

# He Must Go To Jerusalem

*<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.  
(Matthew 16:21. ESV)*

## **Confession And Confusion**

**March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Matthew 16:13-28**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! For the next few weeks we are going to be walking with the disciples, following Jesus to Jerusalem, to the cross and to the empty tomb. You can think of this mini-series as preparation for Easter. We'll be using Matthew's Gospel and focusing in on some of the texts that show Jesus helping the disciples come to grips with the necessity and meaning of the cross. Let me read to you now from Matthew 16:13-28.

### **Matthew 16:13-28 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

<sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

<sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

<sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

<sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

<sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

<sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."

<sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

<sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

<sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

<sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

<sup>28</sup> 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.”

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

This is a long text and we don't have time to conduct a line by line exegesis; rather my goal this morning is to help you see the BIG PICTURE and the main issues. However, I recognize that there are an unusually high number of difficult questions raised in this text; is Jesus making Peter the Pope here? What does he mean by “keys” and “binding” and “loosing”? In what sense will some of these people “see the coming of the kingdom” before they taste death? Those are important questions, but they are not the main issues that this text is addressing address, they are things we struggle to understand, and so I have prepared an “FAQ” document that we will send out on Monday addressing each of those questions in turn. If you want to read that, you can do so on the website or you can have it sent to you by email if you indicate your desire and your address in the Worship Register.

For now, put those questions on hold and look carefully at verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> **From that time** Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

This story reveals a hinge – a new phase in the teaching of Jesus that particularly focuses on helping the disciples understand the necessity of his coming death and resurrection. The disciples did not yet have a complete understanding of who Jesus was and what he came to do. Their vision of Jesus was partial and incomplete. That's what this story is about and we know that because the Bible itself provides a clarifying illustration. Keep your finger here in Matthew 16 and flip forward in your Bible to Mark 8:22. Mark's Gospel is the only Gospel to record a little story just before this story that scholars agree, is given as an illustration of what is happening in Peter's confession and subsequent confusion. Let me read it to you:

**Mark 8:22-27 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.

<sup>23</sup> And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”

<sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

<sup>26</sup> And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

<sup>27</sup> And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

Do you see what the Bible is doing here? Peter is the blind guy, metaphorically speaking! He has been touched by God and he sees a little bit – he sees forms and shapes; like trees walking around – but he doesn’t see perfectly. He is still partially blind. But another touch from God is coming and after that, he will see everything! Now hear what I am saying carefully; I am NOT saying that the miracle of the two stage healing didn’t literally happen, I am saying that it did literally happen, but it happened, in the providence of God, in such a way and at such a time that it helped Peter understand what God was doing to him in Caesarea Philippi. That, by the way, is not my opinion, I don’t make this stuff up, I steal it from other people smarter than me. R.T. France, the noted Biblical commentator says it this way:

There are then, good reasons for believing that Mark included this story at this point in his narrative because for him it illustrated a fundamental theme of the journey to Jerusalem, the curing of the disciples’ blindness. But the symbolic does not exclude the literal.<sup>1</sup>

Mark, writing more than likely under the influence of Peter himself, thinks this story is worth mentioning because it is a picture of what Jesus is doing with his disciples. He is opening their eyes in stages to the meaning and centrality of the cross. He is preparing them for Good Friday and Easter Sunday; that’s why this section of text is so perfect for our consideration over the next several weeks. These texts will help us understand the glory of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. So let’s flip back to Matthew 16 and let me walk you through the text in terms of this theme of seeing and not yet seeing Jesus. There are four questions I want to ask and answer in order to understand this text. First of all then:

## Seeing And Not Seeing Jesus

### 1. What did Peter see?

What did Peter understand about Jesus, because he did understand some things and those things he understood very well. Have you ever had the experience of taking a test in High School or in University which you feel like you have absolutely nailed. You complete the test, spike your scientific calculator on the ground and moonwalk out of the gymnasium because you have

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<sup>1</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 323.

absolutely mastered the material in question; have you ever had that experience? And have you ever then, subsequently had the experience of talking to other students after the exam only to discover that there was another section of questions on the back side of the page. Booo!!! That is going to seriously impact your overall mark in the class. That is what just happened to Peter in this story. Peter got 100% on half of the exam. He got 0% on the half that he missed. Before we throw Peter under the bus for what he missed, let's learn from what he got right.

Jesus asked the disciples:

“But who do you say that I am?”

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, “You are **the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

He got two things very right in that answer. First of all, he correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ; that is as the Messiah and the Son of David. The story line of the Bible is that after the fall of Adam in the garden, all creation falls under the curse. Humanity was created by God to be in his image OVER all creation. Meaning that human beings were supposed to serve and obey God and rule over everything else. But when Adam sinned, mankind fell away from God and without God they cannot rule creation and therefore all creation groans in captivity, waiting for the unveiling of the children of God. Creation NEEDS a restored human to rule over it. Until that happens, everything is going to pot. That's a decent summary of the Old Testament. Now, into that desperate scene, God makes a promise. A child will come. A child, born to a woman, will come and will destroy the devil; the devil has temporarily stepped into the vacuum of world leadership vacated by fallen humanity; but a child will come and defeat the devil and restore men and women to God, to each other and to their created destiny as the image of God OVER all creation. That promise first appears in Genesis 3 and then it keeps reappearing with more detail at several key turning points in Scripture. A child will come! A child of promise will come! Later we learn he will be born to the tribe of Abraham, and after that we learn that he will be born to the house of David. He will be anointed with Power from on High and he will sit on an eternal throne and rule over all creation – Peter rightly identifies Jesus as that child of promise. You are the CHRIST! You are the ANOINTED KING; you are the SON OF DAVID and SEED of PROMISE! That's huge and that is exactly right.

Secondly, Peter understands that in addition to being the child of promise, the coming king and the seed of David, Jesus is also fully DIVINE! You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. That makes Peter more insightful than all the scribes and teachers of Israel. Jesus criticises the teachers of Israel for being slow to make this connection in Matthew 22:

**Matthew 22:41-46 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question,

<sup>42</sup> saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.”

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

<sup>44</sup> “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’?”

<sup>45</sup> If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

<sup>46</sup> And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

What Peter understood that the Pharisees did not was that in addition to being the Son of David, the Messiah was also the CREATOR of David! That is a pretty good beginning on a theology of the incarnation and it shows that Peter was way further down the road than the brightest minds in Israel when it came to understanding the true identity of Jesus. Peter understood that Jesus was the Son of David AND the Son of God. That is a pretty good beginning. That is 100% on the first page of this exam. But what did Peter not see?

## 2. What did Peter not see?

Look at verses 21-22:

<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

<sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! **This shall never happen to you.**”

Peter did not understand that the glorious Christ, the seed of Abraham and the Son of David would also have to suffer and die for the sin of his people. In fairness to Peter – NOBODY saw that until after it happened. There are two great threads of promise that weave through the Old Testament but one was far more popular than the other. Everybody loved the thread of victory and triumph. The “son of David” theme summoned memories of the hay days of Israel when they ruled from the Nile to the Euphrates – essentially the entire Middle East – and they had peace on every side and there were powerful experiences of the presence of God in their midst. It was glorious but it was also long gone. Israel had fallen on very hard times. They had been

through exile and suffering on an unimaginable scale. So, when you started whispering about the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David people naturally begin thinking of a return to the glory days of old. That's what people wanted but there was another thread in Scripture that was often overlooked. The whole structure of temple worship and the whole climax of Isaiah's prophesy looked forward to the coming of a Suffering Servant; a Lamb who would take away the sin of the world. Of this coming servant, the prophet said:

**Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Peter saw the Christ – he saw the Son of David, but he did not see the Suffering Servant and in that failure he had great company. Many were those who wanted Jesus to be a king without a cross. The crowds wanted it:

**John 6:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and **take him by force to make him king**, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

The devil offered it:

**Luke 4:5-7 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,

<sup>6</sup> and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.

<sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

But Jesus understood that there could be no kingdom without a cross. Humanity needed more than a fresh start – we tried a fresh start in the days of Noah and it did nothing to address the root issue of human depravity – we needed a Saviour alongside our need for a King. We cannot have a kingdom without a cross.

Peter saw and understood a lot of things that he does not often get credit for, but he did not see or understand the sinfulness of sin, the lostness of man, the Holiness of God, the nature of true discipleship or the redemptive value of suffering. In short, he did not see the necessity of the cross.

Thirdly, we need to ask:

### 3. What did Jesus say about those whose sight was only partial?

Look at verse 20, after Peter, speaking on behalf of the disciples as a group, revealed his partial understanding of the Christ, Matthew records:

<sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Why would he do that? Why wouldn't he want them to go around and put forth, in speech or in writing that Jesus was the Christ? Because they didn't understand yet what that meant. They didn't KNOW enough to say anything helpful about Jesus as the Christ. Their teaching at this point in their development would do more harm than good.

Now right away, we want to consider how that goes along with the fact that Jesus did, actually send out the disciples on a teaching mission. Back in Matthew 10 he sent his disciples out to teach – that is true – but look at what he told them to teach.

**Matthew 10:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**'

They didn't go out teaching Christology – who Jesus was and what he came to do – they went out with a message of preparation. In that sense, their mission was very similar to the one given to John the Baptist. Matthew tells us in chapter 3 that John went out preaching:

**Matthew 3:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

Same message, because at this point, the disciples knew little more than John the Baptist about who Jesus was and what he came to accomplish. But on the other side of the cross and the empty tomb, what did Jesus tell his disciples to preach then?

**Luke 24:45-48 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

<sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

<sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.

There is the second touch from Jesus that opens their eyes – after his death and resurrection – to the totality of his identity and mission. After that touch – after they see clearly – he sends them out to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins **IN HIS NAME TO ALL NATIONS**. You are witnesses of **THESE THINGS**.

People who have not had their eyes opened to the sinfulness of sin, the lostness of man, the holiness of God, the nature of Christian discipleship and the redemptive and sanctifying purpose of suffering should not be given a platform for the public preaching of Jesus. They will likely do far more harm than good.

That is why I say things from time to time to try and wean you away from the influence of bad teachers that have become available through the means of internet, radio and television. You have access now to every immature and partially informed Bible teacher on the face of the earth via modern technology – that has the potential to do enormous mischief for the cause of the true Gospel. I had someone ask me last week – **VERY NICELY** – I might add and without a hint of animosity or arrogance – she was just curious, why I felt the need to name Christian teachers that we should not listen to or learn from. That is a fair question and I don’t mind answering it. The reason is **NOT** that I think these folks aren’t Christians – they may be, some of them are for sure – that isn’t the point. The point is I don’t think that they have had their eyes opened to the sinfulness of sin, the lostness of man, the holiness of God, the nature of Christian discipleship and the sanctifying value of suffering and therefore, I think they will do you more harm than good. If you can write a book called “Your Best Life Now”, that tells me nothing about whether you are saved or not, but it tells me everything about whether or not you are competent to speak publicly about the identity and mission of Jesus.

Lastly, we need to ask and answer the question:

**4. Who is it that ultimately opens the eyes of the blind?**



Do we open our own eyes? Do we wipe the mud away by force of effort with human hands? No. Jesus says in verse 17:

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Blessed are you Simon! Not, “smart are you, Simon” not “wise are you, Simon” but, “blessed are you”. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, you didn’t learn this by force of effort or because some smart person told you, this insight is a gift from God. My Father had compassion on you.”

You can say whatever you want about free will and human wisdom and whatever else you like. The truth is, people are born blind. In the flesh we cannot see the truth about God, the truth about ourselves and the truth about our need for a Saviour. We are blind and deceived! We think we are able to decide right and wrong for ourselves. We think God weak, or dead, or silly or permissive or irrelevant. We think ourselves immortal, invincible and free. We are fools, dead and blind. Who will rescue us from this body of death? Thanks be to God for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Thanks be to the Father, who knew us from before the foundation of the world, who chose us, called us and quickened us that we might see and believe and be saved! Where then is boasting? Not in flesh, not in intellect, not in our character as seekers – God forbid! And let those who boast, boast in the Lord, who alone opens the eyes of the blind.

As we close our time together, I want to borrow a page from the Letter To The Hebrews. As we noticed two weeks ago the Apostle in Hebrews will lay out certain truths and then turn and point at them and say: “If these things are true, as indeed we know them to be, then we should do so and so.” Truths carry implicit exhortations. So it is here. Let me close by drawing two of those to your attention. If these things are true, that Jesus is Son of David and Son of God, that it was necessary for him to die and rise again, that we must preach the whole truth of Christ, not merely the obvious or the pleasing parts and that it is ultimately God alone who opens the eyes of the blind – if those things are true, then, let me leave you with two pastoral exhortations.

### **Closing Exhortations:**

## **1. Let us beware of partial visions of Christ; in ourselves and in our teachers**

Many are those, Jesus said in Matthew 7, who will say to the Christ on the last day: “Lord, Lord” and the Christ will say to them: “I never knew you”. Partial visions of Jesus are damning to men and women. Beware! Beware that you do not believe yourself saved because you know some stuff about Jesus. You know that he is the Messiah, you know that he is Son of God – the demons of hell know those things and they are not saved thereby. Do you know your own sinfulness? Do you know your own depravity? Do you know your need of a Saviour? Beware of half healings and partial insights. Beware of those things in yourself and in those you listen to. Test the teaching you consume against the standard of Holy Scripture from cover to cover and from curse to cross.

## **2. Let us press into the means of grace and let us pray for God to bless**

It is true that only God can open the eyes of the blind but that does not mean that there is nothing we can do. Commenting on how the Father works to open our eyes, William Hendriken says:

This is not necessarily directly, by whispering something in the ear, but by blessing to the heart the means of grace, not the least of these means being the lessons which issued from the words and works of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

That is an incredibly useful quote! It is absolutely true that only God can open the eyes of the blind but that does not mean that you should sit at home and wait for thunder! No! You should lean in to the means of grace! You should lean in to corporate worship, you should lean in to Christian fellowship and you should above all LEAN IN TO HOLY SCRIPTURE and you should PRAY FOR GOD TO BLESS those lessons to your heart. Ask God to bless you as he blessed Simon Peter. Ask him to open your eyes to see what flesh and blood cannot reveal. Do these things with greatest urgency my friend, turning neither to the left or to the right, for what will it profit you to gain the whole world and forfeit your soul? This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

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<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen, Exposition Of The Gospel According To Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 644.