

25. A pointed question & a pointed answer

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From the worldly point of view, we are who we are by what other people think. That is the main reason why the clothing fashion industry exceeds many other industries. People want to be associated with others. They don't want to be known as odd balls.

During the sixties, everybody wanted to be groovy with long hair, hippie sign, bell bottoms, Volkswagen bug, and dope. In the seventies, there was disco fever. Everyone was walking around with shiny shirts with long sideburns, and thick ties with polyester suits. That was cool things then. Did you notice that fashion came back to our kids? Some of the kids I see on the street wear such big bell bottom that their whole bodies can get in and out. They show half of their boxer undershorts, and their pants crouch around their knees. That is how they identify with one another.

Jesus asked His disciples a very pointed question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter came up with the perfect answer. That same question still is asked to every human on the face of the earth without an exception. All of us must answer that question to Him and to ourselves without any lawyer next to us. After we answer that question, we must decide whether we should identify ourselves with Christ or not.

A. MORE SIGNS

Matthew 16:1-4 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 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. 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 chapter 16 is the turning point in Jesus' ministry. From now on, Jesus openly talks more about His death and resurrection. He is focusing on what is going to happen to Himself soon.

Their desire to silence Jesus had caused the two opposing religious parties—the Pharisees and Sadducees to unite in one common effort. Jesus was not impressed with these VIPs. We should learn this from Jesus. We tend to be impressed by person's job, wealth, social status and so on. James teaches us in James chapter 2 that we should not treat one another differently because of person's wealth.

Jesus had done many signs and they remain unconvinced. They looked for a sign from heaven such as calling down fire from heaven, preferably against a Roman legion. They were not convinced by the signs "on earth" Jesus had done. Because their tradition held that a sign done on earth could be a counterfeit from Satan, but signs done from heaven were assumed to be from God.

Many people still looking for miracles more than the Savior. Miracles do not convict people for their sin or give a desire for salvation. Miracles will give confirmation where there is faith, but not where there is willful unbelief.

The sign of Jonah is the message of the Gospel for the unbelievers. What the church around the world need is the steady diet of the word of God, not looking for fancy

miracles. Many people flock down to television Bible teachers' healing crusades to have more miracles. They may get their emotional hypes during the crusade, but when that is over, they are still spiritually starving, because they didn't have the Bread of Life which is the Word of God.

B. BE AWARE OF FALSE TEACHING

Matthew 16:5-12 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?--but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 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.

Jesus emphasized the importance of being on guard against false teaching. Here as always, leaven is a picture of corruption in the Bible.

Just a reminder for all of you: Just because somebody is standing behind a pulpit and teach, it doesn't mean we should trust everything from that person's teaching. Rather we should compare what they teach against the Word of God in context.

C. A POINTED QUESTION AND A POINTED ANSWER

Matthew 16:13-17 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?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 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.

Caesarea Philippi region was strongly identified with various religions. It had been a center for Baal worship. The Greek god Pan had shrines there and Herod the Great had built a temple there to honor Augustus Caesar.

If someone ask you, "Who do you say Jesus is?" What would it be your answer? A mere man with a bunch of nice stories? A lunatic who claimed as a messiah? A founder of another religion? Or was He God, the Creator of the universe and the Savior of the sinful world? If your answer is anything but the last one, you don't know the true identity of Jesus. Your eternal destiny is depend on your answer of this question. I am not talking about a typical textbook answer. I mean the pointed answer from your heart in response to this pointed question. You must decide whether Jesus is your God and Savior or He is anything but God and Savior. No middle ground or gray area.

Matthew 16:18-20 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. 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.” Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

The verse about Jesus building the church on the rock was one of the most misunderstood verses in the whole Bible. They believe that Peter had a complete authority over the church and he was the first pope. Because of the way of the verse was structured in English, many people misunderstood. In the original Greek language, Peter is “Petros” which means a small size rock and the Rock that Jesus was mentioning is “Petra” which mean a gigantic boulder size rock. Who would it be this Rock? That is Jesus Christ the Son of Living God.

It is so good to know that I don't have to build a church on my own foundation which is a pathetic quick sand.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

But it is Jesus Christ our Lord who builds this church Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita according to His will for His glory. We just happen to be in it and enjoying the ride all the way to heaven. My job as the pastor of this church is to equip the saints according to Eph 4:12.

Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

I am a firm believer of the Word of God. If I feed the sheep, that is you guys, with the Word of God, you will be healthy and you will beget healthy sheep which means that you will be able to evangelize the Gospel of Jesus Christ to someone else. That is how it works. It is not me alone running around to bring people to this church, you will bring people to Christ.

For the first time, the word ‘church’ was mentioned in the Bible here. The church is not a spin off of Judaism. It was what Judaism was pointing from the very beginning.

The gate of Hades is not attacking us. We are attacking them in spiritual warfare. We may lose a few fights here and there, but we will win the war in the end because of our Lord Jesus. And the devil knows about it. So he is doing everything he can to hurt Christians all around the world.

The traditional concept of this verse is that Peter has the key to the kingdom. It is wrong. That is why in many of our silly jokes about heaven, we hear St. Peter is standing at the pearly gate in heaven. However, the key is available to anyone who believes in Christ.

In v 19, we find another non-sense we were taught from some Christian denominations. They claim that we can bind the devil's power with our commands and loose our wealth and health as we please. They are wrong. This was a very familiar phrase to the Jews, for their rabbis often spoke of “binding and loosing,” that is, forbidding or permitting.

Jesus did not say that God would obey what we do on earth, but that we should do on earth whatever God had already willed. The church does not get man's will done in heaven, rather it obeys God's will on earth.

D. HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Matthew 16:21-23 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 the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" 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."

Having declared His identity, Jesus now declared His work. Because the two must go together.

The crucifixion was no surprise to Jesus. Did you notice whenever Jesus mention the crucifixion, He also mentioned His resurrection? Jesus is the only One who conquered the death, no other religious founder raised up from their death.

One moment Peter was speaking from the inspiration that comes God, and next moment he was speaking for the devil. The word 'rebuke' is 'scold the lowly' in Greek.

We don't have to be demon possessed to be used of satan and we need to be on guard lest we are unwittingly used.

E. FOLLOWING JESUS

Matthew 16:24-28 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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 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. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

This is the most difficult verse for any non-believers to understand.

To deny self does not mean to deny things. It means to give yourself wholly to Christ and share in His shame and death.

To take up a cross does not mean to carry burdens or have problems. To take up the cross means to identify with Christ in His rejection, shame, suffering, and death.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Philippians 3:10-11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Who do you say Jesus is? Is He your Savior, or just another good man who died on the cross?

If Jesus is not your Savior and Lord in your heart, you don't need to listen to the rest of the applications I am going to say. They don't apply to you, for you are not a child of God. But listen to me, God loves you and He has a great plan for your life. Come to Him.

Now, I am talking to those who accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord:

2) We must keep our guards up from the subtle approach by satan to use us to hinder the work of God.

As Peter was used by God and next moment he was speaking for the devil, we can be godly and ungodly in a matter of a minute apart. We must weight every thought that comes to our heart according to the standard of the Word of God. If it doesn't go with the Word, let's not even dwell on it.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

3) What the world can offer to us is temporal and it is worthless to compare with what God can offer. It all starts with denying what we want carnally, taking up our crosses and following Him.

2 Corinthians 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.