

DECLARING ALLEGIANCE Sunday School- February 14, 2010

Unifying Topic: DECLARED BY PETER

Lesson Text

I. **Jesus Asks The Disciples A Question (Matthew 16:13-16)**

III. **Jesus' Response (Matthew 16:17-20)**

III. **Jesus Reveals The Cost Of Allegiance To Him (Matthew 16:21-27)**

The Main Thought: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Many people are curious about the Jesus of history. Who was Jesus really? Jesus affirmed that Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, was a revelation from God.

Lesson Aim: To show how Jesus was being perceived by the crowd, and compare that to how He was perceived by those closest to Him.

Life aim: To help us to form an appropriate opinion of Jesus in order for us to see who He really is for us.

- 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
- 16:14 And they said, Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
- 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
- 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
- 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- 16:20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.
- 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
- 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.
- 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.
- 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. .

HISTORY:

The end of **Matthew Chapter 15**, (verses 36-39) Jesus and His disciples had just fed four thousand men beside women and children with seven loaves of bread and few little fishes. After all were full, seven full basket were still in abundance. The multitude were sent away, they took a ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Pharisees and Sadducees Wanting a Sign

Matthew 16:1-4 opens by focusing attention on some key people, this time the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to each other in principles and in conduct; yet they joined against Christ. The Pharisees believed in bodily resurrection and eternal life; The Sadducees did not, nor did they even believe in signs and supernatural events. But they desired a sign from heaven of their own choosing. Their opposition was due to two reasons:

1. They cooperated with the Roman government and were thereby put in position of leadership and wealth. Jesus preached a gospel of sacrifice and poverty in order to help a needy world. He was therefore, a serious threat to them.
2. They did not believe that all scripture was of God, nor did they believe in the supernatural or in the

resurrection of the dead. Christ, of course, did believe. Therefore, He was again a threat to their very existence. The purpose of the Pharisees and Sadducees tempting Jesus was to prove that He was an imposter and to discredit Him before the people. This is a TEST! Why does anyone call you out?—to make you look bad! The problem is not that He has failed to give them signs or to prove Himself. The issue clearly is their unbelief. After their request in Matthew 16:1 for a sign from heaven, Jesus answers:

But he answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' In the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times!"

¹They can look at the sky and tell what the weather is going to be (**physical perception**), but they cannot look and see what God is doing and recognize where they are in His program (**spiritual perception**). Jesus says, in effect, that the signs are there. The people of Jesus' day had signs. What were some of the signs they should have recognized?

- The ministry of John the Baptist provides a sign in that he is the prophet who was prophesied in the Old Testament. **Isaiah 40:3** had been fulfilled in the life and ministry of John the Baptist.
- Still again John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy from **Malachi 3**.
- One clear sign these Jews had missed was given in **Daniel 9:24** where Gabriel told Daniel that seventy weeks were determined for his people and the Holy city Jerusalem. The Jews could have sat down and calculated from the giving of the commandment to rebuild the temple in Nehemiah 2 to their day that they were just about at the end of the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel, or four hundred eighty-three years.
- And also the message and works of Jesus were great evidence.

Jesus revealed their problem in **16:4**: "*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.*" The problem was their wicked and adulterous hearts. They want signs, which is an indication of wickedness. They are really saying that the Word of God is not adequate, so they need some spectacular, miraculous proof because they are not willing to believe what God says. His Word is not enough for them. There are never enough signs or evidences to convince people to change their lives, and cause them to turn to God.

The only sign to be given to a wicked generation is the sign of Jonah. In **Matt. 12:40** the sign was unfolded saying, "*that as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's great sign, the culminating miracle of miracles to prove that His Son, Jesus Christ, is the Messiah of Israel. **Rom. 1:4** says that Jesus was "*declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.*" So the greatest miracle and sign that could be given was given: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus turned away from the leaders of the nation and abandoned them to their condemned, sinful condition in which they had chosen to be. The nation has rejected Him, and now He has rejected them. Jesus did not argue with the Pharisees and Sadducees, because they were not open to consider the truth of the Word of God and the person of Christ. So He did not continue to scatter the truth of God before them that they might tear it and misuse it. He abandoned them and left the area. After this, Jesus begins the time of instruction for His disciples. The basis for this instruction is found in the events which occurred with the Pharisees and Sadducees.

16:5-12 Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

After departing to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the disciples remembered that they had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus saw an opportunity to teach a much needed lesson; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. By leaven, Jesus meant the false teaching of the religionists, but the disciples misunderstood what He was saying. They thought He was rebuking them for not having bread. Their thoughts were, as is so often the case, occupied with earthly matters and cares. Jesus has been conveying to them a great spiritual truth, but they did not perceive it at all because they were occupied with their physical circumstances. **Always thinking on the physical will keep us from receiving the spiritual.** In **v8** Jesus turns around and rebukes them in their preoccupation with earthly matters. He called it distrust—"*O ye of little faith.*" * Then He began immediately to teach two great lessons of life.

1. He will take care of the believer's earthly needs. He was almost shocked to think that His followers did not trust Him to take care of them.
 - a. 'Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up?

¹ http://www.ihcc.org/index.php?id=sermon&sermon_id=xylSEgrJHzMDbShnPVGscRED

- b. Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up?'
2. His followers are to be primarily concerned with spiritual matters, not with earthly affairs. Guarding one's mind and soul against the leaven, the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees is to be the believer's constant concern, not worrying and caring for earthly things.

NOTE:

"O ye of little faith" or "ye men of little faith", directed to the disciples is recorded four times: *Matt.6:30* (food drink and clothes); *8:26* (Jesus stills the storm on the sea); *14:31* (Peter walking on water); *16:8* (physical needs).

POINT:

This is a good reminder as well as an encouragement. Christ did not give up on them. Even though they did not grasp the lesson which you would think they should have understood by that time. Christ did not abandon them and look for some men who would be a little quicker to learn the lesson. He continued to work with the disciples and minister to them. This is a reminder that God works with ordinary people, and He is very patient. As believers, we are to learn the lessons He wants to teach us, but it may take repeated emphasis before those lessons sink in.

Jesus has not said anything different. He has not given them an explanation of leaven. But He has reminded them to get their eyes off the physical things and on Him. **16:12** suddenly reports, *"Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."* All of a sudden they could see the spiritual truth that He was teaching them. The Pharisees believed in a personal God and in the scripture as God's Word to man, but they added to God's Word. They added rules and regulations, rituals and ceremonies laying undue restrictions upon man's behavior. The Sadducees or Herodians were the liberal minded of their day. Their leaven or false teaching was keeping the right rules and thereby becoming righteous.

LESSON:

Matthew 16:13-16: Jesus Asks The Disciples A Question

Jesus and the disciples have come to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi (about 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee). And Jesus asks His disciples a question. There was much to reveal and teach them. It was time for them to learn that He was building a church—an assembly of people who would be confessing Him to be the Messiah. Jesus' question was, *"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" 16:13.* What men think of Jesus...?

- Determines their destiny.
- Determines how we are to reach out to them.
- Determines their reaction to us as we witness to them.
- Determines to a large degree the morality and justice of a society.

There were false confessions regarding Jesus. The popular opinions show that Jesus was highly esteemed and greatly respected. He was considered one of the greatest of me. **And they said... (16:14)**

- ***"Some say thou are John the Baptist..."***
 - Herod and others thought this.
 - The common people saw some similarity between John and Jesus: both were doing a unique and great work for God; both were divinely chosen and gifted by God; both proclaimed the Kingdom of God and prepared men for it.
- ***"Some, Elias..."***
 - Elijah was considered to be the greatest prophet and teacher of all time, and was predicted to be come before the coming Messiah Mal. 4:5-6. Elijah had also been used by God to miraculously feed a widow woman and her son.
 - The people connected Elijah's miracle and Jesus' feeding of the multitude.
- ***"And others, Jeremias..."***(Jeremiah)
 - It had always been thought that Jeremiah was going to return to earth right before the Messiah and bring with Him the tabernacle, ark, and altar of incense. He was said to have taken these and hid them in Mount Nebo right before he died.
- ***"Or one of the prophets."***
 - He was thought to be one of the great prophets brought back to life or one in whom the spirit of a great prophet dwelt.

POINT:

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

There are some people today who think that Jesus was only a great man of righteousness who was martyred for His faith. There are others who think that Jesus was only one of the great teachers and prophets of history. There are still others who think that Jesus was only a great man who revealed some very important things to us about God and religion. And there are some who think that Jesus was just a great man and prophet sent to the people (Jews) of His day.

Jesus now asks a second critical question: **"But whom say ye that I am?" 16:15.** He's making the question personal. By this question He was forcing the disciples to consider again their personal convictions. Had they been swayed by the attitude of the multitude? The answer to this question determines a person's eternal destiny. The true confession declares one's personal trust in Jesus. **"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" 16:16.** The very life and survival of a man's soul and of the church as a whole rests upon this simple, yet profound conviction.

- *The Christ*; the Messiah, the anointed One of God (*Matt. 1:18*)
- *The Son of God*: of the same being, the same substance; One with the Father (*Phil. 2:6*)
- *The Son of the Living God*: the source and being of life; possessing the source, energy, and power of life within Himself (*Jh. 5:26; 17:2-3; 1Thes. 1:9*)

Peter probably did not understand all that was involved in Christ being the Son of God (the cross and resurrection had not yet taken place). But his confession was made in simple trust which God desires and longs for—nothing more and nothing less. Peter was simply confessing step by step, "I believe You are..."

- the true Messiah
- not a mere man
- but the Son of God
- sent by God
- to fulfill all that the prophets foretold.

POINT:

The question is personal. It is directed to every man; "Whom say ye that I am?" Every man has to answer, and his eternal destiny depends upon his answer. But his answer is critical, for it is not a confession about Christ that Christ is after. He is after a belief, a confession in His deity, a trusting of his saving grace.

Matthew 16:17-20: Jesus' Response

As a result of that acknowledgement, Jesus pronounced a great blessing on Peter. He was one who was spiritually blessed and one in whom God had performed a special work of revelation by giving him insight into the person of Christ. **"And Jesus said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" 16:17.** Jesus addressed Peter with the word "Barjona"; "bar" means "son." "Jona" is the name. It simply means son of Jona. By this address, Jesus was emphasizing Peter's human origin. Only God can convict the soul of a man and lead a man to personally trust Jesus as the Son of God. Why is this?

1. Conviction that leads a man to trust Christ—that leads to regeneration—is the work of God's Spirit.
2. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Man is of the earth; He is earthly. Christ is of heaven and of God; He is heavenly. God is Spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Man cannot come to know Christ in a personal way through natural wisdom or study, only through faith as God draws.

16:18a-Jesus replied to Peter, **"You are Peter (petros) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church."** When Peter came to Christ, He changed his name to Cephas, which is Aramaic for petros, meaning a stone. He saw Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. The confession Peter has just made was acknowledged. So upon the rock of that testimony, the Church will be constructed. It is not Peter's personality or strength upon which the church is built but Peter's gospel confession. Jesus Christ was announcing the "messianic community," and that it was established upon **the solid rock** of divine revelation that Peter had just confessed.

1. ²The Savior does not say, Thou art a stone, and upon thee I will build, etc. or Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build. He changes the word in the Greek from Petros (Peter, a stone) to Petra, a rock, or ledge of rock--a solid bed-rock.
2. Every saint is a stone (see 1Pt.2:5). The Lord declares that Peter is one these living stones, made such by his confession of faith, and ready to be built into the church, the spiritual temple, formed of living stones, and built upon the rock. So is every confessor of Christ. In order to settle what the Savior does mean by the rock, we must consider Mt 16:18-19 together, and keep in mind the entire figure. This figure portrays
 - a. a Builder, Christ;
 - b. a temple to be built, composed of lively stones, the church;

² <http://bible.cc/matthew/16-18.htm> (People's New Testament)

- c. a foundation for that temple, the rock;
- d. the gates of an unfriendly city or power which shall seek its destruction, hell, or more correctly, Hades, the unseen abode of the dead, the grave;
- e. a door-keeper of the church, or spiritual temple, with his keys, Peter. Peter's place in the figure is not that of the foundation, but that of the key-holder, or turnkey. The only difficulty is in settling what the Lord means by the rock. Since this rock is the foundation of the church, the central principle, the fundamental idea, we are aided to a correct decision by the teachings of the Word elsewhere. We learn through Paul that "*other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" 1Corth.3:11. This excludes Peter or any human platform. Christ is often called a stone:
 - i. the stone that the builders rejected (Matt 21:42 Mk.12:10 Lk.20:17);
 - ii. the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20);
 - iii. the stone that is the head of the corner (Matt 21:42 Mk.12:10 Lk.20:17 Ac 4:11 1Pt.2:7);
 - iv. the spiritual rock which is Christ (1Corth. 10:4).

Faith in Christ held in the heart, and confessed with the lips is the very foundation of the spiritual life and of the church. Jesus said, "***You are Peter and on this rock (I Myself, the great truth of your confession) will I build My church***" 16:18a. There is no question that the church is built upon Christ. He is unquestionably the builder of the church and the power behind its structure. It is He who takes every believer, all the "*living stones*", and places them into the structure of His church (1Pt.2:4-8). **The church** depends upon Christ, not upon Peter nor any other man or combination of men. It was first built by Peter after Pentecost; but it is *held up and held together* by Christ, the only foundation.

- Fact 1: "*My Church.*" The church is Christ's not man's.
- Fact 2; "*I will build.*" Christ builds the church.
- Fact 3: "*The gates of hell shall not prevail.*" Christ Himself protects the church.

POINT:

The true church is universal. It is made up of all who genuinely confess Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. If God is living, then Christ is living. Christ not only loved and died for us individually—He also loved and died for the church as a whole (universally) Eph.5:25.

The power of the gospel of Christ affecting the lives of His followers as they are assembled into a body of believers cannot be overpowered: "***and the gates of Hades will not overpower it***" v18b. *Hades*" refers to the place of the dead, while "*gates*" implies great strength. In other words, not even the power of death can conquer the church. The steward of the house is given the keys or the responsibility for the house. The steward has the responsibility to close (bind) and to open (loose) the house. The key is the gospel, the message, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is the business of the steward to proclaim and teach the Gospel. By proclaiming and teaching he opens the door; by not proclaiming and not teaching he shuts the door. Note the keys are not the keys to the church but to the kingdom of heaven for the church. It is entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Peter was the first man to preach the gospel and open the door to Israel at Pentecost.

16:19a Keys To The Kingdom of Heaven

³What are "***the keys of the kingdom of heaven***" that are said to be entrusted to Peter (and perhaps, by extension, to all who make the good confession of faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son)? In the OT, keys symbolized divinely ordained responsibility and authority (*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 187). In *Isaiah 22:21-22* we are told of a promise made to Eliakim, son of Hilkiah. The Lord states, "*I will entrust him with authority ... I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder; when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open.*" The ascended Jesus mentions directly to this in His message to the church in Philadelphia -- "*He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this ...*" (Rev. 3:7). Keys open doors, and lock doors shut; to let in or lock out. Within the investment of any set of keys to an individual, or to a group of individuals, is the authority to use those keys for the purpose prescribed. In the case of Peter, it was to bind and loose. However, since this authority to bind and loose is later extended to The Twelve as well, the implication is that they too have these keys. "*The same power was given to the apostles and the church as a whole; it is not an exclusive gift to any one person*" (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 191). "*Keys opened locked doors or gates, but the carrying of such keys especially symbolized the bearer's authority*"

This Kingdom is now in the presence of the King in our lives through His Spirit. Jesus' kingdom was not a political

³ <http://www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx237.htm>

kingdom, but God's reign in the hearts of people that will control and transform their lives. The human heart is the realm in which Jesus came to reign. He came for all mankind to live in him so that He can change us into His own image. He says in Matt.12:28, "*the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*" When you see "*kingdom of heaven*" in Matthew, it means exactly the same thing as "kingdom of God" in the other gospels. It refers to the Reign of God which has come in the person of Jesus Christ Himself.

16:19b Binding and Loosing

Firstly, in the original Greek, the sentence goes something more like 'whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven'. That means whatever is happening on earth, the reality of it has already been decided in heaven, by God. The church on earth carries out heaven's decisions, not heaven ratifying the church's decisions.

⁴Jesus looked to God to know what to do in situations. In contrast, Jesus' disciples had looked to Him for direction, but what would they do when He was gone? He knew His disciples needed instruction in the church that would spring up all over the globe. So he taught them to be sure to follow God's lead in what they forbade or permitted. The same power here given to Peter belongs to every disciple of Jesus in all the ages. The binding and loosing is repeated by Jesus to all the disciples (18:18). Later after the Resurrection Christ will use this same language to all the disciples (John 20:23), showing that it was not a special prerogative of Peter. He is simply first among equals because on this occasion he was spokesman for the faith of all. As Jesus taught us, what we forbid on earth must have first been forbidden in heaven, and what we permit on earth must have been first permitted in heaven.

16:20 - Jesus warned the disciples not to publicize Peter's confession because they did not yet fully understand what kind of Messiah He had come to be—not military commander but a suffering servant. Reasons why:

1. They still needed more preparation. They did not yet know the full gospel. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
2. The disciples needed the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit if the message was to be effective, and the Spirit had not yet come. Pentecost had not yet taken place.
3. The people misunderstood the prophecies of the Messiah. If the disciples began preaching with force, the people might revolt against the Roman conquerors.

Matthew 16:21-27: Jesus Reveals The Cost Of Allegiance To Him

*"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****" 16:21.* Now, however, there was a significant switch in how Jesus went about preparing His disciples for His death. The difference was that Christ no longer spoke in pictures and symbols. He now taught them in simple and direct words. Jesus had already been telling His disciples about His death and resurrection for some time, but they had not understood. The disciples now understood more fully that Jesus was *"the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* Now they needed to learn two things: that the real way into God's kingdom and glory was through death, sacrifice, and self-denial. The path of suffering had to be taken not only by God's Messiah, but also by the followers of God's Messiah.

So Jesus indicated that the three major groups in Israel, which comprised the ruling body known as the Sanhedrin, would lead the way in bringing about His suffering and death. Jesus mentioned indirectly earlier, to His coming death by His reference to the sign of Jonah the prophet. *"Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights"* Matt.12:40.

Peter takes Jesus to the side and begins to rebuke Him 16:22. Peter was unwittingly doing the same thing Satan tried to do in the wilderness temptation—urging Jesus to act on His own apart from the Father. Jesus' words did not fit Peter's agenda. Just as, His words and deeds did not fit the agenda of the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees. Jesus had only one purpose—to do His Father's Will. His death was necessary. His death arouses natural man. Natural man rebels at the idea of the cross and natural man wants another way other than the cross. Peter could accept Jesus as "the Son of the living God," but not as the suffering Savior. That's why he tried to stop the idea.

Jesus then turns to Peter and says, *"Get thee behind me Satan"* 16:23. Calling Peter Satan was stern, and yet such sternness was necessary. The loyalty and allegiance of men without the cross was again being suggested to Him. When a man refuses to accept God's plan for life, he becomes an adversary to God. Peter was saying that

⁴ <http://www.truthortradition.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1187>

he was wiser than God. And that's why Jesus had to stop him in his tracks by charging Peter with being Satan, that is, with being under the authority of Satan.

Commitment of Allegiance:

Jesus gives four steps that are involved in total commitment **16:24**:

1. A person must "will" to follow Christ. The word "*wills*" (thelei) means to desire, wish, design, purpose, resolve, determine; a deliberate willing, a deliberate choice. Note the choice is voluntary. Therefore, it is the individual who must act and do the following:
2. A person must deny self. The word "*deny*" (aparnesastho) means to disown, disregard, forsake, renounce, reject, refuse, refrain, restrain, disclaim, do without; subdue one's self and one's interest. Very simply, it means to say "*no*." A person is to deny self, and this means much more than just being negative, that is, giving up something and doing without something; acting positively, to say "*yes*" to Christ and "*no*" to self; letting Christ rule his life.
3. A person must take up the cross. Carrying one's cross meant walking to one's death. That's what the Lord wanted them to see. And for us to be content with what God gives us to do.
4. A person must follow Jesus. The follow (akoloothei) means to be a follower or companion, to be a disciple. It has the idea of seeking to be in union with and in the likeness of. A disciple of Christ comes after Him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven: and one that walks in the same way that he walked in, is led by His Spirit, treads in His steps, submits to His conduct, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever He goes, Rev. 14:4. Note that the steps of Christ led to death before they led to glory.

16:25 - "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Now there are two paths to follow: **Save** (keep) your life—you lose it or **Lose** (abandon) your life for Jesus' sake—you find it.

1. The person who keeps his life and what he has and seeks more and more of this life, shall lose his life completely and eternally. The person who saves his life by seeking:
 - a. to avoid the aging of the body and death and yet denies Christ shall lose his life eternally.
 - b. to make his life more and more comfortable, easy, and secure and neglects Christ shall lose his life eternally.
 - c. to gain wealth and power and fame by compromising Christ shall lose his life eternally.
 - d. the thrills, excitement, and stimulation of this world by ignoring Christ shall lose his life eternally.
2. But, **An abandonment of this life saves a person**. What does it mean? The key is in the words for "my sake." The person who **abandons** this life—who sacrifices and gives all that he is and has for Christ shall save his life. When we give our lives in service to Christ, we discover the real purpose of living.

16:26 - "For what is man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- A man's soul is worth more than the whole world. The word "*soul*" is the same word translated "*life*" (v25). Jesus uses the word life in two senses. There are two stages, two beings, two existences to the same life; "*the life that exists on this earth*" and "*the life that shall exist beyond this life*." Once a person (life) is born into this world, he shall exist forever. It is just a matter of where he goes after this world: to be with God or to be apart from God. No man can gain the whole world, but what if he could? All the pleasure and wealth and power and fame are nothing compared with his soul. Once a man has lost his soul, it is lost. It cannot be bought back. Begin to evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective.

16:27 - "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

- A day of judgment is coming. When Christ returns, the true value of sacrifice vs. self-satisfaction will be clearly seen. Sacrifice for Christ will be abundantly rewarded: self-satisfaction will be condemned. Man is to be judged according to his works. The word "*works*" means doing, working, and acting. It is not isolated acts, but continuous behavior. This will not be confined to nonbelievers. Christians too will face a judgment. Their eternal destiny is secure, but Jesus will look at how we handled gifts, opportunities, and responsibilities in order to determine their heavenly rewards. This is not something we can earn, but a by-product of faithful obedience.

SUMMARY:

Peter's confession took but a few words, but it was a turning point in the history of salvation. He spoke on behalf of all the disciples. Jesus for one of the first times, does not criticize their response as "*little faith*," but instead

commends the response of Peter for its revelatory power. Peter's central role is recognized as a representative of the disciples' community in its confession of faith. Peter is praised because of his confession (not because of who he is). He is blessed (blessed for ever) because the divine mystery of who Jesus is has been revealed to him—Peter's grand confession: faith in the Spiritual Rock, the faith that lays hold of Christ, belief that He is the Anointed of God, the Divine Savior, that the Lord pronounces the rock upon which He will found His church.

Christ gave some clear revelation concerning His own person and the plan of God that will be carried out both before the kingdom is established and then in the kingdom. After clearly establishing the fact that He is the Son of the living God, Christ moved on to tell His disciples that He is going to build the Church. He made clear to them that the Church does not replace the kingdom, but the kingdom will follow the Church. Then He focused their attention on the events which will transpire next, He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things; be killed; and be raised again on the third day. There was no one or thing that was going to stop the plan of God, not even Peter. He lets them know, that following Jesus meant a true commitment—the risk of death and no turning back.

Now to spell it all out, our allegiance to Jesus means making a conscious choice to voluntarily deny our self, take up His cross and follow Him. He does not soften it or cut any corners. Now how should our lives follow Him? What an odd paradox, that something as important as your LIFE, is dependent on losing it in order to find it! We don't want to lose; we want to win! Yet somehow, as Jesus tells us, the person who "loses his life for My (Jesus') sake, will find it." For, it seems like the more we try to grab onto life and make it work in our favor, the more it tends to slip away.

⁵The story of Jesus doesn't end with the cross. Because His story doesn't end there, neither does the story of His followers. Jesus will return. Everyone will be judged by Him. For those who have followed Him, who have surrendered to His Lordship, His coming with much anticipation, with longing, His disciples await that day because it will be the vindication of their faith.

We give our allegiance to a crucified Messiah and are part of an upside down Kingdom because we believe that Jesus died, was buried, was raised, now lives with power, and one day will return for us with the angels. When all the stories are over and the last chapter is read, we will be with Jesus and share in His victory.

APPLICATION:

It's serious news when someone we know loses a part of his or her body. We speak in quietly and sad when someone loses their mind, their kidney, part of a lung, one of their limbs. How do we feel, however, when we see someone losing their soul? Do we speak out? Do we warn? A soul bought and paid for by Jesus is worth us declaring who he is to others even when they don't want to hear. Our allegiance is unto God.

⁵ <http://www.heartlight.org/wjd/matthew/0809-wjd.html>