

**Teen Bible Study Notes:** Friday, November 30, 2018  
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**The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ – Lecture #17**  
**Book and Chapter: Matthew – Chapters 16 & 17**

## MATTHEW 16

### *The Pharisees and Sadducees Seek a Sign*

**V1** Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.

**V2** He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red*’;

**V3** And in the morning, ‘*It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.*’

Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times.

**Question:** Is there any scientific validity to **verses 2 and 3**?

**Answer:** Indeed there is scientific validity to the adage. This saying has very old roots. Mariners have a similar saying: ‘Red sky at night, sailors’ delight; red sky in the morning sailors take warning. There are also versions of this saying that refer to shepherds. Shakespeare also said something similar in his play, *Venus and Adonis* – “Like a red morn that ever yet betokened, Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field, Sorrow to the shepherds, woe unto the birds. Gust and foul flaws to herdmen and to herds.”

Two factors contribute to the cogency of this saying. The first is that weather systems generally travel from west to east in the mid-latitudes. In the mid-latitudes, the prevailing winds are westerlies. Because the sun rises in the east and set in the west, a rising sun in advance of an approaching weather system would illuminate the approaching mid-and high-level clouds to create a red sky in the morning. Alternatively, if the sun is setting as a weather system exits and high pressure is building, then the departing clouds would be illuminated. This would create a red sky at night with fair weather to follow.

The reddish color results from scattering of sunlight by suspended particles and water vapor in the atmosphere. The sun’s rays pass through a greater length of atmosphere at sunrise and sunset than at any other time of day. In addition, water vapor, dirt, and dust concentrations are maximized in the lowest layers of the atmosphere when the atmosphere is dominated by sinking air (high pressure). A red sky suggests an atmosphere loaded with dust and moisture particles. Therefore when under high pressure we can see vivid red sunsets and sunrises.

So this saying is valid in mid latitudes if the timing of weather systems is just right. That is, clearing in the east at sunrise with approaching clouds and clearing prior to sunset in the west as

clouds exit to the east. If weather systems and their associated clouds are moving from south to north (as can occasionally occur), however, then the saying does not hold.

### **Red sky at night, sailors delight**

When we see a red sky at night, this means that the setting sun is sending its light through a high concentration of dust particles. This usually indicates high pressure and stable air coming in from the west. Basically good weather to follow.

### **Red sky in morning, sailors take warning**

A red sunrise can mean that a high pressure system (good weather) has already passed, thus indicating that a storm system (low pressure) may be moving to the east. A morning sky that is a deep, fiery red can indicate that there is a high water content in the atmosphere. So, rain could be on its way.

Christ's told the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees that they could "discern the face of the sky and thereby predict the weather – but they were unable to "discern the signs of the times." They could understand physical things. They lacked spiritual discernment and understanding. Christ performed many mighty miracles and astonished them with his understanding and wisdom – and yet they rejected Him, and failed to recognize who He was!

**V4** A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

***The sign of Jonah the prophet*** – the only sign Christ gave to prove that He was the Messiah was the length of time, following His death, that He would be buried – a period of three days and three nights, or 72 hours.

But according to Easter tradition, Christ was crucified Friday afternoon and resurrected Sunday morning – a period of only a day and a half, or 36 hours.

Since Christ did fulfill His sign, the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition is just that – a tradition, not a fact. Jesus was buried on a Wednesday, and rose from the dead 72 hours later – late Saturday afternoon. (*We will study this in more detail when we get to those verses that deal with this subject later in the Matthew's gospel account.*)

### ***The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees***

**V5** And when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

**V6** Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

Far beyond the physical uses of leaven are the significant *spiritual* meanings.

Jesus said to His disciples: "...Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (**verse 6**).

The disciples didn't know what He meant. Do you?

The disciples thought Jesus was talking about physical bread, but He wasn't. He was talking about the doctrine of the religious authorities, which led people into sin (**Matthew 16:11-12, Matthew 23:13**). The doctrine of Pharisees and Sadducees was leavened with hypocrisy, legalism, political opportunism, and spiritual hardness.

By way of analogy, this leaven of false doctrine has spread through the whole world as a tool of Satan's deception (**Revelation 12:9**).

**V7** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "*It is* because we have taken no bread."

**V8** But when Jesus perceived it, He said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because we have brought no bread?"

**V9** Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?

**V10** Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?"

Notice again – these were two separate miracles. 1) The five loaves and feeding of the five thousand, and 2) the seven loaves and the feeding of the four thousand. Christ fed this many men besides women and children in both cases. He did this out of concern for the people and because He had compassion.

**V11** How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? – *but* you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

**V12** Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Now Christ's disciples understood. They got it.

### ***Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ***

**V13** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

**Caesarea Philippi** – was located north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of the southwest slope of Mt. Hermon. The place had long been associated with idol worship.

**V14** So they said, “Some *say* John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

**V15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

**V16** And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

**V17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

**John 6:65** “And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’”

**I Corinthians 2:11** “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man who is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

**I Corinthians 2:14** “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

**V18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

### ***“Peter” a Title Designating Leadership***

Immediately after the decisive battle to overcome Satan, two of the disciples of John the Baptist saw, with John, Jesus. Jesus asked them to follow him to his home. One of these was Andrew, son of Jona. He called his brother, Simon bar-Jona.

Jesus looked on Simon, and said to him, “... You are Simon the son of Jonah, You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone – ***“Petros”***)” (**John 1:42**).

In **Mark 3:14-16** we read, **V14** “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.

**V15** And to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

**V16** Simon, to who He gave the name Peter.”

A surname is, according to Webster, “an added name derived from occupation.”

The surname Peter, had for centuries been a surname or TITLE, designating a religious LEADER, HEAD or HEADQUARTERS. Peter was the first and chief apostle. An apostle is “one sent forth to proclaim or preach.”

So, at the very beginning of his earthly ministry, preparing the FOUNDATION for the Church, Jesus Christ chose his chief human apostle and the other original 11.

*Mystery of the Ages, by Herbert W. Armstrong, Chapter on “Mystery of the Church”, pp. 221-222.*

To understand what Jesus meant in this passage, we must begin reading in **verse 13**. As Christ came into the coastal country near Caesarea, He asked His disciples who the people thought He was. They gave various answers. Jesus then asked who *they* thought He was.

Peter, more outspoken than the others, answered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Then Christ said to him, “You are Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then Christ said to him, “...you are Peter [*the Greek word is **Petros** – which means “little rock”*], and on this rock [*Greek word – **Petra** – which means “very great rock” – referring to Christ Himself*], I will build My church...”

Christ is the great “Rock” upon whom the Church is built (**Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 15, 18; I Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 2:20; I Peter 2:6**).

In the New Testament Greek, the Church is called the *ekklesia*, a Greek word meaning “called-out ones” – an assembly, a congregation, a gathering, a group.

The first place in the New Testament where the word *church* appears is this verse (**Matthew 16:18**), where speaking to Simon Peter, Jesus said, “...I will build My church...”

The Church was to consist of many to be called out of Satan’s world to be taught and trained for numerous governmental positions under Christ when He comes to rule over all the nations.

Christ told Peter that He (Christ) was about to found the New Testament Church, guide it (**Ephesians 5:23**), be with it always (**Matthew 28:20**), and the grave would never prevail against it. The Church would continue to exist, doing His Work down through the ages as a little flock, till the end time, when it would reach the whole world with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (**Matthew 24:14**). The true Church would never die out, but would remain until Christ returned to the earth. *The gates of hell [Hades – or “the grave” in the Greek]* would not prevail against His Church, since Christ – not Peter – was to be the LIVING HEAD over it (**Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18**).

The forces of evil will not be able to conquer the people of God [the Church of God]. The Church, although small and persecuted, would never die out. It would always exist!

**V19** And 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.”

***Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*** – The Church was invested with certain powers and responsibilities.

God's true ministers, however, have been given the authority to bind only that which is agreement with God's laws and which, in reality "would be bound by God." The decisions of God's ministers are based on the Scriptures.

In this way, they are led to make the right judgments in accordance with God's will. But, notice also that this verse neither says nor implies that God's ministers have the power to forgive sin. Only God can forgive sin (**Mark 2:7**).

From the scriptural teaching, however, true ministers are able to discern when God has forgiven a person and when He has not. For example, in **I Corinthians 5:1-5** – Paul knew that this man was not forgiven because he was not repentant. Yet, after the man repented, Paul said that he was to be admitted again to the fellowship of the Church (**II Corinthians 2:6-8**) because his sins were now forgiven.

To guide His ministers in making the right decisions, Christ gave them the "keys" to the Kingdom of God. This is symbolic language, meaning that He gave them the knowledge of how to enter the Kingdom – the knowledge of the way of life which leads to salvation. Notice, in **Luke 11:52**, Christ reproved the lawyers of His day for suppressing the key of knowledge – hiding the way which leads to salvation and entrance into God's Kingdom.

**Luke 11:52** "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

Christ revealed that way –the key to right living – to His true ministers and His Church.

**V20** Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

*Tell no one* – It wasn't yet time for them to know.

### *Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection*

**V21** From that time Jesus began to show to 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 again the third day.

***Be killed*** – this is the first of three predictions in Matthew concerning Christ's death (*see Matthew 17:22, 23; Matthew 20:18-19*).

**V22** Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

Shortly before this Peter had confessed that Christ was the Messiah. Now he was attempting to correct Jesus.

**V23** But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

***Get behind Me Satan*** – was a very serious thing. But Peter was standing in the way of the plan of God, and so he was speaking for Satan.

### ***Take Up the Cross and Follow Him***

**V24** Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

**V25** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

**V26** For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

**V27** For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

***He will reward each according to his works*** – We are saved by “grace.” However, we will be rewarded according to our works.

**V28** Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

**Question:** Jesus’ disciples died long ago, and Jesus Christ still hasn’t returned with His Kingdom. What does this verse mean?

**Answer:** Notice that Jesus was talking to His disciples (**Matthew 16:21 - above**). He said, there are “**some** standing here who shall not taste death” till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Next, notice that Jesus said they would “**see** the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” before they died. He didn’t say He was actually going to come before they would “taste death.”

**Matthew 17:1** – continues the same train of thought: “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves.” Here were **some** of Jesus’ disciples going with Him. (***Read the companion accounts of this event in – Mark 9:2-4 and Luke 9:28-32.***)

## **CHAPTER 17**

The Transfiguration recorded here in **Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9** – is an enigma to many.

Yet this incredible event relates crucially to the soon-coming Kingdom of God, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles!

Why did Jesus, some six months before His death, take three of His disciples up to the mountain for this unusual experience?

First of all, let's understand what actually happened on the mountain. The disciples were shown a vision, as Jesus later affirmed in **Matthew 17:9** "...Jesus commanded them saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'"

Since God's Kingdom has NOT yet been established here on earth and the disciples did all die, the obvious meaning is that some of the disciples were to be shown the splendor of the Kingdom in a vision. And so they were, through the Transfiguration.

The disciples saw Christ as He would look when He returns to this earth – but only in vision [a supernatural picture], not in reality.

We call this vision the Transfiguration because Jesus was changed in form or appearance, or *transfigured*.

*Trans* means "across or beyond," and *figure* means "form, shape or appearance."

**Matthew 17:2** describes this amazing miracle as a transfiguration, and says Jesus' face shone as the sun. God divinely intervened by His Holy Spirit to change the appearance of His Son.

**Revelation 1:13-16** – describes Christ as He appears now.

The transfiguration of Christ was a transformation of Jesus by God to give Him the same appearance He would have at His Second Coming. The three disciples saw Christ just as they will see Him again when he comes with His Kingdom.

The disciples had begun to fully understand just who Jesus was – the Messiah and Son of God – only a short while before the Transfiguration (**Matthew 16:13-28**).

### *Jesus Transfigured on the Mount*

**V1** Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves,

**V2** And was transfigured before them, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

**V3** And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Moses was dead and buried long before this event (**Deuteronomy 34:5-6**). So was Elijah. The disciples saw these men only in the glory of the resurrection – an event which will not actually occur until the Second Coming of Christ (**Hebrews 11:39; I Thessalonians 4:13-17**).

**V4** Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

The flow of events recorded in the gospels indicates that this spectacular vision occurred a short time before Jesus celebrated His last Feast of Tabernacles. Peter’s comment during the vision seems to shed additional light on the time. As the glorified Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about His coming death and resurrection, Peter said, “Lord it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles...” (**Verse 4**).

The Jews has a custom that they were not to construct booths for the Feast of Tabernacles until after the Feast of Trumpets. Therefore, though the Bible doesn’t say when the vision took place, the narrative indicates that it possibly occurred on or immediately following the Feast of Trumpets, the Holy Day that pictures Christ’s return in power and glory.

**V5** While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

**V6** And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

**V7** But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.”

**V8** And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

**V9** Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

It is interesting to note – that years later, when Peter recounted the Transfiguration in his second epistle, he wanted us to understand that the event was prophetic, not just a historical fact (**II Peter 1:18-19**).

**II Peter 1:18-19: V18** “And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

**V19** We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The Transfiguration only confirmed, in a dramatic way, what was already prophesied – that Christ is coming in tremendous power to change us by a resurrection from the dead and give us entrance “into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**II Peter 1:10-11**).

The Bible indicates that Christ will rule over all nations, crowned with glory and honor, at His Second Coming. At the Transfiguration, the apostles saw Christ's majesty as King of kings.

### **The Exodus connection**

We can draw a parallel between the transfiguration and another Old Testament event – the Exodus.

When Christ, brought Israel out of Egypt, He allowed His servant Moses to see part of Himself in His glorified state (**Exodus 33:18-23**).

When Christ was about to bring mankind out of sin in a spiritual exodus, and about to found His New Testament Church, He again allowed His servants – in this case, the disciples who were to become the leading apostles – to see Him glorified. The event took on a powerful meaning. In the Transfiguration, the disciples had proof that the same One who had led ancient Israel would lead them and many others by His Spirit.

This spiritual exodus from sin was to be accomplished by Christ's death or decease, of which He spoke to Moses and Elijah in the vision. It's interesting to note that the Greek word for decease is *exodus*.

### **Our Transfiguration**

Besides its references to the Transfiguration vision, the New Testament uses the word for transfiguration in two other instances.

Paul says in **Romans 12:2** that Christians must present themselves to God and become transformed.

**Romans 12:2** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The Greek word *metamorphoo* – used here, means “to change form, to transfigure.” As Moses' face was transfigured at Mt. Sinai – it shone brightly after he had seen God (**Exodus 34:29-35**) – so we, too, must be spiritually transfigured by the renewing of our minds.

Every one of us will have a part in a transfiguration. Notice **II Corinthians 3:18** “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”.

The Transfiguration must have greatly encouraged the disciples who witnessed it. For us who understand its significance in our present and future, it is a great encouragement, too.

**V10** And His disciple asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

**V11** Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Elijah truly is coming first, and will restore all things.

The fact that Christ used the phrase *will restore all things* indicates that the prophecy still had a future [end time] fulfillment.

**Malachi 4:5** states: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

**Luke 1:17** says that John the Baptist came “...in the spirit and power of Elijah...” to prepare the way before the first coming of Christ. Another “Elijah” is prophesied to warn the world “before that great and dreadful day of the LORD” – the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to punish the unrepentant nations of the earth!

**V12** But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.”

**V13** Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

“It is revealed in **Malachi 3:1-5** and **4:5-6** that God would raise up one in the power and spirit of Elijah, shortly prior to the Second Coming of Christ. In **Matthew 17:11** Jesus said, even after John the Baptist had completed his mission, that this prophesied Elijah “...truly is coming first, and will restore all things.” Although it is plainly revealed that John the Baptist had come in the power and spirit of Elijah, he did not restore anything. The human leader to be raised up somewhat shortly prior to Christ’s Second Coming was to prepare the way – prepare the Church – for Christ’s coming, and restore the truth that had been lost through the preceding eras of the Church.”

*Mystery of the Ages, Herbert W. Armstrong, pp 290-291.*

### ***A Boy Is Healed***

**V14** And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying,

**V15** Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

***He is an epileptic*** – in this case, the epilepsy was caused by a demon.

**V16** So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

**V17** Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.”

**V18** And Jesus rebuked the demon, and he came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

**V19** Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast him out?”

**V20** So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

**V21** However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

### ***Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection***

**V22** Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men,

**V23** And they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Once again Jesus predicted His death and resurrection (*see also Matthew 16:21; 20:18, 19*). This is the second time He does this in Matthew’s Gospel account.

### ***Peter and His Master Pay Their Taxes***

**V24** And when they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?”

***The Temple tax*** – was a tax given annually by every adult Jewish male over 20 years of age for maintaining the temple.

This tax was based on **Exodus 30:13**, and amounted to two day’s wages for a common laborer. Evidently Jesus had not yet paid the tax, and the temple tax collector was following up on it.

**V25** He said, “Yes.” And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their *own* sons or from strangers?”

Peter replied to the tax collector (**verse 24**) stating that Jesus had paid the temple tax [in previous years].

Jesus ***anticipated*** that Peter was about to bring up the matter of the ***temple tax*** and so Jesus spoke first.

***Their own sons*** – most likely the comparison was between the Imperial family and the common people.

**V26** Peter said to Him, “From strangers.” Jesus said to him, “Then sons are free.

In this verse, Jesus demonstrates that, as God’s Son, He was free from the obligation to pay the temple tax. In fact, the temple belonged to Him (**Malachi 3:1**). The fact that He used the plural *sons* implies that Peter and the other disciples were also free from that obligation.

**V27** Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”