

Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 1:11 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 16

"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?" (Matthew 16:26)

Last week's lesson, on Matthew 15, ended, you might remember, with Jesus and His disciples again getting into a boat--after finishing their ministry in Gentile territory (at least for a time)--and again crossing the Sea of Galilee (this time without incident, apparently), and coming to the "region of Magadan"! Believed to be on the west side of the Sea of Galilee--back in Jewish territory--and perhaps in or near the home of Mary Magdalene!

And wouldn't you know, Jesus is confronted by yet another delegation of Pharisees, coming all the way up from Jerusalem--but this time accompanied, somewhat surprisingly, by Sadducees! Surprisingly, since they represented two opposing "political" parties that comprised the Sanhedrin, the highest governing body in Israel! They were political and theological enemies! The Pharisees, the "conservatives" of their time, who held to strict observance of the law, and traditions--marked by "self-righteousness"! The Sadducees, the "liberals" of their time, who didn't believe in the resurrection, or anything supernatural, but did believe that this life was all there is--and so marked by "self-indulgence"! They were united, however, in opposing Jesus and, because they were caught up in temporal things, but "blind to eternal realities," they missed out on the "most important thing in all the world" of all recognizing their Messiah! "Knowing" who Jesus was (and is)!

As David Platt (pastor of McLean Bible Church) notes: "Amid their supposed "knowledge" of God, as religious leaders, they missed the signs that Jesus had already performed all around them, which affirmed that He was indeed the Christ, the promised Messiah!" And so, their request (demand!) that Jesus "show them a sign (another sign) from heaven" did not come from a heart of faith but, as Jesus recognized, merely as a way of "taunting" Him!

Jesus' response to them was right on! He noted how they knew "how to discern the appearance of sky" (the weather!) but not the "signs of the time"! And a "sign" would not be given to them, He said, except the "sign of Jonah" (which, as it would turn out, they would "miss" as well)!

And so, Jesus left them and used the incident as another "teaching moment" for the disciples! The disciples, verse 5 says, had "forgotten to bring any bread"! (Pastor Jesse gave a sermon on the Mark version of this passage, back on May 13, 2013, calling it "The Case of the Missing Bread"!) Not clear what they actually ate on this occasion, as it turned out, but Jesus used it to warn His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"--or of their "teachings"! And how their "unbelief," if picked up by the disciples, would "defile their spiritual lives"!

Well, as they made their way back up north again, this time to Caesarea Philippi (in what is modern-day Syria), Jesus had something very important on His mind that He wanted to discuss with His disciples! "Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Only to highlight the fact that people really did not know who He was (and is)! And then the most important question of

all! For them (and for anyone today)! "But who do YOU say that I am?" And Peter's ("Simon Peter's!) answer that Jesus Himself said could only have come from divine revelation! And I like the KJV here: "Thou art the Christ! The Son of the Living God!" Wow! Bingo!

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah!" (Son of Jonah, ironically!) And we know what comes next--although it's been often misunderstood and misinterpreted! "...You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church (first usage of "church" in Matthew!); and the Gates of Hades will not overpower it! And I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven...etc.!" Interestingly, Jesse gave his first sermon at IBC (on January 8, 2012) on this passage entitled, "Unstoppable: Building the Church," with a four-point outline about the church! It's supernatural (truth revealed by the Holy Spirit)! It's personal (one person at a time)! It's inexplicable! (He will build it!) And, it's invincible!

I'm also looking at my notes on Jesse' October 20, 2019, sermon: "Marks of the True Church!" Again, a four-point outline: (1) It has the right Lord! It belongs to Jesus and identifies the Trinity! (2) It has the right Gospel! The foundation (rock) is the confession of Jesus as Messiah and Savior of the world! It presents the message of salvation and regeneration by the Holy Spirit! (3) It has the right ordinances! Believer's baptism to symbolize His death and resurrection, and as a public affirmation of faith! The Lord's Supper to proclaim His death and resurrection "until He comes"! And (4) It has the right membership! Made up of sinners saved by grace! Designed for those who know and follow Christ!

Well, there's more in Matthew 16! Verses 21-23 say: "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples how He MUST go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day." And Peter's reaction--being the "mouthpiece of Satan," who desperately wanted to prevent Jesus from going to the cross! (We see Peter, moving from a "rock" to a "stumbling block"!)

Then, we see Jesus reminding His disciples (and us) what it really means to be a disciple of His! Denying self and "taking up the cross and following" Him! I was struck by Paul Logan's depiction of "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it"--as someone who in our very day talks about "going out into the world and finding himself (or herself)"!

And Matthew 16:26--our memory verse--which I think of as the "second most important question" one could be asked: "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?" This, and the question: "Who (exactly) do you say Jesus is?" are two of the biggest questions one could (and should!) ever ask of one's self--as well pose for others who are searching to "find themselves," or seeking something so much better for their lives! And a fitting close for our lesson! Matthew 16 has to be one of the most life-challenging chapters in all the Bible!

Hope you were challenged and inspired by this text as I was!

May God be with you, in your world--wherever that may take you this week!

Lowell