

Matthew 15b-16 Chapter Study

INTRO

Only got through half of ch. 15 last week, so will pick it up at v. 21 tonight.
First, where we are in the outline of Matthew.

Outline of Matthew

- I. JESUS' EARLY YEARS 1-2
 - II. JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY 3-18
 - III. JESUS' JUDEAN MINISTRY 19-20
 - IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK 21-27
 - V. THE RESURRECTION 28
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II. JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY 3-18

N. A Trip Among the Gentiles • 15:21-39

1. A Canaanite Woman's Faith Perfected • 15:21-28

21 Then Jesus went out from there . . .

Meaning the densely populated regions of Galilee where the opposition toward Him had grown more determined and organized.

Scribes & Pharisees had even traveled from Jerusalem to challenge Him – so things are starting to heat up and the course has been set among the religious leaders that will eventually see them move to arrest Him.

21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Tyre & Sidon was the region of the *Phoenicians*; this was a *Gentile* area.

This is the only time we know of that Jesus *left* Jewish territory.

It was a deliberate withdrawal from the region of Galilee where He'd spent the last couple years and where He couldn't go anywhere without a mob pressing Him for healing, as we've seen.

He and the disciples needed this time alone because the end was coming & Jesus wanted some preparing the disciples for the day of the Cross. There were things He needed to tell them, and one of the most important lessons He had to impart to them is given in the next verses.

22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

Jesus' fame has gone before Him into this Gentile area. News of a wonder-worker and healer has gone abroad, and this woman approached Him for help with her daughter.

There is little that is more pathetic than a demon-possessed person and it's especially painful for a parent to watch helplessly while your child suffers with this affliction.

The whole goal of a demon is to try and dehumanize their host, to bring shame and distortion to the soul, and so mar the image of God.

This was an especially bad case; the mother said her daughter's possession was *severe*, there was a violence that was endangering the girl's life.

So when the mother heard that a wonder-worker was coming, someone who had a reputation for casting out demons, she went to Him.

But notice who she was –

A Canaanite! A descendant of that long cursed race the Jews had been commanded to remove from the land.

And she was living among *other Gentiles*, the Greek-Phoenicians of Tyre & Sidon.

Greeting = strange: “Son of David!”

‘Son of David’ Jewish title for Messiah. David told. Crowds shouted at Jesus. For her - *meaningless* label. *More* than meaningless – David fought Canaanite remnants.

This woman heard reports & cries = used that label, though meant little to her.

23 But He answered her not a word.

This seems strange in light of how readily Jesus healed other in need. Why did He ignore this woman? The answer is found in the next words

And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out [lit. ‘keeps crying out’] after us.”

This woman didn’t just shout out once – she followed along after them and kept shouting her request. But the disciples weren’t moved by compassion for her. They were irritated and asked Jesus to get rid of her!

It was THIS reaction of the disciples Jesus was waiting to hear.

You see, Jesus wanted the disciples to learn that His authority, His power, His compassion, and His mission did not stop at the borders of the land of Israel!

He wasn’t only the Jewish Messiah – He was the Savior of the world!

This Gentile woman would receive her request – but both she and the disciples had some lessons to learn along the way.

24 But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

This seems to slam the door in the woman’s face, but it’s not a yielding to the suggestion of the disciples to get rid of her either.

Jesus could have said a simple “No, get lost!” But instead, He turns and addresses her and says in effect, “I was sent ONLY to the Jews.”

But how had she addressed Him? As the Son of David and that’s the context in which Jesus gives this reply.

He is saying, “As the Son of David, I was sent to fulfill the prophecies given to David about His descendant who would take and reign upon his throne forever.”

“BUT – why do *YOU*, a Gentile woman call me by that title because it doesn’t apply to you. How should *you* approach Me? *What am I to you?*”

25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

She worshiped Him! She put aside the technically correct labels that really didn’t mean anything to her and simply moved from her inmost being to give to Jesus what was there – devotion, adoration, worship!

How often people who are new to the things of God think their approach to Him has to be through some formal ritual, some elaborate form.

They have to use all the right names and titles for God, and they have to pitch

their voice in the right tone, using proper King James English. That's what this woman did – she came with a title for Him she'd heard but had no idea what it meant.

And Jesus' response was to simply ignore her, because her approach wasn't sincere, from the heart – it was *religious*, but it was amiss!

It wasn't till she simply gave of herself simply that Jesus began to work with her.

26 But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”

The English translation makes this seem like a rather cruel reply, but it's not.

The word Jesus used for “little dogs” was used of a cuddly, pet puppy; and there was something in the way Jesus said this to her that encouraged and emboldened her to come back with this . . .

27 And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

There's a persistence to her faith that will not let go even in the face of apparent silence, indifference, and outright reluctance on the part of One she knows is God.

Until He says a clear “NO!” she keeps pressing for an answer to her need!

Please understand that Jesus knew this woman would not give up till she got what she wanted – and that He would meet her need.

And though her faith was persistent, it was also a bit misplaced at first, clouded by some silly superstitions about the right titles to use.

But the deeper & more urgent lesson was for *the disciples*.

28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Jesus commended this despised Canaanite woman for her *great faith*.

Later we'll see Jesus rebuking the disciples for their little & weak faith!

He wanted them to realize what God is looking for is *faith*, and faith is not something that's limited to one race or culture of people.

Jesus' foray into the region of Tyre was a fore-shadowing of how the gospel would eventually go out to the *whole world*.

Without this trip into Gentile territory and the disciples seeing Jesus demonstrate His power over the powers of hell there, they might have thought the gospel was *only for the Jews*.

This trip laid the foundation for the future when they would preach to Gentiles and find a ready audience of faith among thousands.

2. Another 4000 Fed • 15:29-39

29 Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. ³⁰ Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others*; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. ³¹ So the multitude marveled when they saw *the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind*

seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. ³² Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” ³³ Then His disciples said to Him, “Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few little fish.” ³⁵ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. ³⁷ So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. ³⁸ Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Mark tells us that after Jesus left Tyre, He went north to Sidon, then south again toward the Lake of Galilee, but detoured around the northern end and came into the region of Decapolis on the eastern side of the lake, another Gentile region.

This trip took 6 months in all; 6 months of working among Gentiles!

Jesus wanted the disciples to get the point that He was the Savior of all people, and their mission in following Him would take them to all people.

But what’s going on here with this miracle?

The critics & skeptics point at this feeding of the 4000 as an example of an error in scripture because it sounds so much like the feeding of the 5000.

They say that whoever wrote this got confused and forgot he’d penned the account of the feeding of the 5000 just a short time a before and added this story by mistake.

No! This is two separate miracles, both of them performed by Jesus for good reason.

AND, Jesus will later refer to **BOTH OF THEM** as separate events.

Once again, Jesus sees a need, and meets it!

Why? Because He *could* and as He sought the Father’s will, knew He *should*.

Matthew’s record of the feeding teaches us a great lesson, that the disciples, like us, are often slow to grasp what the Lord is doing; what He can and wants to do.

They asked, “*Where* could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?” Had they so *quickly forgotten* the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000? It seems they had!

Jesus did what only He could do – the creative miracle of multiplying the food, then He instructed the disciples to do what they could do – *distribute it!*

As we follow Jesus, He does not call us to do the impossible.

But He does call us to remember *nothing is impossible for Him*, and if we’re willing to serve those in need, He’ll *use us* to take what seems impossible *to them*.

When they were done this time, they had 7 large baskets full of food.

Is Jesus' power diminishing? [12 then, 7 now?]

No! In the minds of the disciples, 7 was the number of God, the number of perfection and completion.

If 12 baskets of leftovers in Galilee meant that Jesus could have fed all Israel, then 7 large baskets of leftovers now in Decapolis meant that Jesus could feed *the whole world*.

39 And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.

Magdala was on the west shore of Galilee.

The feeding of the 5000 in Ch. 14 was Jesus' *last act of public ministry among the people of Galilee*. It was the last time He healed or taught them.

The feeding of the 4,000 was Jesus' *last act of public ministry among the Gentiles*. It too was the last time He worked among them.

Jesus' last time of formal teaching with the disciples prior to His resurrection was *also at a meal*.

There's a sweet picture in all this; Jesus always gives us the strength we need for the journey that lies before us.

MATTHEW 16

O. Enemies Unite to Oppose Jesus • 16:1-12

1. Pharisees & Sadducees ask for a sign • 16:1

1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.

The Pharisees & Sadducees were committed enemies! They stood on polar opposites of the religious spectrum and each considered the other a heretic and dangerous to the survival of the Jewish people!

The Pharisees were the ultra-orthodox legalists of the day.

The Sadducees were the ultra-liberals who denied, the existence of angels, miracles, and the afterlife.

The Sadducees were also the elite, ruling class; the rich, cultured power brokers.

They held the majority of seats in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Ruling Council, and dominated the high priesthood.

Because the Sadducees & Pharisees were such bitter opponents, it's strange seeing them unite in this new attack on Jesus.

Both groups have come to see in Him a greater threat than either presents to the other.

Truth makes strange bed-fellows of the enemies of truth and here we see an unlikely alliance of error as the legalists and the liberals unite to challenge The Lord of All Truth.

When they came to Jesus, they asked for a sign from heaven.

Their traditions said that while a demon could counterfeit a miracle "on the earth" only God could work a miracle from the skies.

2. Jesus' rebuke • 16:2-4

2 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, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

These guys weren't even professional weathermen, but they could make a good guess at forecasting the weather simply by looking at the sky.

[Red sky at night – sailor's delight. Red sky at morning, sailor's warning]

What they were experts at was the Word of God – and the Word had clearly foretold the very age in which they lived! Yet they were blind to it!

Willingly ignoring the signs all around them about Who Jesus was.

Jesus said that a sign would be given them – one that was an iron-clad proof of Who He was – the resurrection, which he likens to Jonah's experience in the fish! But even that they would deny!

Jesus makes an important comment here we need to heed – **"A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign."**

While God does bestow miracles and healings upon His people to meet their needs, He does so out of His grace and mercy, not out of an attempt to **prove** anything to anyone!

Those who take an attitude toward faith that God has to **PROVE HIMSELF** or they won't believe are barking up the wrong tree.

God doesn't have to prove **ANYTHING** because **HE ALREADY HAS** – and any more requiring proof is nothing less than an affirmation of unbelief, not faith!

There are entire groups of Christians today whose faith is dependent on a steady stream of the miraculous, and they follow "the signs and wonders movement dog & pony show" wherever it goes.

A faith based on signs and wonders is a weak faith that will not see the person who has it grow to any kind of spiritual depth and real experience of personal holiness.

In Mark 16:17, Jesus said that as we believed in **HIM**, signs would **follow**.

Those who follow signs have it backwards.

3. Turning opposition to opportunity, Pt. II • 16:5-12

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.⁶ Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."⁷ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

After this encounter with the Ph. & Sad. Jesus used it to warn His followers about the error that marked them.

Leaven was an idiom for sin; the kind of sin that spreads throughout and influence one's whole being – just as leaven spreads through a whole batch of dough and puffs it up by decay.

Jesus' mention of leaven prompts the disciples to go, "Hum! Ah – He's upset we didn't plan ahead and bring some bread with us."

But Jesus said **NOTHING** about bread – He spoke of leaven and told them to beware of it.

It's almost ridiculous how out of touch the disciples were with what Jesus was saying.

But it's comforting too, because how often we're in the same place.

The Spirit is speaking to us about something, and we just get it all wrong!

8 But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, "**O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought 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** Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?

"Don't be all worked up thinking I'm upset with you because you didn't plan ahead and bring some food along! I'm **NOT TALKING ABOUT FOOD!** If we needed food, I could provide some! **RIGHT?!?!?!?"**

11 **How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?— but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" **12** Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Link the first part of v. 11 with his first words in v. 8.

11 How is it you do not understand / **8** O you of little faith.

They didn't understand what Jesus was talking about because they were looking at things from a **i**, rather than a *spiritual* perspective.

Their faith was little, weak. They were following Jesus but they weren't really in intimate communion with Him.

They were relating to life out of a purely physical orientation, so when Jesus spoke to them of spiritual things, they spun it in purely physical terms.

There's a lot of this today among Christians – taking truths that God intends to be deeply spiritual blessings, and turning them in to purely physical blessings.

Much of the modern health & wealth movement is nothing but the same error the disciples made here.

Jesus was speaking to them about an important spiritual lesson – beware of the errors the Pharisees and Sadducees make – and they concluded He was rebuking them for not bringing bread!

He had to tell them directly He wasn't talking about bread – He was referring to their doctrines!

The warning Jesus gave them, *we* need to heed.

The leaven of the Pharisees was *legalism* – the idea that it's my careful observance of the law and my own rules about holiness that earn me God's favor. But not just me – you too. If you want to please God, you have to live by MY rules!

LEGALISM.

The leaven of the Sadducees was *liberalism* – the idea that religion is merely a tool

to govern this life. The spiritual realm, if it even exists is utterly unknowable, so the best you can realistically aspire to is to be a good person now, and religion is the best tool for enforcing morality. Morality for mortality.

LIBERALISM.

These are the two great dangers that lie at the polar opposites for those who would follow Christ.

It's interesting looking at Church History through this lens.

Where the Church has gotten off track, it's always moved in one or the other direction; legalism or liberalism.

P. Peter's Enlightened Insight • 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

This was a beautiful region [describe].

Jesus is alone now with the disciples, and it's time to start tying all the threads of their training together as He moves toward the end of His time with them.

He has a specific question He wants to ask them, but starts with this one –

“What are people saying about Me? Who do they think I am.”

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

In ch. 14, Herod had thought Jesus was John come back from the dead. He got that idea from what some others were saying.

Some thought Jesus was Elijah, the first of the prophets who was foretold to come as the fore-runner of the Messiah.

Other views were the Jesus was one of the great prophets of old who'd returned.

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

“Okay, that's what's others are saying about Me – but what about you guys – what conclusions have you reached?”

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

As soon as Jesus issued the question, Peter replied and spoke out his conviction about who Jesus was – their long hoped for Messiah, who is no-one and nothing less than the very Son of God.

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar [son of]-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Jesus affirmed Peter's confession and made it clear that this wasn't just some moment of brilliant deduction on his part – it was nothing less than the revelation of God to him.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter,

In v. 17, Jesus had addressed him as Simon, the son of Jonah.

Simon means “flat-nosed” a not too complimentary name drawn from Simon's fleshly appearance.

But here Jesus gives him a new name; ‘Petros’ means ‘rock; boulder.’

It's important we get this – Jesus said, “Who do you say that I am?”

Simon said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Now Jesus says in v. 18, and this is made clear in the Greek – “You have named me the Christ – I now name you Peter; Rock!”

Then Jesus goes on to say . . .

and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

This second word translated as ‘rock’ is *petra*, a different word from Peter’s name, *Petros*.

Petros refers to a detached stone – like a boulder.

Petra refers to a massive body of rock – **bedrock** is the best translation.

Our English translations make it appear Jesus is saying He’ll build His church on **Peter** – but the Greek is categorical; that is **NOT** what He’s saying.

The rules of Greek grammar demand that if that’s what Jesus meant He would have said, “I also say to you that you are Peter and on you I will build My church.”

The “this rock” Jesus will build His church on is Himself, the Savior-Messiah Peter had just confessed; and that’s why Jesus calls it **HIS** church – because it’s built on Him. [Pointing to Himself]

What makes a person a part of His Church is their confession of Him as Christ. Since Peter was the first to do that – he becomes the first real member, and that’s why Jesus calls him *Petros*, boulder.

Jesus is the bedrock upon which the church is built.

That church is composed of smaller stones which are cut from Him, and laid on Him – as a living temple, made of living stones, as Peter says in 1 Pet 2:5.

Jesus then says that the gates of hell, the fortifications and strongholds of the devil will not be able to stand against the Church.

Is the church a fortress? It’s more an army that is called to take possession of enemy territory.

But if it is likened to a fortress, it’s a living one that keep growing, and as it does, it takes over territory that once belonged to the devil.

This promise ought to give us great boldness as it relates to our influence in the public schools, government, Hollywood, work, family, friends.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

This passage has been badly misapplied by many believers simply because they violate one of the most basic rules of understanding scripture.

We must always ask, “What did the words mean to the original people who spoke or wrote them?”

You see, Jesus used an idiom here that was well understood to the disciples.

Today, we have people who have no idea what it meant to them, and they take these words and use it in prayer like this, “. . .”

That is **NOT** what Jesus meant!

Binding & loosing was a practice of the rabbis as they would apply the Law of God to people’s specific cases. [explain]

Jesus is giving to the disciples, who will become the *Apostles* and the main leaders of the Church once He's gone, the authority to lay the foundation of the Church upon Him as the Chief cornerstone.

And indeed – the early church *was* built on their teaching on the life of Christ and the authority and power He demonstrated through them.

This is the point at which they were formally commissioned and authorized to become the foundation of the Church to come.

Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-22 -

19 You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Why He did this becomes clear with the next verses . . .

Q. Jesus Foretells His Death & Resurrection • 16:21-23

21 From that time Jesus began to show to 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 the third day.

While Jesus' has taken short trips to Jerusalem for the previous 3 years of His ministry, His real time and ministry has been in the north, in Galilee.

Soon He'll be going South to stay and finish His work.

And at this point His opponents have decided that there's only one way to deal with Him; they must kill Him.

None of this is a surprise to Jesus – He knows all about their plans, and He has His own, which He tells the disciples about.

22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

Peter, flushed with confidence from his recent enlightenment and commendation by Jesus, rebukes Him for this bit of negative & defeatist thinking!

Why, how can the Christ be killed? It just didn't fit into his ideas or plans.

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

This is a stinging rebuke to Peter – and a solemn warning to us.

For just as Peter, we can be given a pearl of awesome enlightenment by the

Lord one moment, and then become the mouthpiece and counsel of hell the next!

Peter's error was to correct Jesus! Any time we think we know better than God, we're under the influence of the enemy.

It is not our task to counsel or make suggestions to God.

Having foretold His own path and the cross to come, Jesus now makes it clear to the disciples what it means to follow Him.

R. What It Means to Follow Jesus • 16:24-27

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

The cross, the symbol of Christianity – jewelry.

What it was. / To follow Jesus means to die to self so that we might embrace a whole new life – His!

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

The life we’re born with is curse by original sin, the sin of Adam.

It is broken and doomed to selfish self seeking that is never ever satisfied because man was not made **FOR HIMSELF**.

His life was given him so that He would give it back to God, and in the giving, find true life.

Jesus says that if a person hangs on to their sin-cursed first-birth life, they will ultimately lose it.

But if they give *that* life up to Him, He’ll give them the true life they were created to have but Adam forfeited.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Jesus asks a question here that ought to shake every living person to the core of their being!

The point is this – when you get to the end of the game, what then?

When you stand before God at the end, what’s going to matter – how many earthly goodies you acquired, or that you counted your treasure by heavenly standards?

Story of shipwreck in South Pacific; trunks of gold, silver, treasure.

One man while swimming for shore saw pile of puka shells.

Native islanders; food for pukas, gold meant nothing.

Value system of heaven very different – and the end is coming . . .

27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Jesus may be going to Jer. where He will suffer and die. But He *will* rise and will come back in glory!

28 Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Jesus mistaken? No . . .