

Matthew 16

This chapter is about having an ear to hear.

1. An evil generation does not listen well. (16:1-4)

“1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Him asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 But He answered and said to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘{It will be} fair weather, for the sky is red.’ 3 And in the morning, ‘{There will be} a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do **you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot {discern} the signs of the times?** 4 An evil and adulterous generation **seeks after a sign**; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” And He left them, and went away.

1. It is very sensitive to the wisdom of this world but has little spiritual awareness.
2. It asks for signs but it can't understand their significance.
3. Of all the evidences that bear witness to the authenticity of the Christian story, none is more compelling than the resurrection of Jesus.

2. Teachers that don't listen are to be avoided. (16:5-12)

5 And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread. 6 And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and **beware of the leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 7 And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, “{It is} because we took no bread.” 8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? 9 Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? 10 Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? 11 How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 12 Then they understood that He did not say to **beware of the leaven of bread**, but of **the teaching** of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

1. Its teaching can lead others astray.
2. Like leaven, an evil generation's influence can be pervasive and inconspicuous.

3. Listening starts with a sensitivity to the Spirit of God. (16:13-20)

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He {began} asking His disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some {say} John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered and 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. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven.” 20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

1. Peter hears from the Spirit of God.

2. The evidence from Jesus’ life has meaning when God’s Spirit speaks to the heart of the individual.

3. Does this passage teach us that Peter and his successors are to be the foundation of the church? The text does seem to identify Peter with “this rock” but it is unclear as to in what sense this is so. The “you” in verse 19 is singular but later in Matt.18:18 (Jn.20:22-23) it is plural referring to the whole apostolic company. Some have offered the following rendering of vs.18 “Thou art Peter (Petros) a stone and upon this (the) rock (Petra) will I found My Church.” The rock could be 1) Peter, 2) Peter’s confession, 3) Peter’s faith, 4) Christ, 5) the function of the Apostles described in verse 19. The grammar suggests but does not demand #1 but this does not seem to square with the rest of the NT teaching.

4. The text says nothing about Peter’s successors’, infallibility, or exclusive authority. These late interpretations entail insuperable exegetical and historical problems—e.g., after Peter’s death, his “successor” would have authority over a surviving apostle, John. What the NT does show is that Peter is the first to make this formal confession and that his prominence continues in the earliest years of the church (Acts 1-12). But he, along with John, can be sent by other apostles (Acts 8:14); and he is held accountable for his actions by the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-18) and rebuked by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). He is, in short, *primus inter pares* (“first among equals”); and on the foundation of such men (Eph 2:20), Jesus built his church. That is precisely why Jesus, toward the close of his earthly ministry spent so much time with them. The honor was not earned but stemmed from divine revelation (v.17) and Jesus’ building work (v.18).

5. This is the first reference to the church in the N.T. Note that it is viewed as a future reality not a past or present entity. Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit initiated the church as the “Body of Christ”.

4. We can hear in part and know in part. (16:21-28)

21 From that time Jesus Christ 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 be raised up on the third day. 22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid {it,} Lord! This shall never happen to You.” 23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. 26 For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going

to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and *will then recompense every man according to his deeds.* 28 Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

1. Humility is always in order for those who have an ear to hear.
2. We can be very insightful in one area and not at all in another.

Insights and Lessons from this chapter

1. It is possible to be taught by the Spirit in some areas of life and yet not be enlightened in other areas of life.
2. Teachers must be first of all be good students.
3. The role of Peter in the Kingdom (or the church) is best understood by looking at the book of Acts and the letters of Peter.