

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 58, Chapter 16 Continued 2

We will continue to carefully work our way through Matthew in this chapter that is nearly a Gospel within a Gospel. Some of the more elite Bible scholars of the past make chapter 16 of Matthew among their most extensive studies, so rich is it in critical information. So I would like you to open your Bibles to Matthew 16, verse 19. We'll read more in Matthew 16 in a few minutes, but for now I'd like your attention to be focused only on this one verse. This is going to be a bit long-winded, but I think if you focus on what I'm about to tell you it will answer a number of difficult questions you might have wondered about.

READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 16:19

We spent the bulk of our time last week on the first part of this verse that explained what it means for Peter to hold the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. I won't review, but you can go back to that lesson if it helps you. Yet I didn't really get into those mysterious words that come later in that same verse, which speak of an authority given to Peter to bind and to loose both on earth and in heaven (and perhaps this authority is meant to extend to Christ's other 11 disciples as we will see in chapter 18).

The mysterious nature of binding and loosing is in some ways a mirage. Just as with trying to understand the meaning of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, there's many different views about the meaning of binding and loosing. Yet the words binding and loosing were not at all strange within the context of the Jewish religious community of the 1st century. Dr. Lightfoot points out that this phrase was rather fundamental within Jewish religious academies that were producing the next generation of Jewish religious leadership for the synagogues. Perhaps

the most important aspect for extracting the meaning is that binding and loosing was applied ONLY to things... and not to people. That is, a religious authority (a Rabbi) did not "bind and loose" another person. Instead it was a statement explaining that this religious leader had the official standing to declare things clean or unclean, lawful or unlawful, sin or not sin, and so on. So that when a case was brought before him, he would be asked to decide if a certain Jewish Law applied or not. Or, a Rabbi might create a new Jewish Law that permitted something or prohibited it.

Perhaps the best way to help you understand the sense of binding and loosing within Judaism (and this **is** the context in which it is meant here in this passage of Matthew) is to give some examples of it as recorded in ancient Jewish writings.

"R. Jochanan said [to those of Tiberias], 'Why have ye brought this elder to me? Whatsoever I loose, he binds; whatsoever I bind, he looses.'" So the idea here is that the Rabbi is unhappy with this particular Jewish elder because whatever rule or verdict that the good Rabbi makes about prohibiting or permitting something (binding or loosing), this Jewish elder turns around and says the opposite.

"R. Chaija said, 'Whatsoever I have bound to you elsewhere, I will loose to you here.'" So the Rabbi says that even though in other places or situations or times he has made a ruling of Jewish Law to prohibit something (to bind it), in this particular place (or situation or time) he rules that it will be allowed (to loose it).

Getting a bit more specific we have this recorded rabbinic ruling about carrying vessels or pots on Shabbat. **"Concerning the moving of empty vessels [on the sabbath-day], of the filling of which there is no intention; the school of Shammai binds it, the school of Hillel looses it."** So as concerns a Jew moving a cooking pot or perhaps a pot used for some kind of work, it seems that the teachings and rulings taught in the religious academy of Shammai prohibits (binds) moving such a vessel on the Sabbath... even so far as there is no intention on using that pot to cook or carry anything in it... however the religious academy of Hillel has ruled that it is permissible (looses it).

These sorts of religious rulings were a customary part of daily life among the Jewish synagogue leadership during Yeshua's day, and the common folk such as Yeshua's disciples would have heard it, and been subject to it, numerous times. They also had to deal with the reality that one ruling authority might contradict

another. For our purposes we need to begin by understanding that to bind and to loose was a Jewish religious expression used within the realm of the Jewish religious leadership. It was not something that the common folk would have said to one another in a conversation, or that a father may have said to a son or a daughter. So when Jesus employs it here it is because He is assuming the role of a Jewish religious leader who has authority, and He is issuing a lofty-sounding ruling (synagogue-style) that we could rightly call **Halakhah**... Jewish law. And that is exactly how Peter would have recognized it.

Let's take this one step further. In the Jewish context of the day, a synagogue leader (a Scribe) could bestow limited authority to another person who sits lower in the religious hierarchy of the synagogue (say, to an Elder for example) to be able to bind and loose (that is to make rulings about Jewish Law) within a certain scope (but not as large a scope as that of the Scribe). And in fact I quoted to you just such a situation whereby a Rabbi was upset that rulings he made were being overturned by a mere Elder who, in the Rabbi's view, was overstepping his limited authority. However (and this is a biggie!)... the Elder, the one of lower authority who has only limited scope, could NOT create new rules. He could not create new **Halakhah**. All he could do is to hear cases and make legal rulings according to the existing Jewish Laws (existing **Halakhah**). It's not unlike what a Judge in the Western justice system is to do. That is, a Judge is not to make new law, but rather to enforce the laws that exist; and since the cases brought before him or her are often anything but straightforward, then the Judge has to ponder exactly how (or if) a certain law applies.

While what I'm telling you may sound rather complicated or full of trivial nuances, in fact it was understood and a given within 1st century Jewish society. So the average Jew reading what Matthew says that Christ told Peter about giving him the authority to bind and loose intrinsically understood that in no way was Peter being given the same wide scope of authority that his Master held. It was indeed authority, but it was limited.

So the next question is, exactly what was the extent of authority that Yeshua gave to Peter? The words used are that whatever the extent, it applied to the realms of earth and heaven. The authority to bind and loose... to prohibit and to permit... (to make rulings pertaining to things, not to people) happening on earth we can understand. But in heaven? The Greek word that is being translated to heaven in English is **ouranos**. Just like the Hebrew **shamayim** that Matthew would have first written before it got translated into Greek, it is a word that can

indicate either the sky where the birds fly and the clouds float, or it can mean the spiritual place located above the sky; the place where God and the angels live. The context must tell us which meaning to attach. So the decision we have to make is if Yeshua just gave Peter the authority to make rulings about things in the Heaven where God lives. Such a thing is, for me, unimaginable. I see it not only as illogical if not irrational, but it also violates every biblical principle we've learned up to now. I would argue that Jesus may not even hold enough authority over Heaven such that He, on His own, could award some measure of that authority to a mere, very flawed, human being like Peter. So let me be unequivocal: Yeshua was extending Peter's authority to include rulings about things that happen in the sky... not in God's home in the spiritual Heaven. Therefore it is not that Peter got authority in Heaven, but rather in the heavens...plural... meaning the sky. But what does that mean? What authority could Peter hold over the sky?

Let's explore this a little more because it bears such importance regarding church doctrines and church leadership authority. For example: the Catholic Church sees Peter as having been given authority in literal Heaven, and therefore since they deem Peter as the first Pope, so does every Pope to follow him have the authority to renounce portions of God's Word or to change it as he believes it should be. And there are other Christian Church beliefs that extend Peter's authority beyond the earth and the sky and into Heaven (such as having authority over angels), but not quite to as great an extent as the Pope's. From the far view, what Jesus is actually giving to Peter (and later to the other disciples) is the authority to teach, instruct, and thus to make rulings on various situations that will come up within the body of Believers. No doubt this begins with properly interpreting scripture. As for how this might include the sky, this likely refers to what Christ had said just a few verses earlier as He stood on the lakeshore in Magadan and jostled with some Pharisees and Sadducees, regarding reading signs in the heavens (red sky in the morning versus red sky at night). So Peter and the disciples were given authority by Christ to (through proper scriptural interpretation based upon Yeshua's teachings) answer questions about what certain signs in the sky might mean, along with what things that happened on earth (signs) might mean. After all, sooner than His disciples can imagine, Yeshua will be taken from them and all that will be left of the leadership of the Jesus movement will be the 12 disciples. So this authority to instruct, lead, and rule on what we could loosely call religious legal matters among His followers that Yeshua is bestowing to Peter and to His disciples was in preparation for what was inevitably coming.

Since we will encounter Peter further in Matthew's Gospel, I want to take a little time to discuss him. There is, as always concerns such a biblically prominent but distant personality, wide opinions about him. And in this case the bigger question is about his position or rank among the other 11 disciples. The stance on his rank and what it means for Christ followers and especially for Church leadership has resulted in a wide range of Church doctrines and rules. For one strand of Church doctrine, Peter is the newly announced replacement Master that takes over after Christ's death. He is the chief over of all the other disciples and thus the supreme head over the entire emergent congregation of Jesus. The other end of the scale of opinion sees Peter not as special and set apart, but rather as representative of every Believer. In between those are several other views, but probably the middle ground is that while Peter was indeed special among the disciples, He was not the chief authority over the disciples, but rather one that the others informally looked to more often than not for guidance and answers regarding the movement.

There is no mention of Peter holding any office or position of official authority because the Jesus movement simply wasn't that thoroughly organized just yet. Even so I don't see how any plain reading of Matthew's and Mark's Gospel accounts reveals anything other than Peter most certainly being preeminent above the other disciples, and this was at Yeshua's discretion. The statement by Christ in Matthew 16:18 (and then the special authority Yeshua seems to, at least at first, have bestowed upon Peter concerning the Kingdom of Heaven), and proclaiming that Peter was the Rock out of which the congregation of Yeshua followers would be cut, by itself sets Peter apart from the others. Not for the typical Christian reasoning, but rather because such a statement is meant for the Jews of that era to recall that Abraham was also called a Rock out of which the Hebrew nation would emerge (with Rock being an expression that wasn't meant to be overly examined and scrutinized in its every possible nuance... it was mainly a well understood metaphor). Just as Abraham did not hold an official office in some newly created religious organizational structure, neither, it seems, did Peter. Rather purely through force of character, God's will, and an acceptance by others of these men's high positions before God, Abraham and Peter were revered and considered as the top leaders. Similarly we also know that James, Jesus's biological brother, was head of the believing congregation in Jerusalem and apparently was accepted as such in a similar way as Peter was (even Paul held a widely accepted high status even though it, too, was unofficial).

While I can't get into all the details today, there is strong evidence that there was no universal agreement among Believers in the early Jesus movement about Peter's proper status. But perhaps what is more telling and important for us, 2000 years later, is that whatever his status might have been, Peter was regularly the center of discussion and he was widely known and respected. We don't read much about the other disciples (other than for John) after Yeshua's death; but Peter was always a hot topic. This should be easily understandable for us because it would be the normal human reaction to question a movement's leadership, and even for rival leadership factions to form, especially prior to a movement becoming a formal organization with a clear management structure and defined hierarchy of authority.

I will go forward in my Matthew lessons under the assumption that Peter is special, that Yeshua saw him as special, and so He gave Peter a special (although unofficial) position and status at the top of the Jesus movement as it existed as of that moment. We don't have any further details to make any greater assumptions or to draw any more definitive conclusions than these. Let's read some more of Matthew.

RE-READ MATTHEW 16:21 - end

So after warning His disciples that they were not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah, in verse 21 Yeshua began to explain to them some of the details about what would soon happen to Him. He says that He will have to go to Jerusalem and there He will suffer greatly at the hands of the Elders, the High Priest, and the Scribes. Those 3 official titles and offices He has put forth essentially define the broad scope of Jewish religious leadership that includes the full involvement of both the Temple authorities and the Synagogue authorities. We must be careful not to lump all Temple authorities and all Synagogue leaders together as wicked. No doubt there were those individuals that wanted nothing to do with the horrible and unjust persecutions that their peers and higher-ups would inflict upon this carpenter from Nazareth.

The really hard part for His disciples to bear must have been Yeshua's shocking prediction of His own death; but then there is also the even stickier matter of Him saying He would be raised back to life on the 3rd day. I think this news had to be nearly unfathomable for His disciples, from both an intellectual and emotional standpoint. Mark 8:31 adds that as Christ explained to them what horrors were going to occur, He did it plainly and openly (that is, openly in the sense of not

softening the gory details or holding back any important information). So Matthew's summation of what Jesus revealed to the disciples is highly abbreviated. Luke and Mark also include Messiah's words about suffering and dying. John addresses it too, although the reference is more implication and hint than the straightforward statements of the 3 synoptic Gospel writers. In each of these 4 references to His death, the promise of resurrection is also included. No doubt the way Christ presented it, and the way it was recorded and handed down, it was meant to echo the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah 52 and 53. Turn your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 53.

READ ISAIAH CHAPTER 53 all

This chapter is probably familiar to many of you. The predictions of what will happen to the Suffering Servant and what actually happened to Yeshua are so similar as to be undeniable... at least it is undeniable for those whom God has blessed with the faith to believe and so are open and teachable. And yet, even if these verses from Isaiah about the Suffering Servant's torture and death had been in some way recalled by Yeshua's disciples, there is little here that would imply Him being raised from the dead. But even more, should one find some implication of resurrection, what kind of resurrection might this foretell?

In the 1st century there were numerous viewpoints and doctrines about resurrection ranging from it not existing at all (which was the Sadducee's position) to full bodily resurrection. But there was also what we might call a partial or lesser resurrection that would mean the living-on of the human spirit, but in some undefined form. And this kind of resurrection did, in some Jewish circles, lean towards a kind of reincarnation (although it didn't involve the Eastern mystical concept of Karma whereby whether one returns as another human or as some kind of animal depending on how one lived their life).

This strand of belief about resurrection has been well in evidence in the last couple of chapters of Matthew as he records that some Jews thought that Yeshua might be a revived John the Baptist. In other Jewish circles resurrection looked something like one's soul going to a Heaven-like place upon death (that is, going from being alive on earth to being alive in a set-apart space in Heaven). The concept of Abraham's Bosom as a pleasant resting place of safety under the earth for the souls of the righteous dead was still in the mix as well (and Christ seems to have verified this when He descended before He ascended). We even have the recent miracle of Yeshua revivifying a young girl after she had died (but

before she was buried), and bringing her fully back to life as though her death had never happened; something His disciples were well aware of. So the matter of what could happen after death...whether some type of afterlife was possible or not... or what resurrection might have amounted to... was in no way a settled doctrine or tradition. Which means that neither was it settled in the minds of Jesus's disciples (after all, these men had not suddenly become biblical scholars or spiritual giants). So whatever it was that they each mentally pictured about what Jesus meant by being raised from the dead on the 3rd day, likely this bore no similarity to what would actually happen, as we now know it.

This conclusion is reinforced when in verse 22 Peter is said to have taken Jesus aside and tells Him that all this that Yeshua has just said about His torture and death, that is supposedly going to happen, is inconceivable and can't possibly be so. I think Peter had good reason to feel and react this way; only moments before, Yeshua told Peter that the gates of **She'ol** would not prevail against **it** ("it" is something that could be taken as meaning Peter's position was going to be protected or that the movement Christ started would be protected from dying out). The confusion about this verse is because Christian commentators regularly equate **She'ol** with Hell or Hades; but that is factually incorrect. For Jews, **She'ol** was the grave. It was literally a hole in the ground where a corpse was placed after death and then the body decomposes. It doesn't generally include any kind of afterlife. The grave did include afterlife, to a degree, in earlier times but less so by the 1st century. Early in the Old Testament writings we regularly hear that so and so died and "went to be with his ancestors". However Hell and Hades both are evil netherworlds; underground places of a not-so-pleasant afterlife for souls. So when Yeshua told Peter that the gates of **She'ol** would not prevail, I think it meant that the movement would not die (metaphorically it would not go to the grave). Therefore since Yeshua was the head and founder of that movement, living and standing there before him, Peter had to assume that Yeshua was NOT going to die anytime soon. And yet, just a few words later, it seems that Yeshua has reversed course and schizophrenically said that He IS going to the grave (to **She'ol**) not long from now. This all had to be terribly confusing and alarming.

We are also intended to notice that it's not just that Yeshua says that these terrible things are going to happen to Him, but that they **MUST** happen. It indicates that He is accepting this as His destiny. "Must happen" means that these things are necessary as a prerequisite for something more. But why **MUST** they happen? Clearly Peter and the others had in no way understood that

the Torah and the Prophets leads us to the conclusion that the only way to the truly redeemed life is through death. Messiah's death. Yeshua responds to Peter with one of the most famous lines in the Bible; a line that continues to be used to this day, even in the secular world: "Get behind me Satan !". That, my friends, is a pretty weird thing for Jesus to blurt out, and is a questionable interpretation that seems to me to lie outside the context of what has been occurring. While the majority of Bible scholars assume that Yeshua is literally referring to Satan, many others do not and I tend to agree with the minority.

Satan, in Hebrew, is actually less a name or title as it is a simple noun that means adversary. The Greek word that we find here is **satanas** (obviously taken from the Hebrew) and it operates the same way. That is, it can be translated as adversary or opponent, or it can at times be used as a proper name referring to a specific evil being (Satan). A simple noun is how I lean towards translating this unless perhaps Jesus is mouthing an otherwise unknown Jewish expression telling someone that they are speaking evil. Otherwise just moments after declaring Peter the Rock on which the Jesus movement shall be built, we have Christ calling Peter the Devil or at least saying that Peter is being co-opted and used by the Devil (which certainly is not out of the realm of possibility)! Rather it seems to me that Yeshua is rebuking Peter by saying that Peter is essentially speaking in opposition to Him even if it was meant innocently. Yeshua then goes on to say that Peter is behaving as an adversary, and this is because Peter processes Yeshua's words of His suffering and death through the lens of his human thought and his adherence to the Traditions of the Elders, as opposed to the way God sees it and wills it. If Yeshua meant that Peter was representing Satan it seems to me He would have said that Peter's thinking was coming from Satan's view (not from the human view).

Nevertheless, it is challenging to put into words the thoughts that must have been racing through Peter's mind as this surreal scene unfolded; but let me see if I can paint a picture of what it likely was to help us understand why Peter impulsively said what he said in response to Yeshua's unwelcome message. To begin with, the Father had just revealed to him that Jesus was God's Son and Israel's Messiah, and Jesus had confirmed it. But what kind of a Messiah is going to be revealed and then immediately say that He's going to be arrested and put to death? And this would accomplish exactly... what? According to the Jewish traditions the Messiah was very nearly Jewish Superman; an unstoppable and charismatic conqueror that brushes aside the opposition. He's King David on steroids. This was to be the one man that could finally throw off the oppression of

Rome and re-establish an independent Jewish State. He would be the first Israelite King of Israel in hundreds of years; a wise leader and a brilliant and courageous military man that would usher Israel into a new golden era. Therefore what Yeshua said made no sense to Peter. Jesus couldn't possibly be that Messiah and at the same time be destined for a premature death at the hands of His enemies. Therefore Yeshua could not have been the fulfillment of what every Jew knew a Messiah was to be and to do if He was only going to appear and then soon suffer and die. Such a thing would be, for a Jew, anything but victory; it would be a soul crushing catastrophe. And yet Peter was so sold out to Yeshua, and had so much faith in Him, that he didn't do what others might have done; throw his hands in the air in despair and walk away from yet another in a series of self-proclaimed wannabe Messiahs that never panned out. Perhaps this is actually the thing that ought to most impress us about Peter, and provide a great example for us to strive towards. Even though Peter's mind had been conditioned according to everything he had been taught within the Jewish religious system... making it seem as though Jesus was not living up to the expectations of a Messiah... Peter still loved Yeshua and trusted in Him so deeply and without reservation, that he was willing to continue to follow Him despite it not making sense to his mind.

Folks, this is how we must trust and follow Our Savior as we rapidly approach what inevitably comes next in Redemption History: Christ's return, the revealing of the Anti-Christ, incredible persecution of Believers, Israel being isolated and decimated, and then The End. We do have somewhat of a biblical roadmap for how this is going to unfold; but it is vague and incomplete. Peter and his fellow Jews also had a biblical roadmap available to them in the Torah and the Prophets about the advent of a Messiah and what He would do and what would happen to Him. But, it, too was vague and incomplete. The Israelites were meant to trust in God, wait patiently, and let history play out with enough information to, perhaps in hindsight, recognize what God was doing so as to have confidence that God was in control and that His will was being carried out. But the Jews of Christ's era were victims of centuries of incorrect Traditions taught by their Elders and Teachers just as Christians are victims of centuries of incorrect Traditions taught by our Elders and Teachers.

There are several End Times traditions (which certainly don't all agree) and each insistent that they tell us the true and accurate details of how The End will unfold. Some insist that if you don't believe their particular tradition, you must not be a Believer. Entire systems of exactly how the End Times plays out have been

concocted that have names like Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib and Post-Trib. Pre-Millennial, Post-Millennial and Amillennial. There are rigid doctrines about what the Rapture looks like and amounts to, the exact point in time at which Yeshua returns, who returns with Him, details of what the Millennial Kingdom will look like, and so much more that are popularized and each denomination has adopted one or another of these and brooks no dissent among their ranks. So the problem for a Christian today is similar as it was for the Jews in the era Matthew is writing about. Their Traditions were so dominant that when the prophesied events began to happen, they were oblivious to it or dismissed as irrelevant because the focal point of those biblical prophecies didn't fit their Traditions of the Elders. This is what Peter and the disciples are struggling with and it is why Peter was aghast and confused about Yeshua's prediction of His coming demise. There is a similar danger within The Church and within Judaism that the foretold signs of the world having entered the End Times, and prophesied signs of the imminent return of Messiah, will be missed by God's people because incorrect doctrines and traditions of men insist on something else entirely. Let those with ears, hear.

Beginning in verse 24, there is a subtle shifting of gears. Yeshua says:

^{CJB} **Matthew 16:24-25** ²⁴ *Then Yeshua told his talmidim, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him say 'No' to himself, take up his execution-stake, and keep following me.* ²⁵ *For whoever wants to save his own life will destroy it, but whoever destroys his life for my sake will find it.*

The subject is the **high** cost of discipleship. Did that startle you... even a little? I'm unsure of the last time I heard of a Christian speaker talk on the high and ongoing cost each Believer must pay to be a true and accepted member of the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead, it is a rather widespread Church doctrine that Christ paid the high cost so that we, His followers, don't have to. He suffered so that we can live lives of ease on our own terms. I've personally heard a number of times while in Israel of Jews saying to Christians that we embrace a cheap faith. While that sentiment comes mainly from an underlying animosity, that's not necessary incorrect. At least not as far as manmade Christian doctrines are constructed concerning the cost of discipleship and who pays it. But the New Testament tells a bit different story.

The subject of the cost of discipleship (that is, of following Yeshua) as presented here in the Gospel of Matthew is not new. In fact it may in a certain sense have reached a high point a few chapters ago during the Sermon on the Mount as

Yeshua says things like:

CJB Matthew 5:21-22 ²¹ "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not murder,' and that anyone who commits murder will be subject to judgment. ²² But I tell you that anyone who nurses anger against his brother will be subject to judgment..."

And also:

CJB Matthew 5:27-28 ²⁷ "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I tell you that a man who even looks at a woman with the purpose of lusting after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

He said more of course but that is sufficient to make my point. Which is harder? Not to murder someone, or not to hold any anger against someone, even if it might seem to be justified and yet is never outwardly displayed?

Men, which is harder? Not to cheat on your wife, or not to secretly look at another woman from a mindset of lust... even if you never act on that lust? But before Yeshua speaks to the crowd by encouraging a higher standard by which they are to obey the Laws of Moses... the right standard that God always intended but still is a standard greater than the ones their ancestors were told by their leaders that they were to follow... Yeshua sets down this dilly of a principle.

CJB Matthew 5:18-20 ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

So, says Jesus, membership in the Kingdom of Heaven requires scrupulous obedience to the Torah, (the Law of Moses), not only in letter but in spirit, and now to an even higher standard if one wants to be Yeshua's disciple. In fact, He says that the traditional standard bearers of righteousness among the Jewish people... the Torah Teachers and the Pharisees... had not attained the high level

of righteousness that Jesus said is needed to even enter the Kingdom of Heaven, let alone be placed in its social hierarchy that is based on Christ's standard of the observance of the Law. This teaching is but one aspect of Yeshua's requirements for people to be His disciples. Does this sound easy, or like our only obligation is say the Sinner's Prayer, and then sit back and relax until the Lord calls us to Heaven? Well, it does get much easier if Christ's teachings on the high cost of discipleship are ignored and replaced with manmade doctrines. And it is all the more easy if one simply rips the heart out of the issue of obedience to God (the Law of Moses) and throws it into a doctrinal trash heap. Strong words? Yes. No stronger than Jesus's words, though.

We'll finish up chapter 16, next time.