



## 13. Matthew 13:53– 18:25

"The Sermon on the Mount" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

### Part 4: Rejection by Israel and the Sermon on the Church

"Rejection of Jesus in his hometown, misunderstanding by 'Israel,' and growing opposition by the Pharisees lead Jesus to stress teaching to the disciples." (*Harper Collins Study Bible*, 1883)

## My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

My Shepherd will supply my need: Jehovah is His Name;  
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, Beside the living stream.  
He brings my wandering spirit back, when I forsake His ways,  
And leads me, for His mercy's sake, In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death His presence is my stay;  
One word of His supporting grace drives all my fears away.  
His hand, in sight of all my foes, doth still my table spread;  
My cup with blessings overflows, his oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;  
***O may Thy house be my abode and all my work be praise.  
There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come;  
No more a stranger, nor a guest, but like a child at home (cf.  
Matthew 17:25–26).***

## Part 4: Rejection by Israel Narrative

(13:53–17:27)

3 instances of rejection punctuate a narrative otherwise characterized by miracles, a transcendent vision, and predictions of Jesus death

- **1. Rejection at Nazareth** (13:53–58, dramatic episode)
- Death of John the Baptist (14:1–12, dramatic episode)
- **Miracle Stories 4** (14:13–36): Feeding 5,000+, healing many, walking on water
- **2. Conflict over Pharisaic Traditions** (15:1–20, dramatic episode, formula quotation, teaching saying)
- **Miracle Stories 5** (15:21–39): Canaanite woman's daughter, healing multitudes, feeding 4,000+
- **3. Pharisees and Sadducees Demand a Sign** (16:1–12, dramatic episode, teaching saying)
- **Peter's Declaration** (16:13–20, dramatic episode)
- **Passion Prediction 1 and Results** (16:21–28)
- **Transfiguration** (17:1–13, apocalyptic vision, teaching saying)
- **Lesson about Faith: Healing of the Young Demonic** (17:14–20, miracle story and teaching)
- **Passion Prediction 2 sans correction** (17:22–23)
- Question about the Temple Tax (17:24–27, segue to *Sermon on the Church* 18:1-35)

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## A Prophet Is Not Without Honor

- **Rejection at Nazareth** (13:53–58; cf. Mark 6:1–6a)
  - “they were offended in him” the Greek means “caused to stumble or sin” (*eskandalizonto*; cf. 18:6–7)
  - “. . . he *did* not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (13:58; cf. Mark 6:5, “could do no mighty work”)
- **Death of John the Baptist (14:1–12): prefigures Christ's own**
- **Miracle Stories 4** (14:13–36): Signs for the Faithful
  - Multitudes follow Christ, who heals them because he “was moved with compassion toward them” (14:14)
  - Feeding 5,000 (*plus* women and children, 14:15–21)
    - 12 baskets of fragments again
  - Walking on water and its effect on the disciples (14:22–33)
    - **Peter's Attempt (14:28–31)**
      - *Exposition: the dangers of “taking our eyes off of Jesus”*
      - **“of a truth thou art the Son of God” (14:33)**
  - Christ heals many (14:34–36)

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## Conflict with Authorities

- **Christ on Pharisaic Traditions** (15:1–9, Controversy or Conflict Narratives)
  - “Traditions of the elders” versus “the commandment of God” (15:2–3)
    - Unlike Mark, Matthew does not use the Aramaic term *corban* or need to explain the custom
    - **Matthew adds a reference to Isaiah 1:13**
      - not a full formula quotation (these always note “thus it was fulfilled” and usually refer to Christ)
      - “. . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”
  - Things that defile: “those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart . . .” (15:18)
- **Miracle Stories 5** (15:21–39)
  - Exorcizing the Daughter of the Canaanite Woman (15:21–28)
  - Healing Many People (15:29–31)
  - Feeding the Four Thousand (plus women and children, 15:32–39)

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## Rejection by Authorities

- **Demand for a Sign (16:1–4)**
  - Rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees after the feeding of the 4,000
  - “a wicked and **adulterous** generation . . .”
    - **Spiritual adultery is unfaithfulness to the Lord and the covenants that bind us to him**
    - **Sign of the prophet Jonah**
      - **Belly of the whale as a type of the tomb and resurrection**
      - **consider also Jonah as a type of the Pharisees, condemnatory of sinners and looking for their judgment—the Lord “removes their protection,” killing Jonah’s gourd and destroying the Jews city and temple**
- **The Leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (16:5–12)**
  - “. . . he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” (16:12)
    - Mark 8:15 had “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod to emphasizes religious and political opposition
  - Matthew perhaps focuses on religious and scriptural authority
    - **Sadducees: closed canon, no revelation**
    - **Pharisees: adding without authority**
    - **Exposition: How are doctrines, true and false, leaven or yeast to us?**

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## Who is Jesus?

- “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”
  - The disciples’ response: “And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, *Jeremias*, or one of the prophets.”
    - Elijah worked great miracles
    - Elijah and John strongly called people to repentance
    - *Jeremiah pronounced woes and lamented tha destruction was coming to his people for rejecting God*
  - Peter’s Response: “*Thou are the Christ the Son of the living God!*” (16:16)
    - *More explicit Christological identification than Mark 8:29, which had simply “Thou art the Christ”*
- “And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed art thou, *Simon Barjona*: for *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*”
  - Simon bar Jonah (son of Jonah/John) contrasts with Christ the Son of the living God
    - Peter’s mortal paternity versus Christ’s divine
  - Peter’s knowledge of *who* Christ was had been revealed to him

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## Peter’s Declaration (16:13–20)

- “*Thou art Peter (petros) and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church . . .*” (16:18)
  - *petra* (f.) literally, “living rock, bedrock,” in contrast to *petros* (m.), “an isolated stone”
  - Nevertheless, do not make too much of this
    - Peter, a male, needed a masculine form, “Rocky,” not a feminine, “Rockette”
    - *Jesus was probably speaking Aramaic, which only has one word for rock, not Greek*
  - The word “church” (*ekklēsia*) appears here and in 18:17
- Roman Catholics focus on Peter as the rock, Protestants on the knowledge that Jesus was the son of God as the foundation of authority
- LDS position?
  - “Jesus in His teachings says, ‘Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ *What rock? Revelation!*” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 273-74)
  - A nuance of this: “. . .remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation” (Helaman 5:12)
  - *Jesus’ statement may be interpreted to mean that the Church would be built upon the apostolic testimony of Christ that comes through revelation* (cf. Ephesians 2:20).

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## Keys of the Kingdom

- Matthean addition: a discussion of **keys**
- “And I will give unto thee **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**: and **whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (16:19)
  - Cf. the promise to Nephi<sup>2</sup>, son of Helaman<sup>3</sup>, “Behold, ***I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven***; and ***whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven***; and thus shall ye have power among this people.” (Helaman 10:7; cf. D&C 128:8-9)
  - “Keys are the right of presidency, the directing, controlling, governing power. The keys of the kingdom are the power, right, and authority to preside over the kingdom of God on earth (which is the Church) and to direct all of its affairs. ***These keys include the sealing power, that is, the power to bind and seal on earth, in the Lord’s name and by his authorization, and to have the act ratified in heaven.***” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1.389)
  - Keys are also associated with the ordinances of the holy temple

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## Implications of Peter’s Testimony

- As in Mark, Peter’s declaration leads directly to the **First Passion Prediction**
  - “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and **suffer many things** of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **be killed**, and **be raised again the third day**.” (16:21)
- Here, too, Peter misunderstands and tries to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die (16:22–23)

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## Matthew's Account of the Transfiguration

- Transfiguration experience (17:1–13, *Apocalyptic Vision*; cf. discussion at Mark 9:2-14)
- “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart [Greek, “privately”] And was transfigured before them: and *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Greek, “Elijah”] talking with him.” (17:1–3)
  - The JST does not add a reference to John the Baptist here
- “This is my beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased*; hear ye him.” (17:5)
  - Mark 9:7 had just “This is my beloved Son, hear him”

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## Latter-day Insights on the Transfiguration given the introduction of “keys” in Matt 16:19

- “The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave *the keys* to Peter, James and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him.” (Joseph Smith Teachings, 158)
  - In Matthew’s account of Peter’s declaration, Jesus explicitly promised Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven . . .” (Matt 16:19)
    - This is not just the sealing power to bind and loose, but to “seal” all ordinances, especially those of the House of the Lord
  - *These priesthood keys were restored by the same characters in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836* (Passover that year; see D&C 110:11–16)
  - *Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery saw a glorified Jesus Christ on this occasion* (D&C 110:1–10)
- “I am convinced in my own mind that when the Savior took the three disciples up on the mount, which is spoken of as the ‘Mount of Transfiguration,’ *he there gave unto them the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord and that they were endowed*. That was the only place they could go. That place became holy and sacred for the rites of salvation which were performed on that occasion.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *DS* 2:165)
  - More to come with Matthew and Luke’s accounts . . .

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## Question about the Temple Tax (17:24–27)

- “Tribute” (17:24) refers to the *didrachma* = half-shekel annual Temple tax, not to tax to Rome or Herod
- Parable
  - Kings demand tribute of subjects not children > **Peter and the disciples are now children of God, do not need to pay tax to his house**
    - **“O may Thy house be my abode and all my work be praise. There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come; No more a stranger, nor a guest, but like a child at home”** (cf. last lines, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”)
  - This is a **segue**, or literary bridge, into **the Sermon on the Church**, which deals with the church (*ekklesia*) or gathering of the children of God
- Miracle
  - Peter finds four dracma in a fish!

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## Sermon on the Church (18:1–35, discourse)

Matthew’s Second Theme: God’s Purposes Will Be Fulfilled in the Church

- **Precedence in the Kingdom** (18:1–6)
  - Disciples ≈ Twelve ≈ Church leaders
  - Little children: literal *and* a figure for members of the Church
- **Disciplining “Offenders”** (those who “cause to stumble, 18:6–9)
  - Hyperbole of casting off body parts; body ≈ Church
  - **Cutting off = sundering fellowship, excommunication**
- **Seeking the Lost** (18:10–14, **parable** of the lost sheep)
- **Disciplining Those Who Wrong** (18:15–20)
  - The word “church” (*ekklesia*) appears in 18:17
  - **“Verily I say unto you (plural), Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”** (18:18; keys given earlier to Peter are now given to all the disciples)
- **Necessity of Forgiveness** (18:21–22): 70 x 7 = no limit!
- **Parable of the Unforgiving Servant** (18:23–35)
  - He owed 10,000 talents (a talent was 25.86 kg [almost 57 pounds] = 15 years’ wages); he owed 568,920 pounds of silver but could not forgive a sum worth 100 days’ labor

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