



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 main 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!



Chapter 17: God's Beloved Son

The Transfiguration (17:1-19)

This is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke and the chart below shows how useful it can be to compare the different Gospels to get a fuller picture.

Information	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jesus said some would not taste death until they see him coming in his kingdom.	16:28	9:1	9:27
Peter, James and John were the only disciples with Jesus at this time.	17: 1	9:2	9:28
They went up a high mountain	17:1	9:2	9:28
Jesus went to pray			9:28
They were alone	17:1	9:2	
Jesus' face shone	17:2		
His clothes became brilliant white	17:2	9:3	9:29
Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus	17:3	9:4	9:30
They talked about his death at Jerusalem			9:31
Peter wanted to make three shelters	17:4	9:5	9:33
A cloud surrounded them	17:8	9:7	9:34
A voice came from the cloud which said 'This is my beloved Son listen to him'	17:5	9:7	9:35
God also said that He was pleased with His Son.	17:5		
The disciples were scared but Jesus comforted them	17:6		
Jesus told them not to tell anyone until he had been raised from the dead.	17:9	9:9	

Only three of the disciples were allowed to see Jesus transfigured (or changed) on the mountain. This was a great privilege – by showing Jesus in glory, it gave them a picture of the future kingdom.

This event explains what the Lord said in the last verse of chapter 16:

"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16:28)

This comes in each of the three Gospels immediately before the transfiguration.

(Note: The chapter division in Matthew is not a problem as there were no chapters and verses when the New Testament was originally written!)

Matthew tells us that Peter, James and John saw Jesus shining with the glory of God and talking to Moses and Elijah about his death. We do not know if this was a vision or if God resurrected Moses and Elijah to talk to His Son.

These two were both important people in the Old Testament and the Jews had expected Elijah, or a person like him, to reappear before God's promised Saviour. Look at Malachi 4:5, 6 to see the passage on which this hope was based (See also Matthew 11:10-14).

Jesus said to the three disciples, "... Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased", and we are told that "the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist".





Jesus knew in advance what type of death he would suffer, but he was tempted to avoid it (John 12:27). The Transfiguration was given to strengthen him to continue to do his Father's will.

Years later Peter referred to the Transfiguration when he wrote his second letter. The whole experience had been so dramatic and wonderful that he knew without any doubt that he had witnessed God giving honour and glory to His Son. His words are shown in the box.

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

(2 Peter 1:16, 17)

Healing the Boy with Epilepsy (17:14-20)

As Jesus and the three disciples descended the mountain after the Transfiguration, they were met by a man pleading for help for his only child. The other disciples were unable to heal him but Jesus showed God's power at work in response to the man's faith.

Verse 15 says that the boy had epilepsy and describes how severe the epileptic fits were. Sometimes the convulsions were so bad that the boy fell in the fire or in water. Mark 9:17-26 adds more details including the fact that the boy was also deaf and dumb. People at that time did not realise that epilepsy is a medical condition and can be controlled by medicinal drugs. Because they found the boy's behaviour so strange they thought his problems must have been caused by a demon. There are no evil spirits inside a person causing them to be deaf and dumb or epileptic!

The boy's condition represented the faithless spiritual state of Israel and Jesus drew their attention to this comparison, before healing him. Jesus spoke to the father and the large crowd that had gathered to see Jesus performing miracles.

"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." (Matthew 17:17)

The boy's illness twisted his body with convulsions; the minds of the people were spiritually twisted and diseased by their sinfulness. They too were desperately in need of healing.

Jesus warns the Disciples about his Death (17:22, 23)

Jesus continued to warn his disciples about his forthcoming death in Jerusalem. He said to them;

"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44).

But the disciples did not understand him, and we read that they were very distressed.

Paying Tax (17:24-27)

Peter was asked if his master paid the temple tax. He replied that Jesus did. Later Jesus told Peter that kings would not expect their children to pay them tax so Jesus was not expected to offer money to his Father. However, Jesus recognised that he should obey those that are in authority (read Luke 20:21-25) and so he paid the tax, not just for himself but for Peter as well.





Chapter 18: Love and Forgiveness

This whole chapter is about relationships between believers. It tells us how God's children should behave to one another, particularly when differences or offences occur. God does not want any of His children to be like lost sheep and lose the kingdom prepared for them

'Who is the Greatest?' (18:1-13)

From Luke's account (Luke 9:46-48) we know that the disciples had been arguing about which of them should be the greatest (in the Kingdom of God). When they put the question to Jesus in Matthew 18:1, he taught them that the way to enter the kingdom is not to seek for greatness but to be converted into people who approach God in a humble, childlike spirit. This is like the teaching at the very beginning of his ministry that we looked at in Lesson 2.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

(Matthew 5:3)

When we are proud we fail to see how very small we are in God's sight. Jesus went on to warn that we need to make sure that we do not upset the faith of others or encourage them to sin by our poor behaviour as disciples.

He then uses some very powerful language to show how we should remove from our lives anything that may stop us from serving God.

"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.

And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell." (Matthew 18:8-9)

Jesus did not mean that we should literally cut off our hands and feet or poke out an eye! How would that help us to get to the kingdom? But there are things that we do (with our hands), places we go (with our feet) and things that we look at (with our eyes) which are wrong and will keep us from it. We need to cut these out of our lives.

People hearing Jesus use the terms which have been translated as "*the eternal fire*" and "*the hell of fire*" would immediately think of the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem.

The local name for this valley was 'Gehenna' which is the word Jesus used. It was the place where all the rubbish from Jerusalem was sent to be burned. The fires burned continually and Jesus often used the picture of Gehenna to represent the idea of total destruction – just like rubbish which is not wanted and is totally burnt up.

So the Lord Jesus shows us that if we follow desires which lead us away from God, then when he returns and judges the world we will be rejected and die for ever. We will not be allowed to enjoy the blessings of God's kingdom on earth. Note that Jesus did not say that the wicked will be punished by burning forever!

Another problem with wanting to be 'great' is that it can make us look down on those who are young or weak. In verses 5-6 and 10-14 Jesus showed that God takes a very different view. He cares deeply about individual men, women and children however unimportant they may seem to be. Because God cares about them, so must we.

When Other Believers sin against Us (18:15-20).

This next section tells us how to deal with disagreements that arise between people. If someone offends us we must first go to the person concerned and discuss the matter with him to try and resolve it. Sometimes when we talk to the person that we think has sinned against us we find that we have misunderstood him and there is not really a problem.

However if the problem is serious and we fail to resolve it then we should ask two or three others to listen before we bring it to the whole church. (The 'church', or 'assembly', means the local community of believers). At each stage the aim must be to try and find a way to be reconciled together. If we develop a





humble, childlike spirit, then we will resolve our problems in God's way. Doing things His way is important because God, through His angels, sees all that we do and say.

Forgiving Others (18:21-35)

The last part of this chapter continues the same theme. Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who has sinned against him. He thought it would be generous to forgive him seven times.

Jesus told him that he should forgive 'seventy times seven'. What did he mean? Should we forgive until we have reached 70×7 or 490 times and then stop forgiving?

Jesus showed that we should not stop forgiving others however many times they sinned against us. Long before we have forgiven someone seventy times seven we should have lost count! The parable which follows teaches us that we should willingly forgive one another because God forgives our sins which are perhaps far greater than those of our brother.

Why should we be so generous to others like this? Jesus explains the reason in the parable that follows. The first servant, who owed his master ten thousand talents, owed a huge amount of money that he could never expect to repay. So his master was extremely generous in forgiving him. The second servant owed the first servant a hundred denarii. This was a much smaller amount – we can show it like this:

$$10000 \text{ talents} = 60 \text{ million denarii}$$

We are like the first servant. We can have a huge debt forgiven us by the Lord God, our Master, the debt is our sins and we will never find a way of paying Him for all the wrong we have done.

In comparison, anything that anyone has done against us is totally insignificant and we should freely forgive, always remembering what has been forgiven us.



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 16

1a Who did Peter say Jesus was?

1b Who is the foundation of the church, Peter or the Lord Jesus Christ?

2 In which verse does Jesus say he will return in glory with his Father's angels?

Read Jonah chapter 1 and Mathew 12:39,40 to help you with question 3

3a Why was Jonah swallowed by a large sea creature?

3b What do you think is meant by the 'sign of the prophet Jonah'?

Questions on Chapter 17

1 What happened to Jesus when he was transfigured (or transformed)?

2 What New Testament person was like Elijah?

- 3 Verse 18 says that the demon came out of the boy. What had been wrong with him?
- 4 Which verses suggest that Jesus knew he was to die and then be raised from the dead?
- 5 Since Jesus was the Son of God, who owns everything, he did not need to pay tax to anyone. Why then did he pay it?

Questions on Chapter 18

- 3 Which verses tell us that we should speak directly to the one who has done wrong, instead of telling others about him?
- 4 Which verse says that we should forgive people from our heart (so we do not just appear to forgive them but genuinely want to completely forget that they have wronged us)?
- 5 Fill in the table below about the parable at the end of the chapter:

The part of the parable	Who or what it represents
The king or master	
	Forgiving a very sinful life
	Not forgiving another person's little sin against you