

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 57, Chapter 16 Continued

I began the previous lesson with the rhetorical questions: who is Yeshua? What is Yeshua? It is such a complex issue that as we go through this chapter I'll continue to weave-in some needed background about the historical Jesus so that we can better grasp Him as the very real Jewish person that He was, which of course was the context from which He acted and taught. And from this we should be better equipped to extract His intended meaning for what He said, as we endeavor to apply it to our lives.

As we study Matthew's Gospel what is becoming more fully apparent to us in retrospect, but only barely apparent to the crowds and even to His own disciples of His day, is that although Yeshua can be compared to a prophet of old He is greater than any. Although He bears similar attributes to John the Baptist, He is far more. What is also slowly beginning to emerge before us (but again almost not at all noticed, yet, by the Jews of the Holy Land) is that the centuries-old messianic aspirations so valued and hoped for by the Jewish people, and the completion of the promises by God to the House of David, are at hand in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth. However we only get the truest picture of the Messiah if we chart a course to re-discover the **historical** Yeshua and not the popularized version so prevalent within Christianity today and for the last 18 centuries.

I'm neither the first nor the only biblical commentator to try to unpack who the historical Jesus was. It is interesting that especially from the evangelical side of Christianity there has been somewhat of a recent backlash against approaching Him this way. Speaking of the "historical Jesus" can produce a grimace of disapproval. This comes not so much from the academic side of the church as

from the church government side; the side of the church that consists of those who run entire denominations and the Pastors of their many congregations. Some seem to think that to try to recover this historical knowledge of Christ humanizes Him in too great a proportion to His spiritual Godly nature and so it is inappropriate and it diminishes Him. Others think that it leads to focusing too much on His Jewishness and thus seeks to advance Judaism and legalism.

As I look back at the more than a half century of Christianity that I have been given grace to personally witness within several denominational settings, from the theologically liberal to the conservative, it is my observation that it is the **lack** of highlighting Yeshua's humanness that is out of proportion in the Church's portrayal of Him. This leads to spiritualizing... which is a lofty way of saying allegorizing... His person and His instruction, which can only lead to misunderstanding. Yet when we do attempt to recover His humanness, we inevitably come face-to-face with His obvious Jewishness that is especially front and center in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. I don't think I have to point out that in general the Jewish Christ is not something the institutional church wishes to confront because for 1800 + years there has been a concerted effort to make Jesus a non-Jewish, only sort-of-human, generic or universal man, who is the Savior for a gentile Christian faith. This is so much the case that in some (thankfully only a few) circles there is a serious thought that perhaps the God-man Jesus that walked on the earth in the Holy Land in the 1st century was more apparition than actual flesh and blood.

In our last lesson, Yeshua had departed the area of Magadan on the Sea of Galilee and gone inland and north to a place near Mt. Hermon called Caesarea Philippi (obviously a Roman place name). There He asks an interesting question of His disciples (I am assuming that these were some or perhaps all of the original 12). He asks: "Who are people saying the Son of Man is"? I wonder how this question struck His disciples? Considering what we know about what seems to be their rather low level of spiritual understanding and awareness at this time, I speculate that to them this would have seemed far less of a leading question that Yeshua hoped might nudge them towards a deeper searching about His true identity, and instead, by their answer to Him, it seems they took it as a rather straightforward fact finding question by their Master... an opinion poll about the people that formed the crowds, if you would. So they respond matter of factly by saying that some think Jesus might be a revived John the Baptist, others the returned Elijah, and still others one of the Prophets from ancient times, mostly likely Jeremiah.

By now we have become used to hearing Yeshua refer to Himself as the Son of Man; a title He clearly liked. I have explained that in general, this was usually meant to connect Him to Daniel's "one like a son of man" that comes in the clouds for the final harvest on Judgment Day. And yet there is no doubt that He did not always mean to indicate the End Times Son of Man. It seems to have been a rather favorite phrase He enjoyed using to instruct, to reveal, and to speak in casual conversation. As I have said, He's a complicated person to explain, even before you throw the God element into it.

There seems to be 3 different meanings and contexts in which Yeshua speaks of Himself as the Son of Man. But there are also 3 groups of sayings that we find in the Gospels (and especially in Matthew) about the Son of Man. First, the 3 groups of sayings. The first group is when there is a reference to a Latter Days Son of Man...a future Son of Man. The second group envisions and references the Son of Man's experiences of agony, crucifixion, and resurrection. The third group points out the Son of Man's works among the Jewish people in the present tense.

The first of the 3 different meanings of Jesus when He employed the term Son of Man about Himself is the most prominent one: it is as the End Times cosmic judge. The divine one who sits in Heaven at the right hand of the Father. In this use we need to think of the term Son of Man as a proper title that begins with capital letters. The second meaning is when He is speaking in a sort of 3rd person fashion about Himself; so we need to envision son of man less as a title but rather as a culturally modest way of referring to oneself (and such modesty was a norm within 1st century Jewish society). The third is when Yeshua uses son of man simply as meaning human being. And in fact, human being is the meaning of the Hebrew ***ben adam***, which no doubt is what is being expressed. Essentially it is another way of saying "I" or "me". Most times it is fairly easy to discern which of these 3 meanings or senses of Son of Man that Christ intends; sometimes it's a little more hazy. While there is no universal consensus about it, in our current passage (Matthew 16:13) I think it is most likely that Jesus means it in the 3rd sense; He just means "who are people saying I am". That is, who He is in the context of His humanness.

One of the things we must never overlook with Yeshua is His solidarity and camaraderie with His fellow humans (His fellow **Jewish** humans). This was taken for granted by the people who only saw Him or interacted with Him as a ***Tzadik*** hailing from Nazareth. He was so human and ordinary in appearance

that He was rejected by the residents of His own hometown (who knew Him and His family well) when He attempted to teach them. Even His suffering on the way to the cross, and His agony and death upon it, hammer home to us not only His human vulnerability, but also that He was in no way immune from the severe hand of Roman punishment just as with the rest of Jewish society.

So in verse 15, after asking His disciples who the people that form the crowds that He healed thought He was, He now asks His disciples to speak up and say who they think He is. Let's reread from Matthew 16:15 onward.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 16:15 - end

The effervescent and impulsive disciple Peter is the first to answer. He says you are the ***mashiach*** (the anointed one), the Son of the Living God. Peter got it right. And yet, the reason that I spoke to you last time about how 1st century Jewish people thought about what the person and actions of the expected Messiah might be, helps to reveal that Peter was no different from them in the lens through which he viewed the Messiah Yeshua, who is now standing right in front of him. Because Peter now thought of Yeshua as Messiah, he would have fully expected Yeshua to form an army, confront Rome, win and install Himself as the king of an independent and re-born Israel. In fact as Yeshua began explaining the horrendous things that were going to happen to Him in the coming months, things that went against everything the Jewish people believed their Messiah would do, Peter essentially stood up and shouted "NO WAY!". Understanding for the disciples is still coming in baby steps, and so Yeshua rebuked Peter for his continued lack of understanding and stubbornness in hanging on to centuries old traditions about the Messiah.

But before Peter refuses to accept Yeshua's mission and destiny, Yeshua says something so very important for us to hear. He says:

CJB Matthew 16:17 ***"Shim'on Bar-Yochanan," Yeshua said to him, "how blessed you are! For no human being revealed this to you, no, it was my Father in heaven.***

Before we look closely at this, I want to point out that the CJB use of the term "human being" in this verse is a poor translation. Almost all other English translations rightly say "flesh and blood", and this is the literal translation of the Greek. We can argue that flesh and blood means human being, but the reason

that human being ought not to be used here is precisely because the term son of man in Hebrew also MEANS human being. And as much as Christ calls Himself son of man, that is not the intent here.

So Yeshua says that flesh and blood... persons, people... did not reveal the identify of Yeshua as Israel's **Mashiach**...messiah... to Peter. Even more, flesh and blood stands in opposition to the term divine. That is, flesh and blood meant in Jewish thought "by and through humans". Or, in more scholarly terms, human agency. However in a certain sense Christ must be including Himself as among those flesh and blood (human agents) in the present context because it was His instruction that the disciples had been receiving for the past several months. So it is not instruction from Him or from any other human but rather it is the inspiration from The Father that has revealed this truth to Peter. So we continue to learn, here, that Yeshua has NOT told anyone to this point that He is the Messiah. The way Peter learned of it was through spiritual inspiration from Heaven...specifically from The Father.

One of the great mysteries that Bible scholars wrestle with is why Jesus wasn't more forthcoming about His status as the Messiah. Even though in Matthew's Gospel we might call this scene a pronouncement story (a story pronouncing that He is the Messiah), Jesus really only lauds Peter for Peter's realization of it; Jesus never directly says about Himself "I am the Messiah". He always seemed reluctant... even elusive... about the subject. But clearly He threw this question about His identity out to His disciples as a group to see if any of them had received this heavenly revelation. And it turns out Peter had. We find a very abbreviated version of this same story in Mark 8, but in neither version do we read of any of the other disciples chiming in and agreeing with Peter at this point. What do we take from this?

First it is that while a human... a person... no doubt spoke the Gospel of salvation in Christ to us, we only came to believe when God inspired us to believe. In turn, as Christ's followers we are commanded to evangelize and tell others about Jesus, even though those we encounter will never understand or internalize the message of salvation until The Father does a work in them and He Himself reveals it to them. Not even Yeshua's personal presence with His disciples or with the crowds had accomplished this.

Second is that God reveals Himself to whomever He will. I cannot fathom how He chooses; but He does choose. The Bible sometimes uses the term "elects" to

label this mysterious divine process of choosing. If it was entirely up to us, then it wouldn't be an act of God. So if you trust Christ, thank the Father and understand what a great privilege has been afforded to you because YOU were chosen.

Notice something else: Yeshua does NOT say that it was THE Father in Heaven, but rather MY Father in Heaven who did the revealing to Peter. This subtle difference sends a message. Yeshua again implicates His relationship with the Father as something far greater than for all other humans. In the Lord's Prayer of Matthew chapter 6, Jesus instructs us to pray to OUR Father. That is, God as the universal Father of us all by means of a common human connection through the created Adam and a common spiritual connection because it is the Father who breathes the breathe of life into us all. But here in Matthew 16:17 Yeshua expresses a close, unique, singular familial relationship that can only be taken to mean that He is virtually related to God. It speaks of Yeshua's divine nature. God confirms this by referring to Yeshua as His only begotten Son. So Yeshua speaks in terms of "my Father" , which essentially verifies Peter's statement about Him. And yet, just how deep did this belief take root in Peter? What did it mean to him? Later we find out that it wasn't enough to keep him from denying Jesus not once, but 3 times.

Even so Yeshua confers a blessing upon Peter. This is no small thing. There is no record of Him giving a blessing to another individual disciple. It is just another confirmation to Peter (and us) that Peter got it right. Then in verse 18, Yeshua gives Peter a new name. Such renaming is not unheard of in the Bible, but it is also God that does the renaming because some kind of a spiritual milestone or status change is occurring with that person. Avram became Avra-ham. Ya'akov became Israel. Now Shimon becomes Kefa. Kefa is Hebrew for the Greek Petras. Peter is the English translation of Kefa and Petras. The reason for that choice of name is that Petras is a form of petra, which means rock or stone. It is Yeshua who assigns Shimon the new name (again implying His divine authority to do so). Interestingly, Shimon was not the first to be called "a rock" in the Bible.

^{CJB} **Isaiah 51:1** *"Listen to me, you pursuers of justice, you who seek ADONAI: consider the rock from which you were cut, the quarry from which you were dug- 2 consider Avraham your father and Sarah, who gave birth to you; in that I called him when he was only one person, then blessed him and made him many.*

So we find that many centuries before Peter, Avraham is seen as a rock from

which others will be cut; it is a metaphor for those who will seek God. Peter is put into a similar category in some respects by Yeshua. That is, Peter is a rock or a stone in the sense of his new name being used as a metaphor for those who seek God but also now inclusive of the all-important reality that God's Son has arrived and He is the Messiah.

While I'll spend very little time with it, I need to mention that the Catholic Church's claim that Peter (as the rock) was the first Pope is simply without biblical merit. It is a religious invention. It is also a good way to remove Peter from his Jewish context and thrust him into a new gentile role because if the Catholic Church truly regarded Peter as the rock out which their faith would be cut, they have missed it entirely. Peter was thoroughly a Jew, and there is not a hint of the Jewish faith in Catholicism. They have... as have virtually all other branches of Christianity... divorced Peter from his Jewishness and turned him into a Christian (meaning a gentile) just as they have Jesus and other New Testament Bible characters. Christianity in general has played fast and loose with these words about Peter that were uttered by Jesus. He says:

^{CJB} **Matthew 16:18 ...*"and on this rock I will build my Community, and the gates of Sh'ol will not overcome it.***

While the CJB says "on this rock I will build my **Community**...", nearly all other English versions say "on this rock I will build my **Church**". The Greek word that the English words community and church are both being translated from is **ekklesia**. Every credible Greek lexicon says it is a generic term meaning some type of assembly or congregation of people. Community may be a better choice than church, but it still veers away from the straightforward concept of being the generic, very broad term that it is. Church, as it came to mean only a century or two after Christ's time, is a new religious organization of, by and for gentiles.

A few lessons ago I delved heavily into the term The Church and explained that it is a label, and also what that label rapidly came to mean (and still means). It came to mean an organized institution of gentile Believers that created and hold to a set of manmade doctrines that dismiss the very same Scriptures from the Bible that Jesus often used to explain His presence and purpose (the Torah and the Prophets, the Old Testament). The Church also includes the strong concept of a special building, built to look a certain way. It requires Jewish exclusion unless a Jew disavows most elements of his or her Jewishness (and sometimes Jews are excluded even if they want to convert). It also means an organization

whose faith doctrines are built mostly upon the supposed sayings of Paul, and far less those of Jesus. Therefore, with that understanding of what the word Church predominately means in our modern English vocabulary, and has meant for nearly 2 millennia, I reject (and so should you) the notion that we ought to include it here as properly communicating what Yeshua meant or envisioned by what He said to Peter. After all, just a few sentences earlier He said He was here only for the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He did not come to form a new religion for gentiles.

David Stern, himself a Jewish disciple of Yeshua, puts it this way in his commentary on Matthew: "Unlike (the term) church, **ekklesia** never refers either to an institution or to a building". Exactly. **Ekklesia** simply means the collection of people who understand and accept Yeshua for who He is.

When Yeshua says to Peter that the Gates of Hades (**She'ol** in the CJB, which is not a correct translation) will not prevail against **it** ("it" pointing to the **ekklesia**, the collection of Christ's followers), it means that Satan and whomever on earth he manages to convince to come against the followers of Christ will not be victorious in the end. There is little doubt that being in Caesarea Philippi had much to do with Yeshua choosing those words because it was a pagan site that was dedicated to the worship of the Greek god Pan, and it was believed by some that the mysterious flow of water that came from deep underground in a grotto there, was coming from the underworld... from Hades. So more in context with the way Peter and the disciples would have taken Yeshua's words, it was that pagan religions (such as Pan worship) would not overtake and destroy the fledging groups of the faithful followers of Yeshua.

In another mini-detour I'd like to add this note about who Yeshua is. He was not the revolutionary He is regularly painted as (and by the way, neither am I!). Rather He was a reformer. Yeshua did not come to destroy the ancient Hebrew faith as practiced by the Jews of His day, and then Stalin-style create out of the rubble of its destruction a whole new religion that revolved around Him. Rather He came to rehabilitate and breathe new life into the long existing Jewish faith such that those Traditions of the Elders that had become such a needless burden upon the people, and that in many cases had turned the Word of God on its head, would be removed and replaced with biblical truth as it originally was given to them. Part of that process included exposing the ruthless, shameful, and illegitimate High Priest office and its organization that used the all-important Temple of the God of Israel to make a fine art of fleecing the naive flock for their

personal gain.

In the Gospel of Matthew we see the natural tension building between the Pharisees and Sadducees versus Yeshua for just this reason. They were polar opposites; there was no middle ground. The Pharisees and Sadducees didn't fear He would form a new faith; they feared He would ruin their lucrative and powerful operations that weighed heavy on the common folk. In reality Yeshua didn't even come to destroy these corrupt Jewish religious institutions; rather His words and actions were meant to convince the Jewish populace of the Holy Land that He was the culmination of all they had hoped for that was contained within their ancient Hebrew faith; a faith that itself was built upon the Covenants God had made with their Israelite ancestors; covenants that had been steadily pushed aside. Thus Christ didn't trash the Jewish institutions; He trashed those who ran them and corrupted them.

In verse 19 Yeshua says:

CJB Matthew 16:19 *I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.*"

Jesus is still talking to Peter and states that He will give to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Then He speaks of prohibiting and permitting. First we must notice that Peter is not receiving the keys TO the Kingdom of Heaven (as though he is receiving the key to a lock), but rather the keys OF the Kingdom of Heaven. So it is not that Peter has been given the keys that allow or turn away entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather it is that the keys represent a certain level of power and authority... but to what end? That is what is stated next. It is the power and authority to prohibit and permit.

To help us understand what this means, recall that Jesus favored quoting from the Prophet Isaiah. Here is a section of Isaiah 22.

CJB Isaiah 22:15-23 ¹⁵ Thus says Adonai ELOHIM-Tzva'ot: "Go and find that steward, Shevna, administrator of the palace, and ask him: ¹⁶ 'What do you own here, and who gave you the right to cut yourself a tomb here? Why do you get such an eminent tomb? Why are you carving a resting-place for yourself in the rock?'" ¹⁷ Look, strong man! ADONAI is about to throw you out! He will grab you, ¹⁸ roll you up, and toss you around like a ball in the

open country. There you will die, with your fancy chariots, you disgrace to your master's palace! ¹⁹ "I will remove you from your office, I will snatch you from your post. ²⁰ When that day comes, I will summon my servant Elyakim the son of Hilkiyahu. ²¹ I will dress him in your robe, gird him with your sash of office, and invest him with your authority. He will be a father to the people living in Yerushalayim and to the house of Y'hudah. ²² I will place the key of David's house on his shoulder; no one will shut what he opens; no one will open what he shuts. ²³ "I will fasten him firmly in place like a peg, so that he will become a seat of honor for his clan.

Time doesn't permit me to get into the full context of this Isaiah passage. However what we learn is that in this prophecy the word "key" represents authority and power over David's house that is being removed from one person (Shevna) due to his corruption, and given to another (Elyakim) whom God deems as His own servant; a righteous man. And with that authority and power no one will shut what he opens and no one will open what he shuts. The thing is that the words about opening and shutting is an expression. The expression defines the absolute nature of the power and authority this righteous man (Elyakim) will have over David's household as David's house steward such that no one would dare to try to undo or override Elyakim's decisions.

So using this prophecy as the clearly intended framework for what Yeshua has just said, Peter can be compared to Elyakim in the sense that Peter is being given the keys (the power and authority) to God's house (the Kingdom of Heaven). And since the Kingdom of Heaven is present both in Heaven and only recently on earth, then we have mention of both locations in what is also a cultural expression used by Yeshua to define that power and authority. And yet it is not imaginable that a human disciple of Christ could have such authority that smacks of the divine; nor that if (as some think) Peter is a symbolic representative of the entire congregation of Christ followers. That is, that the entire congregation would be left to wield that same immense power and authority. When later we explore Matthew 18, we'll find that Yeshua promises the same thing to His disciples in general, so this is why some Bible scholars think that Peter represents what is most commonly called "The Church".

So what is the solution to best understand what is being communicated? The disagreements by theologians over this truly startling claim are so many that I have read 13 different conclusions (and I imagine there are a few more). I'm not sure I'm all that confident in picking one as best over any other, but here's one

way that we might look at it. As always context and the 30,000 foot view must be kept in mind when trying to understand the especially difficult sayings in the Bible.

From the far view all that has been recently happening in Matthew's Gospel, and that which has led up to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, is an ongoing and intensifying confrontation between Yeshua and various groups of Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees over the matter of the religious authority to teach, and over whose doctrine is the correct one. This debate will eventually lead Jesus to the execution stake. Yeshua has publicly called these religious leaders blind guides for teaching the people wrongly; some of it unintentional in the sense they don't know any better, and some intentional as a means to propagate their power and control over the people. The Pharisees and Scribes don't think Yeshua has the authority to teach or certainly the power to openly challenge them. If we again look ahead in Matthew, this time to chapter 23, we read about another all-too-familiar exchange:

CJB **Matthew 23:13-17** ¹³ ***"But woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! For you are shutting the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces, neither entering yourselves nor allowing those who wish to enter to do so.*** ^{14*} ¹⁵ ***"Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You go about over land and sea to make one proselyte; and when you succeed, you make him twice as fit for Gei-Hinnom as you are!*** ¹⁶ ***"Woe to you, you blind guides! You say, 'If someone swears by the Temple, he is not bound by his oath; but if he swears by the gold in the Temple, he is bound.'*** ¹⁷ ***You blind fools! Which is more important? the gold? or the Temple which makes the gold holy?***

Notice how in verse 13 of Matthew 23 the Torah teachers and Pharisees are said by Jesus to be shutting the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven for the people because they are leading them in an errant way that takes them away from the truth; and then Yeshua elaborates further in the next few verses. There is nothing more important to Yeshua than the Kingdom of Heaven; this is the Good News that He brings and He was sent by His Father to inaugurate the Kingdom on earth. So while opening and shutting must on the one hand be taken as a cultural expression, at the same time there seems to be a literal aspect to it as well. So what Christ is proposing is a forced transference of power and authority from the illegitimate though official Jewish religious leadership (the Pharisees and Scribes) to the new legitimate Jewish religious leadership (meaning Peter and probably

His other disciples) as legitimized by Yeshua (as the Father's agent). This new leadership is to be over the **reformed** Jewish faith that involves trust in Christ and a new look at Holy Scripture. Yeshua is claiming that this transference process is under way to take the keys (the authority) from those who currently control the Jewish religious institutions, but abuse it with teaching error filled traditions and manmade doctrines that result in shutting the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven to so many, and instead handing the keys over to Peter and the disciples who Jesus trusts to teach the biblical truth, which effectively opens the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven for God worshippers. I could probably go on a little longer to defend my best take on what those strange words of Matthew 16:19 mean, but I think this is enough to chew on for now.

Assuming that I'm correct, then we can't breeze by this without noticing the obvious application. Risking that I may be misconstrued as one who is anti-Church or thinks that all denominations and Pastors fit but one less-than-satisfactory mold, clearly in this passage there is a warning of grave danger lurking around any Judeo-Christian religious leaders that lean towards accepting and teaching manmade synagogue or Church doctrines to their people; doctrines that seem to blatantly defy the instructions of God's Word. While those teachings might not result in the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven being entirely shut to the Believers they teach, it could well mean that they will fall into the unwanted category of the eternal "least" in the Kingdom that Jesus warns about in Matthew 5:17 - 19.

Yeshua lived in an era when after centuries of mismanagement and corruption, the Jewish leadership of the Temple and the synagogue had led the faithful so far off the rails that Christ could describe the situation as the blind following the blind. Or here as the Jewish religious leaders effectively locking-out their people from entering the Kingdom of Heaven. How can they do that? By teaching manmade doctrines as though they were God's Word, and the naive people accepting them. Make no mistake; we live in an alarmingly similar era and of course those sounding the alarm sometimes get the same treatment Jesus got... minus the crucifixion of course! Every era and society and religion has its means of dealing harshly with its (always unwelcome) reformers, and that usually begins with an attempt to discredit them. When that doesn't work, the next step is to destroy them. Destroying a reformer in Christ's era often meant execution. In our era one's life and mission can be destroyed by other means, such as lies and slander on social media or if one is famous enough, fake news on the large media outlets. Our government can take away our necessary tax exempt status, or even

go after us personally by weapon-izing the IRS or other government agencies against us. There's much happening all around us right now... pretty much globally... that we mustn't disregard as but noise.

This scene at Philippi concludes with Yeshua telling His disciples that they are not to tell anyone that He is the Messiah. While the implication is certainly there, this, to me, in no way indicates that the other 11 disciples have also adopted Peter's confession as their own. Rather, it is more likely that the notion of their Master being the Messiah (a thought that doesn't seem to have ever been entertained by any of them up until that very moment), is not to be discussed outside their immediate inner circle. This is because not only would such a suggestion bring down even more trouble upon Jesus by the Jewish religious leadership, but also because it would immediately raise a huge red flag to Herod Antipas and to Pontius Pilate. They well understood that the Jewish people believed that the Messiah would be a political leader and would-be king that would lead a full-blown military revolution to make Israel once again an independent kingdom.

We'll continue with Matthew chapter 16 next time.