

Matthew Chapter 14-17 – Evidence of Jesus’ Messiahship and More Opposition – Part 7

Matthew 16:1-20

Introduction

Matthew is an evangelical book to Israel. The purpose of Matthew is:

- To demonstrate that Jesus is Christ (the Messiah)
- To write an account of the life and times of Jesus Christ
- To introduce, offer, and prepare the Jews for the kingdom of heaven
- To prepare the remnant of Israel to survive the Time of Jacob’s Trouble
- To validate both this testimony and the testimony of all the apostles
- If Israel were to believe in Jesus and accept Jesus as their King, then He will bring the kingdom of heaven to fruition.

Review Matthew 14-15

Within this section, we have a stark contrast between those who oppose and those who believe. His hometown not only disbelieves, but they take offense at Jesus (they try to kill Him). The rejection and beheading of John the Baptist are captured here. Pharisees come and perpetually challenge Jesus for not keeping the Tradition of the Elders.

In contrast, we have the disciples of Jesus, the population of Gennesaret, and a Canaanite woman.

Also in this section, we have three actions that demonstrate that Jesus is not only the Messiah but also that He is the Son of God (Jesus feeds 5000, Jesus walks on the water, Jesus feeds 4000).

Pharisees Fail to Discern the Time

Matthew 15:39-16:4

Jesus travels to a location called Magadan. This is a region that is adjacent to the Sea of Galilee, but we do not know anything about the location.

On Sunday, we saw the Pharisees and the Herodians confronting Jesus from Mark 12. We noted that they were not friends and preferred a power struggle but did not want to upset the power struggle with the addition of another. So, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The Pharisees believed in strict adherence to the Scriptures (the written law) as well as to the Mishnah (the oral law), which sought to apply the written law to everyday life.

The Sadducees were allegorists in the Hellenistic tradition but did not like Rome. The Sadducees believed the Scriptures to be moralistic and did not believe in the resurrection of spirits. They seem to have tended toward the more social, political, and earthly aspects of life.

These two opposites come to Jesus to test Him. This testing is “to attempt to entrap through a process of inquiry.” They asked for a sign with the purpose of trapping Jesus. In what way is this a trap? The implication is that they did not believe that He could and are trying to disprove Him by showing He could not perform such a sign.

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Jesus repeats what He says in Matthew 12:38-40 – Repeating that the only sign that would be given to them, the Jewish leadership, would be that of Jonah.

What is different in Matthew 16 is Jesus’ observation that they are unable to discern the sign of the times. What were they missing? They have already dismissed what has been reported and seen by many other Pharisees. Jesus tells them in Matthew 12:28-29 that if He is casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of heaven is in their midst. But there is more they have missed, according to Matthew.

1. The timing of Daniel – 463 years after the building of the wall of Jerusalem after the exile, the Messiah would be on the scene.
2. The testimony of those who witnessed His birth
3. The witness of the magi
4. The testimony of John
5. The decree from heaven (This is my beloved Son)
6. The wisdom of Jesus
7. The works of Jesus
8. The miracles of Jesus

All of this points to Jesus as the Messiah; they had not believed these signs of the times. Also, they had not believed Moses (John 5:46-47), so they would not believe Jesus. So, Jesus will give them one last sign, He will rise from the dead. But as Jesus records, those in Israel who do not believe Moses will not believe even if someone were to rise from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).

Even to these unbelieving, obstinate, evil, adulterous people, Jesus still extends grace to them by giving them even more that proves that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. But they will not believe even after Jesus rises from the dead.

The Disciples Still Demonstrate Little Faith

Matthew 16:5-12

This account is very straightforward. We read it and scoff at the disciples, but I am not sure if we would fare any better. It is easy to reflect on the truth when the truth is pointed out to us. But when pressure occurs, the truth can be elusive.

This account has two main points. First, to beware of the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ teaching. It is a poison that affects everything. Second, the disciples should have understood that Jesus is not worried about physical sustenance.

In response to Jesus’ warning about the leaven (yeast) of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the disciples panic because Jesus is calling them out for not bringing bread.

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Jesus was aware of their misunderstanding and calls them “You men of *little faith*.” “ὀλιγόπιστος oligopistos” combines the word faith with the word for small or little. “ὀλίγος oligos” means small with respect to quantity. This is never a qualitative term. Jesus is calling them men that lack doctrinal understanding. What they have seen is not transferred to understanding.

When Jesus tells them to beware of the leaven of the Jewish leadership, they should have perceived and discerned that Jesus was warning them about teaching and not bread. Jesus then gives them a recent history lesson.

One question that I ask is how much time has taken place between the feedings of the 5000 and 4000 and this circumstance? It was probably a couple of weeks up to a maximum of two months. It is not a long time, but it is long enough for the disciples to not have it at the top of their minds.

There is a comparison here that is saddening. The Jewish leadership did not understand the signs, and they could not discern that Jesus was the Messiah.

The disciples, even though they are believers in Jesus, they still do not fully understand and fail to discern the message of Jesus.

However, they are beginning to get it. “Then they understood.” Being believers means that they are receptive to Jesus, and they are coming around.

They understand who Jesus is, but they perpetually demonstrate their lack of understanding; they lack doctrinal understanding, and they struggle with believing Jesus and God in the most basic of truths.

1. They do not understand that Jesus is not bound by food restrictions
2. Peter tries to prevent Jesus from going to the cross
3. They could not drive out a demon because of the littleness of their faith
4. They squabble about who is great in the kingdom of heaven
5. The disciple rebuked children from coming to Jesus
6. They scatter in fear when Jesus is taken into custody
7. They are paralyzed after Jesus is crucified
8. They struggle to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead

Peter’s Confession that Jesus is the Son of God

Matthew 16:13-20.

This is one of the peaks in Matthew and concludes the main point of the revelations that Jesus gave them over the last few months. In Matthew 14:33, the disciples have already declared that Jesus certainly is God’s Son. But words uttered in a highly emotional state are often rationalized later.

The details about who Jesus is become even more convincing. This leads Jesus to probe the disciples to reveal what they believe.

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The question and answer here are one of the most critical sections in the Gospel. We know this because this conversation is captured in all four Gospels. John’s account might be a different situation, but the content still has a very similar confession by Peter (John 6:66-69).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke have nearly identical accounts, but Matthew adds that Jesus adds a blessing to Peter and a statement about the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21

The scenario is set up with Jesus being alone with His disciples, and if John is capturing the same account, only the twelve apostles are with him at that time.

From Bethsaida to Caesarea, Philippi is about 25 miles. That is about an eight-hour walk.

During this time, Jesus asks them to account for the crowds. Who do the crowds say that Jesus is? The apostles then respond that the crowds think that Jesus is John the Baptizer, Elijah, or one of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures risen from the dead.

This is one of the reasons that we say that the crowds, although experiencing Jesus, are not a contingent of believers in Jesus.

Jesus then asks His apostles about His true identity. Peter responds, “You are the Christ.”

The word *Christ* is a transliteration “Χριστός *christos*,” which is Greek for “one that is anointed.” The word for *anointed* in Hebrew is “Messiah.”

Peter’s proclamation that Jesus was the Christ means that he was saying that Jesus is the one promised, the promised Messiah from the Hebrew text.

The title *Christ* (Messiah) is used in Matthew 1-2, declaring that Jesus is the Messiah and that this book is written as a testimony about Jesus the Messiah. The next time that *Christ* (Messiah) is used in Matthew is in 11:2 when John the Baptizer hears about the works of Christ.

Jesus does not proclaim His identity; the works, the words, the testimony of John the Baptizer, and the testimony of Father (at Jesus’ baptism) provide the evidence by which He is called the Christ.

Why does Jesus not simply say, I am the Christ from the beginning? Humility. We must remember that testimony about oneself is not judicial evidence (John 8:12-14, 5:30-39).

Peter’s proclamation was not as obvious as we are able to see it. This is why Peter’s words are so profound. This is why Jesus says, “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” Peter was not told plainly that Jesus was the Christ; he figured it out.

Peter declares something even more than Jesus is the Messiah—He is also the Son of the Living God.