

## Matthew 16

The animosity between the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and Jesus continues to increase in this chapter. They challenge His credulity (16:1-4); He warns His disciples about the leaders' doctrine (16:5-12). In the middle of controversy and His ministry, Jesus asks His followers Who they believe He is (16:13-20). He gives them a promise that they will teach the Word of God to their contemporaries. Jesus also predicts His death and resurrection (16:21-28) for the first time (see also 17:22; 20:17-19; it has only been implied before: 1:21; 10:22, 28, 38; 12:14, 40; 14:12-13; 16:4). The enemies at the first of the chapter will have the "sign" they were requesting (compare 16:4 and 16:21).

### TRANSLATION - 16:1-4:

**1** And after coming, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were testing, asked Him a sign from heaven to show to them. **2** And after answering, He said to them, "[Evening after coming, you say, 'Beautiful weather, for it is red the heaven;' **3** and early, 'Today, bad weather, for it is red becoming dark the heaven. The face of the heaven you know to evaluate, but the signs of the times you are not able?]' **4** An evil and adulterous generation pursues a sign, and a sign will not be given to it except the sign of Jonah." And after leaving them, He departed.

### GREEK WORDS:

"Pharisees" (ver. 1) and "Sadducees" were first introduced in 3:7. "To test" or "to tempt" was first used in 4:1, 3. "To ask" was used first at 12:10. "Sign" was also first used in 12:38-39. This is the first use of the verb "to show." It is used 7 times in the NT: Matt. 16:1; 22:19; 24:1; Luke 17:14; Acts 9:39; 18:28; Heb. 6:17. "Evening" (ver. 2) was first used at 8:16; 14:15, 23. This is the only time "beautiful weather" and "to be red" are found.

"Early" (ver. 3) is found 12 times in the NT; in Matthew, at 16:3; 20:1; 21:18. "Today" was seen first at 6:11, 30. "Bad weather" or "storm" was seen at 16:3; 24:20; Mark 13:18; John 10:22; Acts 27:20; 2 Tim. 4:21. "To become dark" is used here and Mark 10:22. "Face" was seen first at 6:16-17. "To judge" or "to evaluate" is used 19 times, in Matthew at 16:3; 21:21.

"Generation" (ver. 4) was used first at 1:17; 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45. "Evil" was used first at 5:11, 37, 39, 45. "Adulterous" was first used at 12:39. "To pursue" or to "seek after" was first used at 6:32; 12:39. "Jonah" was first used at 12:39-41.

### PARALLELS:

Other accounts of this interaction are found in Mark 8:11-13; Luke 12:54-56.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Some of the oldest and important manuscripts do not have the section in brackets, part of verse 2 and all of verse 3. However, manuscript scholar, Bruce Metzger, in his *Textual Commentary on the NT* suggests it is best to leave it in the text as the evidence is evenly balanced.

### COMMENTS:

The Pharisees and Sadducees were theological enemies, but they joined hands in opposition to Jesus, just as King Herod and Governor Pilate will do later (see Luke 23:12). See comments at 3:7 for the origins and beliefs of these two sects. They come to Jesus on this occasion, not sincerely, but to "test" Him, as Satan had done in Matthew 4:1. They were requesting Him to show them a sign "from heaven." We do not know what type of sign they were wanting; was it fire directly from heaven? Or manna? Jesus had done many signs up to that point and His fame was not insignificant. Clearly they were not sincere.

Jesus responded by pointing out that they could read the "sky" (they knew the signs when the weather was to be bad or good), but they were not able to read the signs which He had given. Actually, they could read the signs if they had desired Truth. Instead, Jesus calls

them and that generation “wicked and adulterous,” as He did in Matthew 12:38-40, echoing thoughts of the OT prophets. They were looking for a sign, but they would not receive any sign except that sign which was Jonah, the prophet, in the belly of the fish for three days and nights. In other words, His resurrection would be the sign to prove definitively that He was the Son of God (cf. Rom. 1:4). Yet, when Jesus does rise from the dead, the Pharisees will bribe the guards to lie about the empty tomb: Matt. 28:11-15.

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus did not always respond to man’s questions. He practiced what the Spirit led Solomon to write in Proverbs 26:4-5: “Do not answer a fool according to his folly.” The religious leaders had shown themselves to be insincere; Jesus did not perform miracles to satisfy their curiosity. If they had had open hearts, they would have been led to the Truth.

#### TRANSLATION - 16:5-12:

**5** And after arriving, the disciples, into the region, they forgot bread to take. **6** And Jesus said to them, “Pay attention and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” **7** And these were considering in themselves saying that “Bread we did not take.” **8** And Jesus, after knowing, said, “Why do you consider in yourselves, o little faith ones, that bread you do not have? **9** Do you not yet understand, neither do you remember, the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took? **10** Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets you took? **11** How do you not understand that not concerning bread I said to you? But beware from the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?” **12** At that time, they understood that He did not speak to beware of the leaven of the bread but from the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

#### GREEK WORDS:

“To forget” (ver. 5) is used only here in Matthew; see also Mark 8:14; Luke 12:6; Phil. 3:13; Heb. 6:10; 13:2, 16; James 1:24. “Bread” was first seen at 4:3-4. “Pay attention” (ver. 6) was first seen at 5:8; 8:4; 9:30. “Beware” was seen first at 6:1; 7:15; 10:17. “Leaven” was discussed at 13:33. It is used three times in this text: 16:6, 11-12. “Pharisees” and “Sadducees” were mentioned in 16:1; see at 3:7.

“To consider” (ver. 7) or “to think” is used 16 times, three times in Matthew: 16:7-8; 21:25. “Little faith ones” is used almost exclusively (4 times) by Matthew; see at 6:30. “To understand” was first seen at 15:17. This is the first use of the verb “to remember.” It is used 21 times, only here in Matthew. “To understand” (ver. 12) was first seen at 13:13-15, 19, 23, 51. “Teaching” was first seen at 7:28.

#### PARALLELS:

This text is paralleled in Mark 8:14-21.

#### COMMENTS:

As Jesus and His apostles continued on their journey, Matthew comments that they had forgotten to bring food, specifically bread, with them. Mark tells us (8:14) that they had one loaf. It was at that point that Jesus warned them to beware of the “leaven” of the religious leaders. Leaven was used in a good sense in 13:33. Here, it is used with a negative sense. The apostles, however, were thinking only in physical terms; they were thinking of literal bread.

Jesus knew the secrets of their thoughts and chastised them for not having more faith and more understanding. He was not speaking of literal bread. He had the ability to multiply the one loaf, if necessary. Had they already forgotten the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000? So, Jesus then repeated Himself about being careful of the leaders’ teaching. At that point, the apostles realized Jesus was speaking of the leaders’ doctrine which they were teaching.

#### APPLICATION:

In Matthew 23:1-2, Jesus told His disciples that when the Pharisees teach the Law of Moses, they ought to listen to them, but they should not follow their practices.

Christians ought to be extremely careful from whom they listen in religious contexts. Paul will warn frequently about false teachers and urge Christians to beware of them: Romans 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15; Eph. 4:14-15; Phil. 3:18-19. John also warned against those who were not teaching the doctrine Christ authorized (2 John 9-11). There is only one way to make sure we are hearing the Truth: studying the Truth ourselves (Acts 17:11) and make sure every verse is interpreted and understood correctly in its context.

#### TRANSLATION - 16:13-20:

**13** And after coming, Jesus, into the district of Caesarea of Philip, He was asking His disciples, saying, "Who do they say men, the Son of Man to be?"

**14** And they said, "Some, John the baptist, and others, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

**15** He said to them, "But you, yourselves, Who Me do you say to be?"

**16** And after answering, Simon Peter said, "You, yourself, are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

**17** And after answering, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon of BarJonah, because flesh and blood did not disclose to you [this], but My Father, the one in the heavens.

**18** And even I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hades will not overpower it. **19** And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on earth will be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever you release on earth will be having been released in the heavens."

**20** At that time, He commanded the disciples in order that no one they would tell that He is the Christ.

#### GREEK WORDS:

"Caesarea" (ver. 13) is mentioned 17 times in the NT. See below under "Archaeology." The phrase "Son of Man" has now been used 9 times before this occasion; it will be used a total of 31 times in Matthew. See 3:1 for John the baptist (ver. 14). "Elijah" was first seen at 11:14. "Jeremiah" was mentioned at 2:17; here; 27:9. "Prophet" was first seen at 1:22.

"Simon" and "Peter" (ver. 16) were first seen at 4:18. "Christ" was introduced at 1:1. "Son of God" was used by Satan at 4:3; 4:6; by Jesus, of His disciples, at 5:9; by demons at 8:29. It will be used again at 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54. "Living" was used first at 4:4; 9:18. "Blessed" (ver. 17) was used extensively in chapter 5; also at 11:6; 13:16. This is the only use of Peter's father's name: "BarJonah," an Aramaic name meaning "son of Jonah." This is the first use of the word "flesh," used 147 times in the NT; in Matthew at 16:17; 19:5-6; 24:22; 26:41. "Blood" is used here first also, from 97 occasions. In Matthew, it is used 11 times. "To disclose" or "to reveal" was used first at 10:26; 11:25, 27.

This "rock" (ver. 18) was seen first at 7:24-25. "To build" was used 7:24, 26. This is the first time the eminent biblical word "church" is used, as a synonym for "kingdom." "Church" is used 114 times; in Matthew only here and 18:17. It will not be used again until, extensively, in the book of Acts. It can refer to the "church" in a universal sense, as it does here (and Eph. 1:22; 5:23), or to a local community (Acts 8:3; 1 Cor. 16:1) or as an assembly (1 Cor. 11:18; 14:28). "Gates" was used first at 7:13-14. "Hades," the unseen world, was used first at 11:23. "To overpower" is used here; Luke 21:36; 23:23.

"Keys" (ver. 19) is found only here in Matthew; also in Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1. On "kingdom," see at 3:2. It is used 162 times in the NT. "To bind" is used first at 12:29; 13:30; 14:3. "To release" or "to loose" was first used at 5:19. This verb "to command" is used 8 times, only here in Matthew; Mark 5:43; 7:36; 8:15; 9:9; Acts 15:24; Heb. 12:20.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

We observe the verb “to ask” (ver. 13) is in the imperfect verb tense, showing it was continuous asking in the past. The verbs “having been bound” and “having been loosed” (ver. 19) translate the perfect tense of the verb indicating something that has been done in the past with continuing power or importance.

#### PARALLEL:

Mark (8:27-30) and Luke (9:18-21) record this conversation.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The kingdom was predicted by Daniel (2:44) and he also suggested it would be the “Son of Man” who would receive that kingdom (7:13-14). We note that Jesus preferred “Son of Man” to any other designation for Himself and His identity. “Rock” in the OT is Jehovah God: Gen. 49:24; Psa. 18:31; 31:3; 62:2; Isa. 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8; Hab. 1:12. The phrase “gates of hades” or “Sheol” in Hebrew, appears in Isaiah 38:10. “Gates of death” is found in Job 38:17; Psa. 9:13; 107:18.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Caesarea” (ver. 13) was known for worship of the god Pan, as well as Augustus Caesar, for whom it was named by Philip. He later added “Philippi” to distinguish it from the other city by the same name. It was located 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of Mount Hermon close to the headwaters of the Jordan River. It was largely populated by Gentiles. This Caesarea is mentioned only in this context and in its parallel in Mark 8:27. The other Caesarea, mentioned 15 times in Acts, is the Caesarea located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

#### COMMENTS:

This paragraph is one of the most theologically remarkable passages in the NT. Jesus leads His apostles into Gentile territory, perhaps away from the antagonism of the Jewish leaders, and the eyes of the other crowds. He has a serious discussion with them. He begins by asking, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite description of Himself, used nine times before this moment (8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41). The apostles answered with the current prevailing opinions.

Herod believed Jesus was John risen from the dead (14:2). Elijah performed some miracles, as Jesus did. The prophets had also predicted “Elijah” would return: Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6; yet, Jesus had already said that John was “Elijah” (11:9-10, 14; see also 17:12-13). The reference to Jeremiah is not as clear; he was an emotional prophet and preached the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Perhaps Jesus’ preaching or His emotions recalled Jeremiah. Moses had also predicted the coming of a specific prophet: Deuteronomy 18:15-18 (see also John 1:21, 25; 6:14-15; 7:40). Jesus is that prophet: Acts 3:22-23. Yet, He is more than a prophet.

Next, Jesus asked the apostles for their view: “Who do you all say that I am?” Then Peter, speaking for the group, made the “great confession:” “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Matthew identified Him as “Christ” in 1:1 (see comments there). Its other uses are: 1:16-18; 2:4; 11:2. Here, for the first time, His apostles acknowledge He is the Christ, which is the Greek translation of “Messiah.” This designation identified Jesus as the One anointed by the Spirit of God (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 42:1-4; see Matt. 12:18-21; Psa. 72).

“Son of God” suggests a Davidic ruler (see Psalm 2; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; Psa. 89:27-29). Yet, it carries much more theological weight. Jesus had illustrated a relationship with God the Father which no one, not even David, could claim (see 11:25-27). The title suggests power, authority, and sovereignty. God identified Jesus as His Son (3:17). Satan had acknowledged that fact (4:3, 6). The demons confessed it (8:29). Here, the apostles confess His nature, through Peter. “Living” God was a designation for God among the prophets to contrast Him with the dead idols the pagans worshipped (Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; Psa. 42:2; Dan. 6:20; Hosea 1:10).

After Peter made such a great confession, Jesus blessed him. Jesus had given Peter his name “Cephas,” Aramaic for “rock” at John 1:42. “Cephas” is a transliteration of the Aramaic word, which might also be written “kephas.” “Flesh and blood,” or humanity or human reason, had not revealed this confession to Peter (see also John 1:11-12). God had revealed it in the person and works of Jesus Christ. Peter was drawing the logical conclusion of these works: Jesus is God in the flesh (see Matt. 1:23).

In verse 18, Jesus makes a play on Peter’s name. Presuming that Jesus spoke Aramaic, Jesus would have said, “You are *kephas*, and on this *kephas*, I will build My church.” In Aramaic, Jesus would use the same word. In Greek, Matthew wrote two words: “Petros” for “Peter” and “petra” for the rock on which the church is built. It is likely that the change only reflects proper usage of the masculine “petros” for Peter’s name. Some have argued based on this statement that the church is built on Peter, that he is the first among equals, the Pope of Christ’s church. That is theologically unsustainable. As we point out below, theologically speaking, only Christ is the head of the church; only Christ is the foundation of the church. The “rock” would, then, have to be Christ as He was just confessed by Peter. Protestants, while rejecting the Roman Catholic interpretation that Peter is the “vicar of Christ on earth,” still maintain that the church / kingdom is built on Peter. But all that amounts to, according to them, is that Peter preached the gospel first to the Jews (Acts 2) and the Gentiles (Acts 10). That hardly constitutes him being the “foundation” of the church! A better interpretation must be available.

The reference to the “church” is its first usage in the NT and suggests a people of God and, perhaps, a place of worship to God or a new temple. Jesus claimed to raise up a new temple (John 2:19-21), which the Jews used against Him at His trial (Matt. 26:61). The fact that Jesus uses the future tense: “I will build...” shows that it was not yet in existence. It did not exist in the OT and it did not exist prior to this statement. Therefore, John the baptist was not a member of the church. This word, “church,” translates the Greek word for “assembly” (see Acts 19:32, 39, 40 for a secular usage; also 7:38 for its use for Israel). Some scholars think Matthew added this word later, once the church became existent and functional. However, it was a word in current usage at that time and it is only reasonable that Jesus would promise to build His “people” into a kingdom. While “kingdom” and “church” are not completely interchangeable, they have considerable overlap. The “kingdom” in heaven will compose those saints who died under the OT law but also include those who are in the church. It will be the church which receives the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The “gates of hades” would not stop Jesus from establishing that church. He will go into the grave, into the unseen world, into hades: Acts 2:27, 31. Hades would not keep Jesus in its clutches. He will return to the visible world and establish His church. Then, in verse 19, Jesus promises to give Peter (and the rest of the apostles: 18:17-18) the keys to open that church / kingdom to others by sharing the gospel message (compare Luke 11:52). As a part of opening the kingdom to others, the apostles will only be exercising authority given to them from above. That is the force of the perfect tense of the verbs translated: “will have been bound” and “will have been loosed.” The apostles will only be binding and loosing, as terms of entrance and membership in the church of Christ, what God had already bound and loosed in heaven (see John 20:23).

Having made such an important promise, Jesus commands His disciples, at that particular point, not to tell others about His identity. He would reveal Himself openly at the right time, which He knew, would lead to His crucifixion. The Father wanted everything to work at the appropriate time.

#### APPLICATION:

There is no evidence here or anywhere else in the NT that Peter was “first among equals” among the apostles. There is no evidence here or anywhere else that he was, in fact, “pope.” There is no evidence here or anywhere else in the NT that Christ intended to set up a succession of leaders over His church on earth. There is no evidence here or anywhere else in

the NT that Christ planned to make the “chair” of Peter in Rome a source of infallible teaching. The infallible teaching came from the written word of God, the Bible, guided by the Holy Spirit in each of the forty writers (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Scriptures are clear that Christ is the foundation of the church: Acts 4:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 1 Peter 2:6-8. The apostles’ teaching are foundational to the church only because they were guided by the Holy Spirit: Eph. 2:20; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:14. The promise given to Peter here is extended to all the apostles in 18:17-18, arguing again that Peter was simply serving as the spokesman for all the apostles.

Peter did serve an important role in the early church. It is his sermon recorded to the Jews which opened the doors of the kingdom to them: Acts 2:14, although all the apostles were guided by the Spirit and spoke on that occasion (2:4, 7-8, 11). He, with John, went to Samaria once they received the gospel, to lay hands on them and give them the power of the Holy Spirit: 8:14-17. He also was the first to preach the gospel to the non-Jews (Acts 10 & 11). However, Peter did not take the lead in the church in Jerusalem in Acts 15; James, Jesus’ brother, did (15:13ff). Also, Paul had to rebuke Peter for sinning publicly in Galatians 2:11ff.

The confession which Peter made in verse 16 is the basic belief that needs to hold firm ground in the heart of one who desires to repent of his or her sins and be immersed for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:36-37; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 3:16; 6:12-13).

#### TRANSLATION - 16:21-28:

**21** From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that it is necessary for Him into Jerusalem to enter and much to suffer from the elders and high priests and scribes and to be killed and the third day to be raised. **22** And after taking Him aside, Peter began to scold Him, saying, “Gracious to you, Lord! It will not ever be to you this thing!”

**23** And after turning around, He said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are My stumbling block, because you are not thinking of the things of God but the things of men!”

**24** At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, “If any desires behind Me to come, let him deny himself and take up his cross and let him follow Me. **25** For whoever may desire his soul to save, will lose it; and whoever may lose his soul for My sake will find it. **26** For what will it advantage a man if the whole world he gains but his soul he forfeits? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **27** For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and at that time, He will repay to each according to His practice. **28** Truly I say to you that there are some of those here standing, who will not at all taste death until when they will see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

“To show” (ver. 21) is used three times: Matthew 16:21; John 2:18; Rev. 22:8. This is the first use of the verb “to suffer,” out of 42 times. In Matthew, it is used here; 17:12, 15; 27:19. “Elders” was used at 15:2. “High priests” was used at 2:4. “Scribes” was used at 2:4; 5:20. “To kill” was first used at 10:28; 14:5. “To raise” was seen first at 1:24; 2:13-14, 20-21. “To scold” (ver. 22) was first seen at 8:26; 12:16. “Gracious” is used here at 16:22 and Heb. 8:12.

“To turn around” (ver. 23) was used at 5:39; 7:6; 9:22. “Get away” was used at 4:10; 5:24, 41. “Satan” was seen at 4:10. Here, Jesus clearly uses it as a designation for Peter. “Stumbling block” was first seen at 13:41. “To think” or “to set one’s mind to” is used here for the only time in Matthew, out of 26 uses. “To deny” (ver. 24) is used 11 times; in Matthew, at 16:24; 26:34-35, 75. “To take up” or “to take away” was used first at 4:6. “Cross” was used first at 10:38. It is found 27 times in the NT. “To follow” was used first at 4:20, 22, 25.

“Soul” (ver. 26) was first seen at 2:20. “To save” was first used at 1:21. “To lose” or “to destroy” was first seen at 2:13. “To be advantaged” (ver. 26) is used 15 times in the NT, in Matthew first at 15:5; see 16:26; 27:24. “World” is found first at 4:8. “To gain” is used 17 times, in Matthew, at 16:26; 18:15; 25:16-17, 20, 22. “To forfeit” is used here; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25; 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Cor. 7:9; Phil. 3:8. “In exchange” is only used here and the parallel at Mark 8:37.

“To be about to” (ver. 27) was first seen at 2:13; 3:7; 11:14; 12:32. “Glory” was first seen at 4:8. “Angel” was seen first at 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19. “To give” or “to repay” was first seen at 5:26, 33. The word “practice” here gives us the English word *praxis*; it is used only here in Matthew but also at Luke 23:51; Acts 19:18; Rom. 8:13; 12:4; Col. 3:9.

“To taste” (ver. 28) is used here for the first time; see also 27:34. It is used 15 times in the NT. “Death” was found first at 4:16. “Kingdom” is found first at 3:2.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

In verse 21, Jesus states that it was “necessary.” This verb is followed by four verbs in the infinitive to show what is “necessary:” 1) For Jesus to go into Jerusalem; 2) For Jesus to suffer; 3) For Jesus to be killed; 4) For Jesus to be raised again. All these are the works of God. Peter is extremely emphatic in verse 22 which makes his later denial all the more embarrassing.

#### PARALLELS:

Other accounts of this paragraph are found in Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27. Verses 24-26 have their parallel in Matthew’s gospel at 10:38-39. The “three days” finds its parallel in several passages: Matt. 12:40; 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Hosea (6:2-3) might have been referring to the resurrection on the third day. The NT never explicitly cites this passage to that purpose.

#### COMMENTS:

With the apostles acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, they were now prepared to hear the total message: Jesus was going to Jerusalem. It was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). As plainly as He could say it, Jesus tells His apostles that He will suffer much at the hands of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council composed of the elders and chief priests and scribes. He would be killed, but He would be raised by the Father after three days.

Peter had just confessed Jesus’ identity but he could not accept the idea that Jesus would suffer and die. Peter likely had no idea as to what the resurrection referred. Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him with a sharp negative statement: “Mercy to you, Lord.” That is, “May God be gracious to you and not allow this to happen.” He is very emphatic that it will not happen.

Then Jesus gets very blunt with Peter and refers to him as His adversary: Satan. He commands Peter to get behind Him and quit trying to prevent Him from going to Jerusalem. He was not physically hindering Him, but discouraging Him through His words. Jesus states that Peter is a stumbling block to Jesus through his misguided zeal. To put it simply, Peter was thinking in earthly, physical terms and not looking at these events from God’s perspective.

So in verse 24, Jesus gives a series of clear warnings to His apostles. If someone wants to follow Christ, he needs to be prepared, as Jesus is, to carry his own cross to suffer, perhaps to die. The condemned criminals would carry the crosspiece for their crucifixion, the *patibulum* (John 19:17). The way of Christ might lead to persecution and death.

Secondly, Jesus promises that if His disciples love their physical lives above His call, they will destroy their own lives. If, on the other hand, they willingly give their lives in life and / or in death to the service of Christ, they will win their lives. When it comes to balancing the soul against earthly allurements, there is nothing more worthy than the soul.

Thirdly, Jesus promises that He will return again one day. When he says, “The Son of Man is about to come,” he uses a verb (is about to) that shows that the Son of Man is on His way! There is no doubt that Jesus will come again! He will not return to earth. No passage of Scripture states that Jesus will return to earth. But, He will return to receive His own and take them to heaven (John 14:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Jesus will return with His angels (13:39, 41, 49; 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7). When He returns, He will repay man according to His obedience to Christ’s commands (Rom. 2:5-7; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12,

13; 22:12). “Practice” refers to man’s life, viewed as a whole. It is also the word for the “Acts” of the Apostles.

Finally, in verse 28, Jesus states that before He returns (verse 27), His kingdom will be established. It will be established, in fact, within the lifetime of His audience. Jesus will be present in His kingdom when He establishes it (Acts 2:33-36).

Scholars of different theological minds have proposed at least seven explanations for the “kingdom coming in the lifetime of that generation:”

1. The promise refers to the Transfiguration in chapter 17;
2. It refers to the resurrection and ascension;
3. It refers to Pentecost;
4. It refers to the spread of Christianity;
5. It refers to the development of the gospel message;
6. It refers to the destruction of Jerusalem;
7. It refers to Christ’s second coming.

The Transfiguration (#1) does not discuss the establishment of the kingdom and it was too soon (six days later) to merit the reference to the audience’s death. The kingdom will be established on Pentecost in Acts 2, as shown below. That will be just a year or so in the near future. The resurrection, itself, while a prelude to the establishment of the kingdom did not create the kingdom by itself. The second coming of Christ, still in our future, is far too distant from Jesus’ contemporaries to be the reference to the kingdom’s establishment. The other options (#4, 5, 6) suffer the same weaknesses as the others, except #3.

The “coming with power” (see also Mark 9:1) was associated by Jesus in Luke 24:49 with the coming of the Holy Spirit (see also Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit came on the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. That’s when they were clothed with power and that’s the occasion when the kingdom / church of Christ was established. All references to the “kingdom” after Acts 2 speak of it as existing in the present: Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9.

#### APPLICATION:

Peter makes it clear that he did not, at all, expect Jesus to rise from the dead. That point makes his testimony to the resurrection all the more inspiring, encouraging, and credible!

Paul (Rom. 9:33, quoting Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isa. 8:14) and Peter (1 Pet. 2:6-8) state that Christ is the stumbling block for many people. Jesus is still a stumbling block (see also 1 Cor. 1:23). We must be willing to follow Jesus Christ, regardless of the cost. Eternity in hell is too costly to have a flippant attitude toward our soul’s destination. When Jesus comes again, He will reward and vindicate all those who put Him first in their lives and followed His teachings, without wavering.