 They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." 8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? 9 "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? 10 "Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? 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." 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.

Leaven does not always refer to evil; however **in this instance it does**. Leaven is used to represent evil in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and Galatians 5:9 as well as many Old Testament passages such as Exodus 12:15 and Leviticus 2:11. However, this is not always the case, e.g. Leviticus 7:13 and 23:15-18.

**Review Note Regarding The Parable of the Leaven in Matthew 13:33** - In the parable of the leaven, we saw that although leaven sometimes symbolizes evil, the principle of leaven is that a little leaven has an effect upon the whole of the dough with which it interacts. When yeast is kneaded into dough, it expands by itself. The kingdom of heaven (i.e. the Millennium) is seen to grow based upon the internal dynamic of the Holy Spirit verses being powered by outward armies or organizations. The kingdom was offered without any display of pomp or extravaganza.

We saw that the *point of the parable* was – the kingdom produces ultimate consequences out of all proportion to its insignificant beginnings. The dough [not mentioned] is Israel, whereas the yeast or leaven is the gospel of the kingdom. This is a parallel truth to the parable of the mustard seed. *Alternative interpretations (the professing, but unbelieving Church of the mystery age or unbelieving Israel of the Tribulation) of this parable by various dispensationalists overlook the fact that the leaven represents a principle related to a growth dynamic and not evil in this context (i.e. Matthew 13).*

**Back to Matthew 16:5-12** – Here the picture of leaven interacting with the whole of the dough is a good picture of the manner in which evil has a tendency to permeate the thoughts of all those with whom it interacts. In much the same manner that a little yeast affects the whole lump of dough, so false doctrine affects the entire perspective of the believer. The false doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees stemmed from their respective distortions of the Law (see previous lesson) into a means of salvation or evidence of salvation. Other distortions of these

two groups either centered around or derived from that basic distortion. The grave danger of false doctrine to the believer is that it affects a believer in several ways:

- Improper understanding and distortion of the humility desired by God (e.g. legalism in Phase 1 & 2 and no grace orientation to life)
- Lack of objectivity in life (e.g. exaggerated self opinion or improper view of humility, no spiritually grounded self esteem, inability to deal with injustice in life, no orientation to authority, lack of orientation to the purpose of human history, improper view of God's interactions with man, distraction with human good endeavors)
- Deception regarding one's relationship and fellowship with God

### **Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ (16:13-20)**

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?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but 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 Christ, the Son of the living God." 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. 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. 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." 20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

Caesarea Philippi was north of the Sea of Galilee and near the ancient town of Dan at the base of the southwestern slope of Mount Hermon. It was about 120 miles from Jerusalem, 50 from Damascus, and 30 from Tyre on the coast. This town had long been associated with idol worship. It was first a Canaanite sanctuary for the worship of Baal and for centuries it was a center of worship of the heathen god Pan whereby it became known as *Paneas* and in more recent times *Banias* (because there is no *P* in the Arabic alphabet).

It was the northernmost point of Jesus' travels and it was in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi that Jesus began to prepare His apostles for His approaching sufferings, death and resurrection which included the transfiguration event. The site for pagan worship centered on a massive stone façade and was the basis for Jesus' play on words – "upon this rock."

In **verse 18**, Peter's answer that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" was an acknowledgment that Jesus was the Messiah. The Greek word *χριστος* is the same as the Hebrew word for *Messiah* and means *the anointed One*. Hebrew Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament) were very clear that the Messiah was more than a human; he was God (Is 9:6; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 5:2).

Jesus' response to Peter's statement has been the basis for much controversy and debate through the years. Did Jesus mean that He would build his church on Peter so that Peter was the first Pope? Or, did Jesus mean that He would build his "church" on Himself, the Rock (*πετρα*), whereas Peter (*πετρος* – stone) was really just a chip of the Rock? First, I will present some exegetical facts:

- The Greek word for *Peter* is *πετρος* and is in the masculine gender.
- The Greek word for *Rock* is *πετρα* and is in the feminine gender.
- The Greek word for church is *εκκλησια* and means *assembly*.

Now, I will present some other observations:

- The future tense of the verb "I will build" indicates that the foundation of the "church" is yet to come.

- Much is sometimes made of the distinction between πέτρος (rock, stone – masc. gender) and πέτρα (rock – fem. gender). It is argued that the rock on which the “church” (as in the Church Age “church”) is to be built is not Peter, who is a mere stone, but Jesus himself, the rock of foundation (cf. 1 Pe 2:5-8).
- Had Matthew wanted to say that Peter was a stone in contrast with Jesus the Rock, the more common word would have been λίθος (lithos) which refers to a stone of any size. However, if Jesus had used λίθος, there would have been no pun or play on words (i.e. petros – petra).
- Jesus is using a figure of speech in Matthew 16:18 known as a *metaphor*, i.e. one term is used to represent something else. [Note: a simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared, e.g. “he is solid like a tree.”]
- The problem with metaphors in the Bible is that sometimes broad generalizations can be made about their meaning in all instances based upon their use in one passage, e.g.
  - Some have opined that leaven always represents evil; however, we have seen in the previous lesson that it is not always so in the Bible.
  - Jesus is said to be the church’s foundation in 1 Co 3:11; however, in Eph 2:19-20, the apostles and the prophets are the foundation and Jesus is the cornerstone.
  - In Matt 16:18, Peter has the keys, yet in Re 1:18 and 3:7, Jesus has the keys.
  - In Jn 9:5, Jesus is the light of the world, yet in Matt 5:14, His disciples are.
- Metaphors should be interpreted based upon their immediate context.
- In this passage, Jesus is the builder of the “church”, therefore it would be using mixed metaphors to see Him as the foundation also.
- We must allow that an objective analysis of this passage could see Peter in some way being the foundation of the “church”, yet not force us to adopt the Roman Catholic views of papal succession, infallibility, or the priority of Peter.
- Ephesians 2:20 does indicate that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation of the Church.
- Peter and the other apostles would not have understood Jesus’ reference to the “church” as anything other than an *assembly* of those who believed in Jesus. They had no concept of the New Testament Church of Acts that would consist of Jews and Gentiles.

Various interpretations of this passage have been presented over the years, all of which are based upon the assumption that the “church” to which Jesus referred was the Church established after Pentecost. The major interpretations are:

- Jesus was indicating that He would build His Church upon Himself in contrast to Peter who, although a rock, did not match Jesus.
- The Church is built upon Peter and the other apostles as the building’s foundation stones (Eph 2:20; Re 21:14).
- The Church is built upon Peter’s testimony of faith based upon revelation given to him by the heavenly Father.
- Jesus was praising Peter for his accurate statement about Him, and was introducing His work of building the Church on Himself.

While I could accept any of the above interpretations, I prefer the following interpretation:

- Peter was the first to make this confession that “Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- Peter’s special apostolic authority in the form of the “keys of the kingdom” relates to Peter’s re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (“church” = assembly of Jews in Acts 3 especially 3:19). Peter was granted the privilege of re-offering the kingdom first to Israel. Peter had no special authority to bind or loose except the binding or loosing that would occur as a result of Israel’s acceptance or rejection of the truth. The same privilege was extended to the other apostles in Matt 18:18.
- A point of confusion: the fact that the word church has a general meaning (i.e. “assembly”) and a more technical meaning (i.e. “Church” = body of Christ in a different age) is significant.

- Jesus' use of the word "church" to refer to an *assembly* of Jews at a point in time future to Matthew 16 is confused with the fact that Peter would re-offer the kingdom to the "church" (non-technical usage, i.e. *assembly* of Jews) in Acts 3 within the Church Age.
- I have no major issue with those who view Peter as simply the first among equals (i.e. the other apostles) to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, especially in view of Matthew 18:18.
- However, to limit the explanation to that point alone ignores the special authority that seems to be conveyed to Peter by our Lord.
- I have no major issue with those who understand that it was upon the same faith to be expressed eventually by all apostles that Jesus would build the Church (i.e. His body in the Church Age).
- However, to limit the understanding of this passage to that point ignores the distinction between the general and technical uses of the word "church" not to mention the context of Matthew 16. The context of Matthew 16 includes the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus and His apostles were preaching up to that point in the narrative and even after Matthew 16.
- The special authority granted to Peter to re-offer the kingdom to Israel (the assembly/church) which occurred in Acts 3 did not grant to Peter the Pope like authority that is implied by the RCC's interpretation of this event. For instance:
  - Peter was very prominent in the early Church (Acts 1-2).
  - However, Peter was subject to the other apostles in that he was sent on occasion by the others (e.g. Acts 8:14).
  - He was held accountable by the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:1-18) and rebuked by Paul (Gal 2:11-14).

In **verse 18b**, Jews would have understood Jesus' reference to the gates of Hades to refer to physical death. The phrase "gates of Hades" or very similar expressions are found in canonical literature (Job 17:16; 38:17; Psa 9:13; 107:18; Isa 38:10), non-canonical Jewish literature, and pagan literature and it refers to death and dying. So, Jesus is saying that even death will not prevent Him from establishing His church (i.e. assembly of believing Jews with specific reference to those who are alive at the beginning of the Messianic reign of Christ).

Remember that Hades in the New Testament is synonymous with Sheol in the Old Testament. There are two compartments in Hades, i.e. torments and Abraham's bosom or paradise (Luke 16:22-23). One was the abode of unbelievers and the other the abode of believers of the Age of Israel and prior. Therefore, the gates of Hades referred to death.

In verse 19, the phrases "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" needs explanation. The phrase "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" refers to the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel that occurred in Acts 3. Peter had the privilege of explaining the transition to a new age (e.g. Acts 2:14-39 and 3:11-26). Included within Peter's explanation of the transition to the new age of the Church was the re-offer of the Messianic Kingdom to Israel should they repent regarding the Person of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:12-21). Peter possessed the keys to the kingdom in the form of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel after the Church Age began.

The phrases "*will be bound*" and "*will be loosed*" are perfect tense verbs (i.e. completed action in past time with results that continue indefinitely). In other words, a more correct translation might be "*shall have been bound in heaven*" and "*shall have been loosed in heaven.*" Peter accomplishes the binding and loosing by proclaiming truth that had already been given to him and allowing the free will of men to respond or reject. The response or rejection had been seen by God the Father since eternity past and entered into the divine decree of God for human history. Peter had no special authority from God to bind or loose men's souls, only to proclaim the truth that would then bind or loose men's souls based upon their response. Jesus makes the

same statement to all the disciples in 18:18. Heaven had acted first by foreknowing those who would believe.

In **verse 20**, Jesus gives His apostles a strange command. The reason Jesus gives this command is that He knew based upon His experiences so far that the nation was not going to respond to His offer of the kingdom. There was no reason for His disciples to try to convince the nation if Jesus Himself was being rejected. Instead, Jesus begins to prepare His disciples during the remainder of His ministry for His death and resurrection. From this point forward in Matthew, there is little to no teaching of kingdom (Messianic) rules or principles. Jesus' teaching begins to shift to prophecy related to His death and resurrection, the Tribulation, and the Second Advent.

### **Jesus Predicts His Death and Rebukes Peter (16:21-23)**

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

Peter was trying to keep the Lord from dying, but that was the primary reason Jesus came into the world. Trying to prevent the Crucifixion, as Satan had earlier tried to do (4:8-10), resulted from not thinking from God's viewpoint.

### **Discipleship is Costly (16:24-27)**

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

A disciple of Jesus must deny himself and all of his ambitions. He must take up his cross of death to self and follow Jesus' example of self-sacrifice. In the Roman Empire a convicted criminal, when taken to be crucified, was forced to carry his own cross. This showed publicly that he was then under and submissive to the rule he had been opposing. Likewise, Jesus' disciples must demonstrate their submission to the One against whom they had rebelled.

### **A Prediction by Jesus (16:28)**

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."

After speaking of His coming kingdom, Jesus stated that some disciples standing there with Him would be permitted to view His coming kingdom before they experienced death. This statement has caused many to misunderstand the kingdom program since they wonder how the disciples saw the Lord coming in His kingdom. The transfiguration (17:1-8) is the explanation.