

## Review

Jesus has just told the Pharisees and the Sadducees,

**Matt. 16:4 “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.**

As they had been doing quite a bit, Jesus and His disciples got into a boat and again when to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

### **16:5-7 The Dumb Disciples?**

Although there had been seven large baskets of bread left over from the feeding of the four thousand, none of the guys had remembered to bring any along on their boat trip. When they arrived at the other side, Jesus began to warn them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Now, leaven is the yeast that you put into bread to make it rise. And so as Jesus mentions leaven, the disciples start talking amongst themselves. They are saying, “I think we’re in trouble because we didn’t bring any bread!”

To be perfectly frank, there are times when the disciples really seem almost like total morons. But it is important for us to realize that it seems that way only because we have the advantage of hindsight. If you’ve ever gotten in trouble with your parents, or the law, and had to give an account of your actions or words, you have probably become aware of how moronic your words and actions can seem with hindsight as well. And so, when I read these things, I often have to remind myself that I would have been saying and doing exactly the same thing as these guys did, had I been there.

But it also reminds me that I need to walk circumspectly, because,  
**Rom. 14:12 ...each one of us will give an account of himself to God.**

### **16:8-11 Do You Not Remember?**

Jesus points out that this isn’t stupidity on the disciples’ part, it’s that their faith is too forgetful. Their shortness of faith has given them

short-term memory loss.

Jesus wasn't talking about bread. You see, if He was, then they should know by now that finding bread is not an issue for Jesus. He reminds them of the feeding of the five thousand a couple weeks' back, and the feeding of the four thousand just a few hours ago.

Again, I have to put myself in the camp of the disciples. My faith often is afflicted with short-term memory loss. How many miracles have I seen? Countless. How often has God provided when I was in need? Every time. And yet when the next need arises, or the next difficult situation surfaces, I get anxious and afraid. How silly is that? I need to constantly be reminded,

**Phil. 4:19 ...my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

So lacking bread is not the issue! He is certainly able to keep them fed with bread, but only the disciples were going to be able to keep themselves from this kind of leaven.

### **16:12 The Leaven Of The Pharisees**

The disciples finally get it. He's not talking about literal leaven. He's talking about something spiritual. What is the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? We talked in detail about leaven in our study of the parables in chapter 13.

When placed in bread dough, leaven metabolizes, releasing carbon dioxide and alcohol. This makes bread rise - literally corrupting the dough and puffing it up with worthless inflation.

This is the problem that the Pharisees and Sadducees had: They had been puffed up with pride, corrupted by inflating their egos. And they taught that this is what being spiritual was all about: Putting on an act, a showing of righteousness. It was hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), looking so perfect on the outside, but being completely corrupted on the inside (Matt. 23:27-28). Jesus will say to them in chapter 23,

**Matt. 23:28 "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."**

This is what Jesus is warning those who follow Him to stay away from: pride and hypocrisy, the teaching of self-righteousness.

And just like we can point the finger at the disciples for a lack of faith, it is easy for us to point the finger at the Pharisees and Sadducees for hypocrisy of self-righteousness. But ask yourself, “What is the most common complaint that unbelievers have against Christians?” The answer is that they’re hypocrites. This should tell us that it is far too easy to become legalistic and self-righteous in our Christianity. That instead of preaching that we’re all sinners and need to be saved by God’s grace, we begin to preach that others are sinners and need to become Christians so they can live the squeaky-clean lives that we are supposedly living.

### **16:13-20 Peter’s Foundational Proclamation**

Jesus’ ministry took them about 25 miles north to Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon. On their way, He asked them, “Who are the crowds saying I am?” There were lots of theories bandied about, but then Jesus asked, “Who do YOU say I am?”

That is really the important question, isn’t it? It really doesn’t matter who the crowds say He is. It doesn’t matter who your teacher says He is, or who the guy writing the opinion column thinks Jesus is. It is all about, “Who do YOU say He is?”

Simon Peter had the answer:

**Matt. 16:16 ...”You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

This was the true answer, the answer revealed by God. And Jesus told Peter that He was going to build His church upon the rock of that statement.

This is to be the foundation of every true church: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is saddening when I see churches build on miracles instead of the Messiah. It is sickening when churches are built on popular programs or the pastors’ personality. The church must absolutely be built upon the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Any other foundation means that it’s not His church.

## **Binding And Loosing**

Jesus' statement about binding and loosing have recently begun to be used to justify Christians waging spiritual warfare. "We bind the devil," they pray. "We loose the spirit of health and prosperity!" But nothing about the context of Jesus' statement tells us that we are binding and loosing spirits, demons, and devils in prayer.

## **The Gates Of Hades**

What about the gates of hell? We often think that this refers to the devil and the demonic realm. But Jesus didn't say, "The armies of the devil will not overpower My church." He's talking about gates. Why? Because Hades isn't the kingdom of the devil, it is the abode of the dead. That's why "death and Hades" are almost always mentioned together in Scripture. Death, and the place where the dead go.

King Hezekiah, when he was sick and dying, said,

**Is. 38:10-11 ..."In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years." said, "I will not see the LORD, the LORD in the land of the living; I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world."**

"Sheol" is the Hebrew word for the Greek word "Hades." Entering the gates of Hades or Sheol talks about dying. But even the gates of death will have no power over the church. As Christians, we are able to say,

**1Cor. 15:54-55 ...when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"**

**1Cor. 15:57 ...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

And so there is nothing in the context about binding and loosing spirits.

### **True Binding And Loosing**

The phrase is in the “periphrastic future perfect passive construction” in Greek. This means that literally the statement is, “will have been bound already” and “will have been loosed already” in heaven. This says that what is being bound or loosed on earth has already been willed, or accomplished in heaven.

So what exactly is it that we are binding and loosing on earth the way it is in heaven?

**Acts 2:24(KJV) ...God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death...**

**Psa. 147:2-3 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**

**Ezek. 34:16 “I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick...”**

God looses the bonds of death, and binds up the wounds of the brokenhearted.

Having accomplished the work in heaven, Jesus is commanding us to accomplish this on earth. Isn't that what we are always praying?

**Matt. 6:10 “...Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”**

Saints, we as the church are called - not to be hypocrites - but to do God's will by binding up the broken hearts and loosing people from the bonds of death.