

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 55

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus' teachings on hypocrisy, spiritual authority, and the necessity of revelation in building the church.

Duration: 25:47

Scripture: Matthew 16:1-24, Luke 12:1

Topics: "Christology", "Spiritual Authority"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 16, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the signs of the times, avoiding hypocrisy, and understanding the revelation of Christ as both fully God and fully man. It highlights the necessity of spiritual authority, the way of the cross, and seeking God's interests over personal desires in building the church.

Transcript

We turn again today to continue our study on all that Jesus taught by his life and by his words. And we've reached Matthew chapter 16, verse one. The Pharisees and Sadducees came up and tested him, asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

It's interesting that these Pharisees and Sadducees were never eager to sit at Jesus' feet like Mary to learn from him. Imagine having the greatest preacher in the world, the greatest man of God, the son of God himself, walking in their midst, and all they do is spend their time arguing with him and testing him. I see the same thing happening today.

There are wonderful godly men, not many, but here and there across the world, and who stand for the truth, real prophets who speak the truth of God without any compromise. And there are many believers. All they do is to try and find fault or pick some holes in some doctrine of theirs or find some little fault in them to criticize, when they could have got so much more if they were just willing to sit at the feet of these men and learn what God had to teach them.

Examine yourself and see whether you're guilty of that crime. They came to test him and they asked him, show us a sign, do a miracle for us. And Jesus didn't always give the same answer every time.

He began by saying, well, when it is evening, you say it'll be fair weather because the sky is red. In the morning, you say there'll be a storm today because the sky is threatening and red. Do you know how to

discern the appearance of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times? He said, you guys are so sharp in the things you can see with your physical eyes, but you are totally blind in your heart.

You can't understand the signs of the times in which you live. Look at that expression, the signs of the times. We also need to recognize the signs of the times in which we live.

The great falling away from the faith that Jesus spoke about deceiving spirits coming in and what Paul spoke about deceiving spirits coming into Christendom. The great apostasy before the coming of the Lord. Do you recognize the signs of the times? Do you recognize that the drift that we see in Christendom today, away from godliness and holiness towards entertainment and superficial Christianity and towards academic study of the scriptures and knowledge rather than experience is one of the signs of the great falling away where people are more interested in prosperity and money and health and healing than in holiness.

And where people try to cover it up with supporting things like orphanages and Bible schools and mission work but their heart is set on their own covetousness. Yeah, this is all indication that Christianity has fallen away from the truth where they are more interested in pushing people down and demonstrating their so-called psychic power in a meeting rather than leading people to a godly life. Don't you recognize the signs of the times? An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.

We're not supposed to seek God for a miracle. If you do, you're part of this evil and adulterous generation. God will do a miracle when he feels like, when it is his will, when it will accomplish some purpose of his.

But he's not gonna do miracles according to our whims and fancies. And every time we ask for one, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a miracle and no miracle or sign will be given to them except, you know, the word sign is really in the margin of my Bible says a testing miracle and that's why I read it like that. And many people look for that.

But it is, if you look for that, you're an evil and adulterous generation. And he said, there's only one sign that's gonna be given, that the sign of Jonah. And we discussed that earlier, that's Jonah coming out of the fish's mouth is a picture of the resurrection of Jesus Christ coming out from three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Resurrection, resurrection is the sign, is the main sign that Jesus kept saying. And that's why the apostles always spoke about themselves as witnesses of Christ's resurrection. And that's what we must be too, witnesses of Christ's resurrection.

And the disciples came together and had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, after this discussion, watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they began to discuss among themselves.

They say, hey, he must be saying that we were foolish not to take some bread with us to eat along the way. I'm surprised that those disciples thought that the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees was bread. I know leaven is used in bread, but the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they were not bakers selling bread in some store.

No. I mean, a young person would have said, hey, that doesn't refer to bread, but somehow they began to think of bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said, you men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Don't you yet understand that bread is no problem for me? How many

baskets did you pick up after I fed the 5,000 with five loaves? Or don't you remember 12 baskets and seven loaves with I fed the 4,000? How many large baskets you took up then? How is it that you still think that food is the thing I'm always talking about? Jesus wasn't speaking about food.

He said, don't you understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread, but I was speaking about the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. What is the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? If you turn to Luke chapter 12. Luke chapter 12, we read, and verse one, under these circumstances, many people gathered together and Jesus said to his disciples, first of all, Luke 12, verse one, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

So the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. And you know what leaven does in a bit of dough? It spreads and puffs up the whole thing. When you don't put leaven, it's flat.

It just is right size. But when you put leaven in it, puffs up with a lot of empty holes in it, just like regular bread. And that's what hypocrisy does.

Hypocrisy in a person's heart, even a little bit, you don't need much leaven to blow up a bit of dough. And a little bit of leaven in our heart is just gonna make us appear very big in the eyes of others, like bread, but with a lot of holes inside us, a lot of empty spaces. This is how most Christians are.

They like to give an impression to people about something big, that doctrines are right. The Pharisees certainly had right doctrines, but there was this leaven that puffed them up. So he said, that's the thing that I was trying to get you to be careful about, not whether you have enough bread or not.

It's very important for us to see this, which is more important, food or freedom from hypocrisy? That's basically the question here. What did Jesus teach here? Even if you don't have food to eat, bread, you didn't bring it, nevermind. Make sure you don't have hypocrisy in your life.

If I'm free from hypocrisy, it doesn't matter, even if I starve to death, starve to death because there's no food. I don't know how many of you believe that. I don't know how many of you believe that it's better to, even if you have a choice, dying without food or hypocrisy, I choose dying without food.

Many people don't seem to hate hypocrisy like that. I mean, what is the meaning here? Food, food is necessary for life, but hypocrisy. Jesus says, beware of that.

Don't beware of the fact you didn't bring bread to eat. Beware of hypocrisy. That is more dangerous than even not having enough food to eat.

That's basically what he's trying to say here. And if you understood that, then you have understood the message that is coming out here. Then they understood that.

Further, verse 13, when Jesus came to the district of Caesarea of Philippi, he began asking his disciples saying, who do people say that the Son of Man is? Now, Jesus never cared for people's opinion, not once. He couldn't care less what people said about him or thought about him, but he was trying to ask them how much have people understood in Israel who I am? And hardly anybody seemed to know who he is. Some say you're John the Baptist, and some others say you're Elijah, and some others say you're Jeremiah, or one of the prophets come back to life.

And then Jesus goes home to the question he really wanted to ask. He says, who do you say that I am? Forget what the others say, but who do you say that I am? And he said, and they said, Simon Peter got up, and he said, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. And immediately Jesus says, you're blessed, Simon Bar-Jonah, because you didn't understand it with your human cleverness.

It is not flesh and blood that revealed that to you, but my Father in heaven. Give the glory to the Father who allowed you to know who I am. It's very, very important, dear brothers and sisters, to always recognize that whatever we know about Jesus has come by divine revelation.

It's not because we are cleverer or smarter than anybody else. It's because God was pleased to give us revelation as to who Christ is. Because there were so many cleverer people than Peter who did not recognize him, or the way of forgiveness.

And there are lots of cleverer people than you and me around us here on earth who don't know Christ. You are blessed, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. The word revelation is fundamental here.

It's by revelation that we know Christ. It's not by intellectual study argument. That's why when people come to argue about something in the Bible, I say, hey, listen, I'm not interested in argument.

Because if I convince you by some argument from scripture, it'll only prove that I'm cleverer than you, or that I know the Bible better than you. It doesn't mean that the truth is triumphant. No, what I say may be the truth, but argument only proves who's cleverer.

So it's revelation that leads people to know, oh, this is Jesus. And revelation comes to those who have a need in their life, not to those who just study. So please bear this in mind.

The important thing whenever you read the scripture is to get revelation on its inner meaning, revelation on Jesus, which only God can give you through the Holy Spirit. Then he speaks about the church. Based on this revelation that you've got, you've seen me as the Christ, the son of the living God, which the Father gave you revelation about Peter.

Now I say to you, you are only Peter. You're a small little stone. But on this rock, Petra, not Petros, which is his name, but on this Petra, I will build my church.

He was contrasting the two, not saying that you're the Peter and I'll build my church on you. It's the way some people have interpreted it, which is totally wrong. I mean, Peter is such a shaky person.

I wouldn't want to be a part of a church built on him. It's a church built on the revealed Jesus, what Jesus was saying is, on this rock, Peter, you just got a revelation from heaven about who I am. On this rock of revelation of who Christ is, on this rock, I will build my church.

You can't build a church without revelation from heaven as to who Christ is. In those days, the important question was whether Christ was God, because he looked just like an ordinary man. And they say, this can't be God.

In spite of the attesting miracles, they did not accept him as God and they killed him. Now, today, it's, the question is, is Christ really a man? Those days, there was no doubt that he was a man. The question was whether he was God.

Today, the question is, yeah, he's God, Christians say, but most Christians haven't understood that he was a man. We need to see Christ revealed from heaven as a man, just as much as he was revealed to them as God. Let's understand this very clearly.

Christ was fully God and fully man, and we need to get equal revelation on both. Because he's almighty God, we worship him, we pray to him, we believe he can do everything, we believe he's got authority over everything in heaven and earth, we believe every name must bow at that name and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, everything, because he's God. And because he's man, I can follow him.

I can overcome sin like he did. I can serve the father like Jesus served the father. I can be loved by my father as Jesus was loved on earth.

I can be filled with the Holy Spirit like Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit on earth. I can have gifts to serve my heavenly father like Jesus had if I see him as a man. So as I said, most Christians have seen him as God, but they haven't seen him as a man, and that's why they live defeated lives.

We need to see Christ as totally God and totally man. Blessed are you who have got that revelation from God, the father, that Christ came to earth as a man and lived on earth as a man, overcame temptation as a man, was tempted like us to sin, but did not sin. It's when you get that revelation from God that you'll come to a life of overcoming sin.

The main reason why a lot of sincere Christians live lives defeated by sin and accept it, the tragedy is not that they live lives defeated by sin, they accept it. They say, well, we can't live better lives than this. The great tragedy is that they accept it, and the reason is, in the back of their minds, whatever they may say, they believe that Christ overcame sin because he was God, that he could not possibly be tempted to sin like we are, even though the Bible says that plainly.

And all such people live defeated lives. They could be better than others, there'd be a measure of holiness in them, but there's no spiritual development in holiness. And that's what I've seen through many years of observation of Christians.

We need revelation that Christ is God. We need revelation that Christ was a man who came in a flesh like us. Not in sinful flesh, there was no sin in him.

He was born holy, but with flesh, with the thing called my will, which he had to deny every single day of his life in order to please his father. And it's on this rock that the church is built. You can't build a church if you don't see Christ as totally God and totally man.

On this rock, the revelation that you get from heaven, I will build my church, and against that church, all the gates of hell or the powers of spiritual darkness will never be able to prevail. That's a very, very comforting thought that the church Christ is building will last forever and ever. Powers of darkness will not be able to prevail on it in eternity or even now.

Is this the type of church you belong to? If you belong to a church that's full of strife and quarreling and hating and backbiting and gossiping and fighting going on all the time, that is not the church that Jesus is building. Because since you're the church that I build, the powers of darkness will not be able to overpower it. That means they will not be able to bring all these sins into that church.

So why is it like that in so many churches? Because that's not the church which Jesus is building. We need to be a part of a church which Jesus is building, where spiritual death does not have power because we live in resurrection power. See, resurrection power can overcome the forces of spiritual death.

They didn't have it in the Old Testament because Jesus had not risen from the dead. But when Jesus rose from the dead, he communicates that resurrection power to all his disciples. If you're a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, you can have a experience of that resurrection power in your spirit fully here on earth and a taste of it even in your body.

This is God's will. And the Lord said to Peter, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

Whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Keys in the Bible are a symbol of authority. Wherever there's mention of keys in the Old Testament, it's a picture of authority.

Jesus says in Revelation, I have the keys of hell and death. He's the one who determines when a wholehearted child of his dies or not. That's the keys are in his hand until he opens the door.

A wholehearted disciple of Jesus cannot die till Christ opens the door. Of course, people whose aim in life is different, who call themselves Christians, but whose aim in life is to make money or something like that, they will find that perhaps they died before their time. Death may be open for them before that.

But if you're a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, it's pretty clear. You cannot die before your time. So the keys speak of authority.

And the Lord says to Peter, I'm gonna give you authority. And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in the heavenlies. Not in the third heaven where God is, but in the heavenlies where the devil dwells.

The devil's not in hell. He's in the heavenlies, probably the second heaven between what we know as the sky and God's presence. And he says, I'll give you power, authority to bind those satanic forces that seek to bring confusion here on earth.

And I'll give you power to lose certain people who have been gripped by Satan here on this earth, to set them free. So what we see here is in order to build a church, we need spiritual authority. Without spiritual authority, we cannot build a church.

No matter how gifted you are, no matter how much of the Bible you know, without spiritual authority, you cannot build a church. So if the Lord commissioned Peter to build his church, he gave him authority. And if the Lord commissions you today to build his church, he'll give you authority.

Without that authority, you won't be able to build his church. And in order to have that authority, we must seek God for it. The anointing of the Holy Spirit.

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to live a clean life because if our life is not clean, the Spirit of God will not support us or endorse us. And so we see here that authority.

Then he warned his disciples not to tell others who he was. And then the other thing that's required to build a church is an understanding of the way of the cross. Spiritual authority alone is not enough.

That's necessary. A true disciple of Jesus who wants to build the church of Christ must have spiritual authority, but he must also know the way of the cross. And that's why it says here, from that time.

That means from the time that Jesus spoke about building the church, he taught his disciples about the fact that he was going to go to the cross, suffer and die and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. He couldn't understand that.

He said, what do you mean, this cross and all? I thought you just gave me authority to bind all these forces of darkness. How can anybody come and take you then? No, I'm going to defend you. God forbid it, Lord.

That's never going to happen to you. He spoke in love. He really loved his master so much.

He said, I'm not going to let anybody take you and spit on you and kill you. But Jesus turned around and said to him, get behind me, Satan. You're a stumbling block to me.

Everyone who avoids the way of the cross is a stumbling block to Christ. And your mind is set on your interests, not God's interests. There we understand what the meaning of the cross is.

When the cross comes into our life, our mind is not set on our interests, but God's interests. If your mind is set on your own interests in life, no matter what you may say, you haven't understood the way of the cross. And that's why Jesus went on to say after rebuking Peter, calling him Satan, at one moment, just a few couple of minutes earlier, he said, you're blessed, Simon Peter, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven.

And then a few moments later, he's calling him Satan. It's interesting how the Lord called his closest co-worker Satan, just because he was trying to prevent him from going the way of the cross. Then he went on to say in verse 24, it's not only for me, folks.

If you want to follow me, you got to take up the cross too. What does that mean? If you look at verse 23, you understand it. When you take up the cross, you stop seeking your own interests, and you begin to seek God's interests.

That's the mark of a man who's taken up the cross. So you understand the cross now. Any one of you who's seeking your own interests in life, you haven't understood the cross.

And in fact, you're a stumbling block, according to verse 23. Any Christian who's seeking his own interest is a stumbling block to God. Work on earth, stumbling block to building the church.

Let's take that seriously. May God help us. We'll continue in our next episode.

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