



## Lesson 6

### Chapter 16: You are the Christ!

#### The Pharisees and Sadducees tempt Jesus (16:1-12)

The Pharisees and Sadducees tempted Jesus, asking for a sign from heaven to show that he really was the Messiah. It was unusual for these two groups to act together, as they were so different and had no respect for each other. Sadly they were united in the common cause of trying to discredit Jesus.

Jesus refused to show them a miraculous sign. The Pharisees had already asked for a sign from Jesus and he had given them one. It was the sign of the prophet Jonah to show that Jesus would be in the grave for three days and three nights and then rise from the grave, just like Jonah was delivered by God from the belly of the big fish (read, Matt 12:38-40). Therefore, no further sign was necessary (16:4).

#### Leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)

Jesus told a parable to warn his against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. A little yeast or leaven can rapidly affect a large amount of dough; in the same way a small amount of wrong teaching can quickly lead to false understanding among many people.

At first the disciples misunderstood the parable. They thought Jesus was critical of them for not taking bread for the journey across Galilee. Jesus then reminded them of two previous occasions when they did not have sufficient bread (14:15-21; 15:32-38). He had miraculously fed the multitudes and there were still baskets full of bread left over. Jesus wanted them to understand that they must beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They made a show of teaching God's Word but in reality they corrupted it and put burdens on the people (15:3-9).

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE SADDUCEES

The group of people who controlled Jewish affairs in the time of Jesus was known as the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the two many parties but there were more Sadducees than Pharisees.

The Sadducees were from wealthy families and so did not include the common people. Most of the priests were Sadducees and they accepted only the teaching of the first five books of the Bible and did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, or that God uses angels.

#### Who am I? (16:13-20)

Jesus asked his close followers what people were saying about him and who they thought he was. Some thought Jesus to be John the Baptist (read Matt.14:2), others thought he was one of the Old Testament prophets. It was Peter who said:

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

Jesus said to him:

"... you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Many people misunderstand this verse and so it is helpful to look at the Greek words which were used when this was originally written.

#### Matthew 16:18 with Greek added

"And I tell you, you are **Peter** (*Petros* - a small stone), and on this **rock** (*Petra* - solid rock) I will build my **church** (*ekklesia* - group of believers), and the gates of **hell** (*hades* - the grave) shall not prevail against it."





Notice that:

- Peter's name means 'small stone'. The church is not built on the man, Peter (*petros*), as some wrongly believe.
- The church is built on the solid rock (*petra*) of the truth which Peter had recognised when he said "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" The foundation of the true church is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19-22).
- Not even death can affect the true church because the Lord Jesus was resurrected from the dead – he overcame the grave.

Great authority was given to other apostles, as well as to Peter. Compare the words in verse 19 with Matthew 18:18. However, they were not given authority to forgive sins on God's behalf, but rather to tell people whether God had forgiven them or not. Acts 8:20-23 shows this is so because Peter told Simon to pray to the Lord for forgiveness. No-one today should call himself a priest and say that he has power to forgive sins, this can only come from God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Jesus' Suffering and Death Foretold (verses 21-23)

Jesus now began to tell his disciples that he would have to suffer at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes and be put to death. Although Peter knew who Jesus really was, he did not understand the need for him to die at Jerusalem. Because of his love for Jesus, he wanted to stop it happening. But Jesus knew that there was no other way that people could be saved from sin and so he rebuked Peter for trying to stop him doing God's will. Jesus also called him 'satan'. Satan means 'adversary' or 'one who opposes'. Peter opposed the will of God because he tempted Jesus to avoid crucifixion.

When Jesus told Peter "*Get **behind** me, Satan*", it is as if Peter was standing in front of Jesus deliberately stopping him walking forwards towards Jerusalem and the cross. Instead Peter should have been following Jesus, so Jesus said,

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and **follow** me."

The message of Jesus is that disciples must follow the example of their leader; we need to try to do God's will in our lives as Jesus did and not put our own desires first, even if we suffer for it (see 1 Peter 2:20-25).

Jesus said to Peter,

"You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." (Matthew 16:23).

The word 'hindrance' means a 'stumbling stone'. So Peter, whose name means a small stone, instead of being a rock on which to build, was becoming a stone to trip over!

