

# The Faith and Doubts of Jesus' Disciples

## Matthew 16:1-20

by David Servant

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*Jesus faced opposition from the Pharisees and Sadducees, but His disciples, including Peter, showed faith in Him as the Messiah and Son of God.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:6

**Topics:** "Faith And Doubt", "Divine Providence"

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### Description

David Servant delves into the growing opposition Jesus faced from the Pharisees and Sadducees, who despised Him despite witnessing His miraculous works. Jesus rebuked their evil hearts, emphasizing that He had already provided sufficient proof of His divinity. The disciples, however, struggled with faith, as seen when they misunderstood Jesus' warnings about the religious leaders' teachings. Despite their doubts, Jesus continued to work with His disciples, showing that faltering faith is not a reason for discouragement or condemnation.

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### Transcript

As we continue reading the life story of Jesus, we'll learn that He faced a growing opposition from the Pharisees and other religious leaders. Those men who were supposed to be servants of God hated God's Son with a passion, and wanted to ruin Him. Ultimately they succeeded in killing Him, but that only lasted for three days!

Today we read about the Pharisees and Sadducees asking Jesus for a miraculous sign in order to prove His claims. This was at least the second time they'd made such a request (see Matthew 12:38). They had no doubt heard the reports of the many people who were healed; in fact, some of them actually had been present to see Jesus heal (see Luke 5:17-25). So they were probably asking for something really spectacular, like fire falling from heaven.

Their request revealed how evil they were, and Jesus responded by saying so. The Pharisees and Sadducees could read the weather signs in the sky, but they couldn't read the obvious signs that proved Jesus was their promised Messiah. He had already provided more than sufficient proof that He was God in the form of a human being. Their request of a sign was an indication of the hardness of their hearts, and Jesus promised them only one sign on the magnitude of what they were seeking, calling it "the sign of the prophet Jonah." Of course, Jonah's expulsion from the fish's stomach after three days foreshadowed

Jesus' own resurrection.

Obviously, anyone who followed the teaching of the Pharisees or Sadducees was doomed, as Jesus later warned His disciples as they once again crossed the Sea of Galilee. Unfortunately, they completely misunderstood what He meant when He said, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). They thought He said that because they had forgotten to bring any bread with them in their boat, since yeast is a primary ingredient in bread. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus rebuked them. Why would they have ever thought that He, having recently multiplied bread twice, would be the least bit concerned about having no bread in the boat? Their thoughts revealed their lack of faith in Him, and He told them so.

However, in the final part of today's reading, we learn that Jesus' disciples weren't entirely lacking in faith. Peter, likely speaking as a representative for most of the twelve, confessed that he believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Thus in one section of Scripture we have examples of the faith and doubts of the same followers of Christ. This clearly shows us that we may well believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but doubt that He will provide for our other needs, as is the case with too many of us. Sometimes we need to be reminded, like the disciples, of what God has done in the past to provide for our needs.

Like the disciples, all of us have faltered in our faith and failed. That, however, is not a reason to be discouraged, give up, or feel condemned. Jesus kept on working with His disciples, and He will keep on working with us!

Q. Jesus said to Peter, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18). What is the rock Jesus mentioned?

A. Peter had just declared his faith that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God. The foundation upon which the church is built is the belief that Jesus is God's Son, and the church grows as more people believe it. The rock Jesus referred to was the fact of Him being God's Son and people's faith in that fact.

Q. What did Jesus mean when He promised Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven?

A. Keys represent the means of opening something that is locked. In this case, Jesus promised to give Peter the means to unlock heaven while he was still on the earth. Heaven, in a sense, is locked to all sinners. But it can be opened to sinners if they are made righteous. The key that opens it to them is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus was promising Peter that He would entrust him with the gospel, so that he could open the entrance to heaven for people. Likewise, Peter could boldly declare that heaven was shut to anyone who refused to believe the gospel.

Application: Like Peter, we're blessed to know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, because so many people don't know or believe it. We're now part of a worldwide church that, as Jesus said, the powers of hell will not conquer. We're on a winning team!

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