CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 16 — The Confession of Christ and the Call to the Cross

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 15 ended with Jesus feeding four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fish.

Matthew Chapter 16 begins with the religious leaders asking for a sign.

They had just seen miracle after miracle.

And yet they wanted more proof.

Jesus refused.

The only sign they would receive was the sign of Jonah.

Then Jesus warned His disciples about the **yeast** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The disciples thought He was talking about bread.

But He was talking about false teaching.

Then comes one of the most important moments in all four Gospels.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks His disciples a question:

“Who do you say I am?”

Peter answers:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus says that this truth was revealed to Peter by the Father.

And He promises to build His church, a church the gates of hell will not overcome.

But right after this great confession, the chapter turns.

For the first time, Jesus tells His disciples plainly that He must suffer, die, and be raised to life.

Peter cannot accept it.

He pulls Jesus aside and says, **“Never, Lord!”**

And Jesus answers with some of His strongest words:

“Get behind Me, Satan!”

Then Jesus calls every disciple to follow Him on the same road.

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Follow Me.

Matthew 16 is a turning point in the Gospel.

From this point on, Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem and the cross.

Matthew 16 therefore shows two great truths:

Who Jesus is — the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And:

What Jesus came to do — to suffer, die, and rise again, and to call His followers to take up their cross.

The central truth of Matthew 16 is:

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who builds His church on the truth of who He is and calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

I. A SIGN FROM HEAVEN

Matthew 16:1 — To Test Jesus

“The Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven.”

The Pharisees and Sadducees came together.

This is unusual.

These two groups were usually enemies.

The Pharisees were strict about the law and traditions.

The Sadducees were wealthy priests who did not believe in the resurrection or angels.

But they joined together against Jesus.

They came **to test** Him.

They asked for **a sign from heaven.**

They did not want to believe.

They wanted to trap Him.

Cross References

Mark 8:11

> The Pharisees came to Jesus and began to ask Him questions. Hoping to trap Him, they asked Jesus for a sign from heaven.

Luke 11:16

> Others, wanting to test Jesus, asked Him to give them a sign from heaven.

John 6:30

> So the people asked, “What miracle will You do? If we see a miracle, we will believe You.”

Spiritual Principle

People who are against Jesus will often unite with each other, even if they disagree on everything else.

II. FAIR WEATHER

Matthew 16:2 — The Sky Is Red

“He replied, ‘When evening comes, you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.”’”

Jesus used a common saying about the weather.

A red sky in the evening meant good weather the next day.

People knew how to read the sky.

They paid close attention to it.

Cross References

Luke 12:54

> Then Jesus said to the people, “When you see clouds coming up in the west, you say, ‘It's going to rain,’ and it happens.”

Job 38:37

> Who is wise enough to count the clouds? Who can pour water from the jars of the sky?

Judges 6:37

> I will put some wool on the threshing floor. If only the wool is wet with dew while all the ground is dry, then I will know You will use me to save Israel.

Spiritual Principle

People often pay more attention to the weather than to God.

III. THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Matthew 16:3 — You Cannot Interpret Them

“And in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”

A red sky in the morning meant a storm was coming.

They could read the sky.

But they **could not interpret the signs of the times.**

The signs were all around them.

The blind were seeing.

The lame were walking.

The dead were being raised.

The good news was being preached.

Prophecy was being fulfilled.

The Messiah was standing in front of them.

And they missed it.

Cross References

Luke 12:56

> You hypocrites! You know how to understand the appearance of the earth and sky. Why don't you understand what is happening now?

Luke 19:44

> You did not recognize the time when God came to save you.

Isaiah 5:12

They have parties with harps, flutes, and wine, but they don't see what the LORD has done.

Spiritual Warning

It is possible to be skilled at reading the world and blind to the work of God.

IV. THE SIGN OF JONAH

Matthew 16:4 — He Left Them

“A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given except the sign of Jonah.” Then He left them and went away.

Jesus repeated what He said in Matthew 12.

A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign.

Adulterous means spiritually unfaithful to God.

The only sign would be **the sign of Jonah.**

Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish.

Jesus would be three days in the grave and then rise.

Then **He left them and went away.**

Jesus did not keep arguing.

He walked away from those who refused to believe.

Cross References

Matthew 12:39

> Jesus answered, “Evil and sinful people are the ones who want to see a miracle as a sign. But no sign will be given to them, except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”

Jonah 1:17

> The LORD sent a very big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Luke 11:29

> The people who live today are evil. They want to see a miracle as a sign, but no sign will be given them, except the sign of Jonah.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection is the final sign God has given.

Spiritual Warning

Jesus will not stay forever where He is not wanted.

V. THEY FORGOT TO BRING BREAD

Matthew 16:5 — Across the Lake

“When the disciples went across the lake, they forgot to bring bread.”

The disciples crossed the lake.

And **they forgot to bring bread.**

Mark tells us they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

This simple, ordinary problem would become a teaching moment.

Cross References

Mark 8:14

> The followers had only one loaf of bread with them in the boat. They had forgotten to bring more.

Matthew 14:17

> They said to Him, “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish.”

Mark 6:52

> They did not understand about the miracle of the bread. Their minds were closed.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus can use everyday problems to teach spiritual lessons.

VI. THE YEAST OF THE PHARISEES

Matthew 16:6 — Be Careful

“Jesus said to them, ‘Be careful. Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’”

Jesus gave a warning.

“Be careful.”

“Watch out.”

The yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Yeast is a small thing that spreads through the whole batch of dough.

It works quietly.

You cannot see it working.

But it affects everything.

False teaching works the same way.

Cross References

Mark 8:15

> Jesus warned them, “Be careful! Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.”

Luke 12:1

> Jesus said to His followers, “Be careful of the yeast of the Pharisees, because they are hypocrites.”

1 Corinthians 5:6

> Don't you know the saying, “Just a little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise”?

Spiritual Warning

False teaching spreads quietly and affects everything it touches.

VII. BECAUSE WE DIDN'T BRING BREAD

Matthew 16:7 — The Disciples Misunderstood

“They discussed this among themselves and said, ‘It is because we didn't bring any bread.’”

The disciples completely missed the point.

They thought Jesus was scolding them for forgetting bread.

They were thinking about their stomachs.

Jesus was thinking about their souls.

Cross References

Mark 8:16

> His followers discussed the meaning of this, saying, “He said this because we have no bread.”

John 6:26

> Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you aren't looking for Me because you saw Me do miracles. You are looking for Me because you ate the bread and were satisfied.”

Matthew 15:33

> His followers asked Him, “How can we get enough bread to feed all these people? We are far away from any town.”

Spiritual Principle

We often think about physical needs when God is teaching us about spiritual truths.

VIII. YOU OF LITTLE FAITH

Matthew 16:8 — Why Are You Talking About Bread?

“Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, ‘You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?’”

Jesus **knew** what they were saying.

He called them **“you of little faith.”**

Why?

Because they were worried about bread.

They had seen Jesus feed thousands.

He could easily provide bread for twelve men in a boat.

Their worry showed that their faith was still small.

Cross References

Matthew 6:30

> If God makes the grass in the field so beautiful... then He will dress you even better. You have so little faith!

Matthew 14:31

> Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter. Jesus said, “Your faith is small. Why did you doubt?”

Mark 8:17

> Knowing what they were talking about, Jesus asked them, “Why are you talking about not having bread? Do you still not understand?”

Spiritual Principle

Worry about provision shows that we have forgotten who our Provider is.

IX. DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

Matthew 16:9 — The Five Loaves

“Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?”

Jesus asked them to **remember.**

The five loaves for the five thousand.

How many baskets were left over?

Twelve.

Jesus had provided more than enough.

Why would they worry now?

Cross References

Matthew 14:19

> Then He told the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish and, looking to heaven, He thanked God for the food.

John 6:9

> Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish.

Mark 6:41

> Jesus took the five loaves and two fish and, looking up to heaven, He thanked God for the food. He divided the bread and gave it to His followers.

Spiritual Principle

Remembering what God has done builds faith for what we face now.

X. THE SEVEN LOAVES

Matthew 16:10 — The Four Thousand

“Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?”

Jesus reminded them of the second miracle too.

The seven loaves for the four thousand.

Seven large baskets were left over.

Two miracles.

Two times Jesus provided more than enough.

And still they worried about bread.

Cross References

Matthew 15:36

> He took the seven loaves of bread and the fish and gave thanks to God. Then He divided the food and gave it to His followers.

Mark 8:8

> All the people ate and were satisfied. Then His followers filled seven baskets with the leftover pieces of food.

Mark 8:19

> Jesus asked, “When I divided five loaves of bread for the five thousand, how many baskets did you fill with leftover pieces?” They answered, “Twelve.”

Spiritual Principle

God's past faithfulness is a reason to trust Him today.

XI. NOT ABOUT BREAD

Matthew 16:11 — Be on Your Guard

“How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Jesus made it clear.

“I was not talking to you about bread.”

Then He repeated His warning.

“Be on your guard against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

The Pharisees added human rules to God's Word.

The Sadducees took away from God's Word by denying the resurrection and the spiritual world.

Both were dangerous.

One added to the truth.

One subtracted from it.

Cross References

Galatians 5:9

> Be careful! “Just a little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise.”

Colossians 2:8

> Be sure that no one leads you away with false and empty teaching that comes from people, and not from Christ.

Titus 1:9

> He must hold on to the true message as it was taught, so that he can encourage others with sound teaching and correct those who are against it.

Spiritual Warning

Adding to God's Word and taking away from it are both dangerous.

XII. THEY UNDERSTOOD

Matthew 16:12 — Their Doctrine

“Then they understood that He was telling them to guard against their doctrine, not the yeast used in bread.”

Finally, **they understood.**

Jesus was warning them about **doctrine** — teaching.

Wrong teaching can spread like yeast.

It can affect a person's whole life and a whole church.

That is why we must be careful about what we believe and who we listen to.

Cross References

Mark 8:21

> Then Jesus said to them, “Don't you understand yet?”

1 Timothy 4:16

> Be careful in your life and in your teaching. If you continue to live and teach rightly, you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

2 John 1:10

> If someone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome that person into your house.

Spiritual Principle

What we believe shapes how we live.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A little wrong teaching can ruin a lot of right living.

XIII. CAESAREA PHILIPPI

Matthew 16:13 — “Who Do People Say I Am?”

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’”

Caesarea Philippi was about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

It was near the base of Mount Hermon.

It was a Gentile area.

The city was full of pagan temples.

There was a famous cave there linked to the worship of the false god Pan.

There was also a temple honoring Caesar.

In this place of false gods and earthly power, Jesus asked the most important question.

First, He asked about others.

“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

Cross References

Mark 8:27

> Jesus and His followers went to the towns around Caesarea Philippi. While they were traveling, Jesus asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

Luke 9:18

> One time when Jesus was praying alone, His followers were with Him. He asked them, “Who do the people say I am?”

John 1:41

> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and say to him, “We have found the Messiah.”

Spiritual Principle

The question of who Jesus is matters more than any other question.

XIV. WHAT PEOPLE SAID

Matthew 16:14 — John, Elijah, Jeremiah

“They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’”

The people had many opinions.

John the Baptist — Herod thought this.

Elijah — the prophet promised to come before the Messiah.

Jeremiah — the weeping prophet.

One of the prophets.

These were all great compliments.

But they were all wrong.

Jesus was not just another prophet.

He was much more.

Cross References

Matthew 14:2

> So he said to his servants, “Jesus is John the Baptist, who has risen from the dead.”

Mark 6:14

> Some people said, “He is John the Baptist, who has risen from the dead.”

Luke 9:19

> They answered, “Some say You are John the Baptist. Others say You are Elijah. And others say You are one of the prophets from long ago who has come back to life.”

Spiritual Principle

Calling Jesus a great man is not the same as knowing who He really is.

Key Truth

Many people today still say good things about Jesus while missing the truth about Him.

XV. WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Matthew 16:15 — The Personal Question

“‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’”

Now Jesus made it personal.

“But what about you?”

The word **you** is plural.

Jesus was asking all the disciples.

It was not enough to know what others thought.

Each of them had to answer for themselves.

This is the question every person must answer.

Cross References

Mark 8:29

> Then Jesus asked, “But who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

Luke 9:20

> Then Jesus asked, “But who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ from God.”

John 6:69

> We believe and know that You are the Holy One from God.

Spiritual Principle

Everyone must decide for themselves who Jesus is.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your eternity depends not on what others say about Jesus, but on what you say about Him.

XVI. YOU ARE THE CHRIST

Matthew 16:16 — The Son of the Living God

“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

Peter spoke up.

And his answer is one of the greatest statements in the Bible.

“You are the Christ.”

Christ means **Messiah**, the **Anointed One.**

The promised King from David's line.

The One the whole Old Testament was waiting for.

“The Son of the living God.”

Not a son of the false gods worshiped in Caesarea Philippi.

Those gods were dead idols.

Jesus is the Son of **the living God.**

Peter confessed that Jesus is both the Messiah and the divine Son of God.

Cross References

John 11:27

> Martha answered, “Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, the One who was to come into the world.”

John 20:31

> But these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then, by believing, you may have life through His name.

1 John 4:15

> Whoever says, “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God,” has God living in him, and he lives in God.

Spiritual Principle

The heart of the Christian faith is knowing who Jesus is.

Key Truth

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

XVII. REVEALED BY THE FATHER

Matthew 16:17 — Blessed Are You

“Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven.’”

Jesus said Peter was **blessed.**

Why?

Because Peter had not figured this out on his own.

This was not revealed to you by flesh and blood.

No human taught it to him.

But by My Father in heaven.

God Himself had opened Peter's eyes.

Knowing who Jesus truly is, is a gift from God.

Cross References

Galatians 1:16

> God was pleased to show His Son to me so that I could tell the good news about Him to the non-Jewish people. I did not get advice from any person.

1 Corinthians 2:10

> But God has shown us these things through the Spirit. The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep secrets of God.

John 6:44

> No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him to Me.

Spiritual Principle

Saving faith in Jesus is a gift from God.

XVIII. ON THIS ROCK

Matthew 16:18 — I Will Build My Church

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.”

This is one of the most discussed verses in the Bible.

“You are Peter.”

The name **Peter** means **rock.**

In Greek, **Peter** is **Petros.**

Rock is **petra.**

“On this rock I will build My church.”

Christians have understood **this rock** in different ways.

Some believe the rock is **Peter himself**, as the leader of the apostles.

Some believe the rock is **Peter's confession** — the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Some believe the rock is **Christ Himself**, the One Peter confessed.

Each of these views points to something true.

Peter did become a foundational leader in the early church.

The truth he confessed is the foundation of the church.

And the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the true foundation and cornerstone.

Notice two more important things.

“I will build.”

Jesus Himself builds the church.

“My church.”

The church belongs to Jesus.

This is the first time the word **church** appears in the New Testament.

It means **a gathering of people called out.**

“The gates of hell will not overcome it.”

Hell here is **Hades**, the realm of death.

Gates hold people in.

Death and the powers of darkness cannot stop the church Jesus builds.

Cross References

Ephesians 2:20

> You are like a building that was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus Himself is the most important stone in that building.

1 Corinthians 3:11

> No one can lay any other foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 28:16

> Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a valuable cornerstone, a firm foundation. Whoever trusts in it will never be shaken.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is building His church, and nothing can stop it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The church does not belong to a pastor, a denomination, or a building — it belongs to Jesus, and He is the One who builds it.

XIX. THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 16:19 — Binding and Loosing

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Keys are a picture of authority.

They open and close doors.

In the Old Testament, a king's chief steward held the keys to the palace.

He decided who could come in.

Jesus gave Peter **the keys of the kingdom of heaven.**

In the book of Acts, Peter opened the door of the gospel.

He preached on the day of Pentecost to the Jews.

He went to the Samaritans.

He preached to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert.

Binding and loosing were terms used by Jewish teachers.

They meant **forbidding** and **allowing.**

Peter and the apostles would teach what God had already decided in heaven.

In Matthew 18, Jesus gives this same authority to the whole church.

Cross References

Isaiah 22:22

> I will put the key to David's house around his neck. What he opens, no one can shut. What he shuts, no one can open.

Revelation 3:7

> These are the words of the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. When He opens a door, no one can close it.

Matthew 18:18

> I tell you the truth, the things you don't allow on earth will be the things God does not allow. The things you allow on earth will be the things that God allows.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus gives His church authority to open the door of salvation through the gospel.

XX. TELL NO ONE

Matthew 16:20 — Not Yet

“Then He ordered His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.”

Jesus told them **not to tell anyone.**

Why?

Because people had the wrong idea about the Messiah.

They expected a political king who would overthrow Rome.

They did not expect a Messiah who would suffer and die.

Before the disciples could tell others, they needed to understand what kind of Messiah Jesus was.

That is exactly what Jesus would teach them next.

Cross References

Matthew 17:9

> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don't tell anyone about what you saw until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.”

Mark 8:30

> Jesus warned His followers not to tell anyone who He was.

Luke 9:21

> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone.

Spiritual Principle

We must understand the whole truth about Jesus before we can share it rightly.

XXI. HE MUST SUFFER

Matthew 16:21 — Killed and Raised

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

“From that time on.”

This is a major turning point in Matthew.

The same words appear in Matthew 4:17, when Jesus began His public ministry.

Now a new stage begins.

Jesus begins to teach about the cross.

Notice the word **must.**

He must go to Jerusalem.

He must suffer.

He must be killed.

He must be raised.

This was not an accident.

It was God's plan.

Jesus named who would be responsible.

The elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law.

The religious leaders of Israel.

But the story would not end in death.

On the third day He would **be raised to life.**

Cross References

Mark 8:31

> Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and that He would be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of the law. He told them that the Son of Man must be killed and then rise from the dead after three days.

Luke 9:22

> Then Jesus said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things. He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of the law. He will be killed, and after three days He will be raised from the dead.”

Matthew 20:18

> Look, we are going to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be turned over to the leading priests and the teachers of the law, and they will say He must die.

Spiritual Principle

The cross was always God's plan, not a tragic mistake.

Key Truth

Jesus knew exactly what was coming, and He walked toward it willingly.

XXII. “NEVER, LORD!”

Matthew 16:22 — Peter Rebukes Jesus

“Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ‘Never, Lord! This shall never happen to You!’”

Peter could not accept it.

He **took Jesus aside.**

And he **began to rebuke Him.**

Think about this.

A few moments earlier, Peter confessed that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now he was correcting the Son of God.

“Never, Lord!”

These two words do not go together.

If Jesus is **Lord**, we cannot say **never** to Him.

Peter loved Jesus.

He did not want Him to suffer.

But he did not understand God's plan.

Cross References

Mark 8:32

> Jesus told them plainly what would happen. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to tell Him not to talk like that.

John 13:8

> Peter said to Him, “No, You will never wash my feet.”

Matthew 26:33

> Peter said, “All the other followers may stumble in their faith because of You, but I will not.”

Spiritual Warning

We cannot call Jesus “Lord” and tell Him “never” in the same breath.

XXIII. GET BEHIND ME, SATAN!

Matthew 16:23 — A Stumbling Block

“But Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.’”

These are some of the strongest words Jesus ever spoke.

“Get behind Me, Satan!”

Jesus said almost the same words to Satan in the wilderness.

Satan had offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world without the cross.

Now Peter was offering the same thing.

A crown without a cross.

Peter was not Satan.

But Satan was using Peter's words to tempt Jesus.

“You are a stumbling block to Me.”

A few verses earlier, Peter was called a **rock** for building.

Now he was a **rock** for tripping.

“You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Peter was thinking the way people think.

Avoid pain.

Protect yourself.

Choose the easy road.

But God's way went through the cross.

Cross References

Mark 8:33

> But Jesus turned and looked at His followers. Then He told Peter not to talk like that. He said, “Go away from Me, Satan! You don't care about the things of God, but only about the things people think are important.”

Matthew 4:10

> Jesus said to Satan, “Go away from Me, Satan! It is written in the Scriptures, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.’”

Romans 8:5

> Those who live following their sinful selves think only about things that their sinful selves want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about the things the Spirit wants them to do.

Spiritual Principle

Even well-meaning words can be used by Satan if they turn us from God's will.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The same man can be a rock in one moment and a stumbling block in the next — it depends on whether he is thinking God's thoughts or man's thoughts.

XXIV. DENY YOURSELF

Matthew 16:24 — Take Up Your Cross

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me.’”

Jesus had just said He must go to the cross.

Now He said His followers must go the same way.

There are three parts to His call.

Deny themselves.

This means saying **no** to self.

No to our own will.

No to living for ourselves.

Take up their cross.

In those days, a person carrying a cross was walking to his death.

To take up your cross means being willing to suffer and even die for Jesus.

It means putting to death your old, selfish life.

Follow Me.

Go where Jesus goes.

Live the way He lived.

Obey what He says.

Cross References

Mark 8:34

> Then Jesus called the crowd to Him, along with His followers. He said, “If any of you want to be My followers, you must say no to yourselves, pick up your cross, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23

> Jesus said to all of them, “If anyone wants to follow Me, he must say no to himself. He must be willing to give up his life every day and follow Me.”

Luke 14:27

> Whoever is not willing to carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My follower.

Spiritual Principle

Following Jesus means dying to self every day.

Application

Denying yourself and taking up your cross can mean:

- Saying no to sinful desires.
- Putting others' needs before your own.
- Obeying God when it is hard.
- Accepting rejection for following Jesus.
- Giving up your plans for God's plans.
- Living for Jesus instead of for yourself.

XXV. SAVE YOUR LIFE, LOSE IT

Matthew 16:25 — Lose It, Find It

“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it.”

This is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian life.

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it.

If you live only for yourself, trying to protect your comfort, your plans, and your safety, you will lose what matters most.

Whoever loses their life for My sake will find it.

If you give your life to Jesus, you will find true life now and eternal life forever.

Notice the words **for My sake.**

It is not just about sacrifice.

It is about sacrifice for Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 8:35

> Whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever gives up his life for Me and for the good news will have true life.

Luke 9:24

> Whoever wants to save his life will give up true life. But whoever gives up his life for Me will have true life.

John 12:25

> Whoever loves his life will lose it. But whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Spiritual Principle

The only life we truly keep is the life we give to Jesus.

XXVI. THE WHOLE WORLD OR YOUR SOUL

Matthew 16:26 — What Can You Give in Exchange?

“What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

Jesus asked two powerful questions.

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

Imagine having everything.

All the money.

All the power.

All the fame.

And losing your soul.

It would be a terrible trade.

What can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Nothing.

Your soul is worth more than the whole world.

Once it is lost, nothing can buy it back.

Cross References

Mark 8:36

> It is worth nothing for you to have the whole world if you lose your soul.

Luke 9:25

> It is worth nothing for you to have the whole world if you yourself are destroyed or lost.

Psalm 49:7

> No one can buy back the life of another. No one can pay God for his own life.

Spiritual Principle

Your soul is worth more than the whole world.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The worst business deal in history is trading your soul for the world.

XXVII. IN HIS FATHER'S GLORY

Matthew 16:27 — He Will Reward Each Person

“For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what they have done.”

Jesus looked beyond the cross.

He spoke about His **second coming.**

The Son of Man is going to come.

In His Father's glory.

With His angels.

The One who would be rejected and killed would one day return as King and Judge.

And **He will reward each person according to what they have done.**

Our lives matter.

What we do with Jesus' call matters forever.

Cross References

Matthew 25:31

> The Son of Man will come again in His great glory, with all His angels. He will be King and sit on His great throne.

Revelation 22:12

> Listen! I am coming soon! I will bring My reward with Me, and I will repay each one of you for what you have done.

Romans 2:6

> God will reward or punish every person for what that person has done.

Spiritual Principle

Living with eternity in view changes how we live today.

XXVIII. SOME WILL NOT TASTE DEATH

Matthew 16:28 — The Son of Man Coming in His Kingdom

“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

This verse has been understood in different ways.

Many Bible teachers believe it points to the **Transfiguration**, which happens in the very next chapter.

Six days later, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in His glory on the mountain.

Others believe it points to Jesus' **resurrection and ascension**, when He began to reign.

Others see it as pointing to the **coming of the Holy Spirit** at Pentecost and the spread of the church.

In each case, some of the disciples would see the power and glory of Jesus' kingdom before they died.

Cross References

Mark 9:1

> Then Jesus said to the people, “I tell you the truth, some people standing here will see the kingdom of God come with power before they die.”

Luke 9:27

> I tell you the truth, some people standing here will see the kingdom of God before they die.

Matthew 17:2

> While they watched, Jesus' appearance was changed. His face became bright like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus gives His followers glimpses of His glory to strengthen them for the road ahead.

XXIX. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 16

1. Signs Are Not the Basis for Faith

A wicked generation demands signs, but true faith rests in Christ Himself.

Principle:

God has already given the greatest sign — the resurrection.

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2. Beware False Teaching

The “yeast” of the Pharisees and Sadducees represents corrupt doctrine that spreads and corrupts.

Principle:

Guard what you believe, because it shapes how you live.

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3. The Confession of Christ Is Foundational

Peter's declaration reveals the solid rock upon which the Church is built.

Principle:

Everything rests on knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

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4. Jesus' Mission Includes Suffering

The cross was central to His purpose, and no human plan could change it.

Principle:

There is no salvation without the cross.

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5. Discipleship Requires Self-Denial

To follow Christ means surrendering our own will, taking up the cross, and living for Him.

Principle:

Following Jesus means saying no to self and yes to Him.

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6. Eternal Perspective Matters

Gaining the world is worthless if it costs the soul.

Principle:

Your soul is worth more than everything this world can offer.

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7. Christ's Glory Is Coming

His kingdom will be revealed, and each person will be repaid according to their deeds.

Principle:

Live today in light of the day He returns.

XXX. WHO IS JESUS?

Matthew 16 records the most important question ever asked.

What People Said

- John the Baptist.
- Elijah.
- Jeremiah.

- One of the prophets.

What Peter Said

- **The Christ** — the promised Messiah.
- **The Son of the living God** — fully divine.

Where Peter Learned It

- Not from people.
- From the Father in heaven.

What It Means for Us

- We must answer the question personally.
- Our answer determines our eternity.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Many people have opinions about Jesus; only those who confess Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, know who He really is.

XXXI. FROM ROCK TO STUMBLING BLOCK

Peter's experience in Matthew 16 teaches an important lesson.

Peter the Rock

- He confessed the truth about Jesus.
- He was blessed by Jesus.
- He received truth from the Father.
- He was given the keys of the kingdom.

Peter the Stumbling Block

- He rebuked Jesus.
- He opposed the cross.
- He was used by Satan.
- He was thinking human thoughts.

Key Truth

The same believer can be used by God one moment and by the enemy the next; we must keep our minds set on the things of God.

XXXII. THE CROWN AND THE CROSS

Matthew 16 shows that the way to glory goes through the cross.

For Jesus

- First the cross.
- Then the resurrection.
- Then the glory of His coming.

For His Followers

- First deny yourself.
- Take up your cross.
- Then share in His reward.

Spiritual Principle

There is no crown without a cross, but there is no cross without a crown for those who follow Jesus.

XXXIII. WHAT MATTHEW 16 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 16 presents Jesus as:

The Sign of Jonah

His resurrection is the final sign.

The Teacher of Truth

He warns against false doctrine.

The Christ

The promised Messiah.

The Son of the Living God

Fully divine.

The Builder of the Church

He builds it, and it belongs to Him.

The Holder of the Keys

He gives authority to His church.

The Suffering Servant

He must suffer, die, and rise again.

The One Who Calls Us to Follow

He leads the way to the cross.

The Coming King

He will return in His Father's glory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Christ we confess is the Christ who carried the cross — and He calls us to carry ours.

XXXIV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign?

They wanted to test Jesus and trap Him.

They were not seeking truth; they had already decided not to believe.

Question 2

What did Jesus mean by “the signs of the times”?

He meant the clear evidence that the Messiah had come — the miracles, fulfilled prophecies, and His teaching.

They could read the weather but not the work of God.

Question 3

What is the sign of Jonah?

Jonah was three days in the fish.

Jesus would be three days in the grave and then rise.

The resurrection is the greatest sign.

Question 4

What did Jesus mean by the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

He meant their false teaching.

Like yeast, false teaching spreads quietly and affects everything.

Question 5

Why did Jesus ask the disciples to remember the feeding miracles?

To remind them that He could provide whatever they needed.

Their worry about bread showed that they had forgotten His power.

Question 6

Why did Jesus ask the disciples who they said He was?

Because each person must answer for themselves.

It is not enough to know what others think.

Question 7

What did Peter mean when he said Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”?

He meant that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the divine Son of God.

Question 8

How did Peter know this?

It was revealed to him by the Father in heaven.

Saving knowledge of Jesus is a gift from God.

Question 9

What is the “rock” on which Jesus builds His church?

Christians have understood it as Peter, Peter's confession, or Christ Himself.

Each points to truth: Peter was a foundational leader, his confession is the foundation of faith, and Christ is the true cornerstone.

Question 10

What do the keys of the kingdom represent?

They represent authority to open the door of salvation through the gospel.

Peter used them in Acts when he preached to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Question 11

Why did Jesus tell the disciples not to tell anyone He was the Christ?

People expected a political Messiah.

The disciples first needed to understand that the Messiah must suffer and die.

Question 12

Why did Jesus call Peter “Satan”?

Peter was trying to keep Jesus from the cross, the same temptation Satan offered in the wilderness.

Peter was thinking human thoughts, not God's thoughts.

Question 13

What does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross?

It means saying no to living for yourself, being willing to suffer and die for Jesus, and following Him wherever He leads.

Question 14

What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose their soul?

Nothing.

The soul is worth more than the whole world, and nothing can buy it back.

Question 15

What should Matthew 16 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 16 should cause believers to live:

- Trusting Christ without demanding signs.
- Guarding against false teaching.
- Remembering God's past faithfulness.
- Confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
- Trusting Jesus to build His church.
- Accepting God's plan, even when it includes suffering.
- Thinking God's thoughts, not human thoughts.
- Denying themselves daily.
- Taking up their cross.
- Valuing their soul above the world.
- Living in light of Christ's return.

XXXV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 16 asks several important questions.

Am I Demanding Signs Instead of Trusting Christ?

Am I Paying Attention to the Signs of God's Work Around Me?

What Teaching Am I Allowing Into My Life?

Have I Forgotten What God Has Already Done for Me?

Who Do I Say Jesus Is?

Do I Trust Jesus to Build His Church?

Am I Telling Jesus “Never” in Any Area of My Life?

Am I Thinking God's Thoughts or Merely Human Thoughts?

What Does Denying Myself Look Like for Me Today?

What Cross Am I Being Called to Carry?

Am I Trading My Soul for Something This World Offers?

Am I Living in Light of Jesus' Return?

XXXVI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Confession and the Cross”

Matthew 16 holds two moments side by side.

The first is a great confession.

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The second is a great rejection.

“Never, Lord! This shall never happen to You!”

Peter got the first part right.

He knew **who** Jesus was.

But he got the second part wrong.

He did not understand **what** Jesus came to do.

Peter wanted a Christ without a cross.

Many people still do.

They want a Jesus who blesses them.

But not a Jesus who calls them to deny themselves.

They want the crown.

But not the cross.

This creates a powerful principle.

It is not enough to confess Jesus as Christ.

We must also accept His cross — and take up our own.

Principle:

A true confession of Christ always leads to the cross — first His, then ours.

XXXVII. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 16 begins with a demand and ends with a call.

The religious leaders demand a sign.

Jesus gives them only the sign of Jonah.

The disciples worry about bread.

Jesus warns them about false teaching.

Then, in a city of false gods, Jesus asks the question that matters most:

“Who do you say I am?”

And Peter answers:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

On that truth, Jesus will build His church.

And nothing — not even the gates of hell — will stop it.

But then Jesus reveals the path ahead.

The cross.

Peter cannot accept it.

Jesus will not turn from it.

And He calls every disciple to the same road.

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Follow Me.

Matthew 16 therefore reminds us:

The most important question in life is who Jesus is.

The most important decision in life is whether we will follow Him.

The road to glory goes through the cross.

And the soul is worth more than the whole world.

The story of Matthew 16 does not end with:

A sign from heaven.

An easy road.

Or a crown without a cross.

It ends with:

A Savior heading to the cross.

A call to follow Him.

And the promise of His coming glory.

The same call still stands:

Trust Him without demanding signs.

Guard your heart from false teaching.

Confess Him as the Christ.

Think God's thoughts.

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Follow Him.

And until He returns:

Keep confessing Him.

Keep carrying your cross.

Keep following Him.

Keep looking for His glory.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for revealing to us who Jesus is.

Keep us from demanding signs when You have already given us so much.

Thank You for the sign of Jonah — for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Open our eyes to see Your work around us.

Protect us from the yeast of false teaching.

Give us wisdom to recognize what adds to Your Word or takes away from it.

Help us remember all that You have done for us, so that we do not worry about what we need.

Lord Jesus, we confess with Peter:

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Thank You that this truth was revealed to us by the Father.

Thank You that You are building Your church.

Thank You that the gates of hell will never overcome it.

Help us trust You to build Your church in Your way.

Forgive us for the times we have said, “Never, Lord.”

Forgive us for thinking human thoughts instead of Your thoughts.

Keep us from becoming a stumbling block to others.

Thank You for walking willingly to the cross for us.

Thank You that You suffered, died, and rose again on the third day.

Give us grace to deny ourselves.

Give us strength to take up our cross.

Help us follow You every day.

Remind us that our souls are worth more than the whole world.

Keep us from trading eternal life for anything this world offers.

Help us live every day in light of Your coming glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” — Matthew 16:16

Central Truth

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who builds His church on the truth of who He is and calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

Matthew 16 in One Sentence

Jesus refuses to give a sign except the sign of Jonah, warns against false teaching, receives Peter's confession that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, promises to build His church, reveals that He must suffer, die, and rise again, and calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.