

SATAN'S WORDS FROM AN APOSTLE'S MOUTH
Matthew 16:21-23

Intro: This is the third message I have brought to you on the events which took place in Caesarea Philippi.

- The Lord had begun by asking His disciples what people were saying about Him. Several answers were given showing that people believed that the Lord was some outstanding person from the past who had come back from the dead. They would have been complimentary to you and to me, but they fell far short of recognizing Who the Lord really was. Nobody was saying that He was the long-awaited Messiah. No one was saying that He was the Son of God. In the light of the Lord's response to Peter, we can say that God had not seen fit to reveal this to the masses of people. How much the other disciples understood, we do not know, but we do know that Peter spoke out and answered the Lord correctly when the Lord turned the question to the disciples. His answer is given to us in verse 16. (Read.)

In the Lord's response to Peter we can see that he had made this happy discovery, not because of his great brilliance (although the Apostle Peter seems to have been very intelligent), but it had come as a revelation from the Father. It could not have come from people because, in the first place, nobody around at that time knew it. But even if some had been who knew Who the Lord was, it would still have had to come as a revelation from God.

This is true of all spiritual truth. It is possible for people to listen week after week to the teaching of the Word, and yet not get it. People can be exposed to all kinds of spiritual light, and yet remain in darkness because they cannot see. Peter had seen it. He knew Who the Lord was. But he only knew it because the Father had revealed this to Him.

As we saw last week, the Lord followed this with a prophecy concerning His Church. And again, while Peter was to have a major role in the beginnings of the Church, yet the Lord said very specifically that He would build it. It was to be a mighty force in the days ahead for opening the door of salvation to people on the earth -- as the disciples were to learn later, throughout the whole world, to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Church would be founded upon this basic truth, that Jesus was the Messiah (opening as that did the OT Scriptures), and that He was not John the Baptist, nor any of the OT prophets, but, infinitely greater than them all, He was the Son of the living God in human flesh.

So, even though the disciples were with Him, heard Him teach,

saw Him perform miracles again and again, and were themselves able to perform the same kind of miracles, they were not able to recognize the Lord until each one personally was shown by the Father Who Jesus was.

This is still true. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14. Man in his natural state does not have the capacity for understanding Who the Lord is. We wonder sometimes how the scribes and Pharisees and elders, who had much understanding of the OT, were not able to recognize the Lord. This is the reason. The Father had not shown them Who He was.

But now we come to our text for tonight: Matt. 16:21-23.
(Read.)

We have here three things, one in each of the three verses:

- 1) In verse 21 we see what the Lord began to teach.
- 2) In verse 22 we see Peter's response to the Lord's teaching.
- 3) In verse 23 we see how the Lord rebuked Peter.

I. THE LORD'S TEACHING (Matt. 16:21).

Matthew suggested here, as did Mark, that the Lord entered into a new phase of His teaching with His disciples. Luke indicates that the Lord told the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ because they still did not understand why He had come to earth.

Those words, "From that time forth," are very important. It shows that the Lord measures out the truth to us according to His good pleasure. There had been hints before as to the reason for our Lord's coming. And some had understood it. But this was something that the disciples had not yet learned. As we can see here, not even Peter understood it.

Matthew means by these words that the Lord had never been clearer nor more specific about the reason for His coming than He began to be here.

Matthew used the word "must," and surely it was because the Lord had used it. This meant that it was an absolute necessity. We know that the Lord spoke of this on other occasions as His Father's will. He prayed in the Garden that if it were possible such a cup might be taken from Him, but we know now that it was not possible. The Lord could have avoided it in many ways, even calling twelve legions of angels to help Him. But it was certainly the Father's will. This is all bound up in that word "must."

When Lucille and I were in England, Frank and Carolyn's

pastor was just beginning a series of messages on texts where this word was used. If the other messages were like the first, they should have been put in a book and published. He probably spoke on this passage. Be sure to notice this word in reading your Bible. It speaks here of "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," as Peter called it when he preached on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Jerusalem was to be the place of His death because that was the city where sacrifices were offered to God.

Those who became the primary instigators of His death, amazingly, were the member of the Sanhedrin: "the elders and chief priests and scribes." They would cause the Lord much suffering, and finally succeed in having Him crucified. Those who should have been the strongest supporters of the Messiah, were His greatest enemies. As the Lord said, they had refused to enter the door of salvation themselves, and now were taking the strongest stand ever to keep anyone else from entering in.

Perhaps the most surprising thing that the Lord said, obviously to encourage His disciples, was a point that neither Peter nor any of the others were able to get. He would "be raised again the third day." They apparently were so overcome by the Lord's prediction of His own death that they completely missed the rest of what He said.

We probably don't have in this twenty-first verse all that the Lord said to His disciples, but this is a summation of what He told His disciples.

Notice this was a revelation from our Lord to His disciples, but there is no indication that any of them really believed what He had to say.

But let us notice:

II. PETER'S RESPONSE (Matt. 16:22).

When Matthew said that "Peter took him," he indicated that Peter took the Lord aside and spoke to Him privately. And he "began to rebuke him." That is, Peter was rebuking the Lord as though Peter knew more about the will of God than our Lord did. That would have been a very interesting rebuke to listen to. But Matthew does not tell us what Peter said except that "this shall not be unto thee."

You would think that Peter would have accepted what the Lord was saying simply because it was the Lord Who was saying it, but that was not the case. He was so strongly set in his own

idea of what the Messiah had come to do, that his heart was closed to the truth even when the Lord spoke it.

But we often treat the truth that way, don't we? We have our own idea as to how things are, and so even though we read otherwise in the Bible, we still hang on to our own ideas. How we need to learn to accept the truth because it is the truth, and because we find it in the Word of God. What presumption it was for Peter to do what he did! Perhaps he felt that, because the Lord told him that he knew Who He was, therefore he assumed that he knew more than he actually knew.

We have here an example of what we were talking about this morning in Romans 11. Peter was counselling the Lord. Peter thought he knew more about the Lord's work than the Lord did. We can easily see that if the Lord had followed anyone who would have counselled Him, we would have no salvation at all.

This brings us to:

III. THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO PETER (Matt. 16:23).

Mark indicated in his record of this event (see Mark 8:33) that the Lord turned around and looked at the other disciples as He said what He did to Peter. The Lord recognized the words as the words of Satan.

I don't think that this meant that Peter was indwelt by Satan. And neither do I think that this meant that Peter was not yet saved. But it does mean that Peter was foolishly playing into the hands of Satan by the way he was rebuking the Lord.

In Luke's account of the temptation of the Lord by Satan, he concluded his report by saying that Satan "departed from him," i.e., from the Lord, "for a season." Well, in Caesarea Philippi Satan was back. Without knowing it, Peter was telling the Lord exactly what Satan would have told him. Satan knew why the Lord had come. There was no question in Satan's mind as to Who the Lord was. He may have wondered if it did anything to the Lord's Deity to become a Man, but He knew that He was the Lord. And the one thing that Satan wanted to stop was the work of the Lord on the Cross. Without that, all people would have been forever damned. Peter knew the Lord, but surely had not yet realized the depth of his own need, and the need of all people in their sins.

We can see from this that the Lord was fully determined to do the will of the Father. And His message given to Satan (because the Lord knew where this idea came from) was meant to be a rebuke to Peter and to any of the other apostles who

may have had the same idea.

And then, after the Lord told Satan to get behind Him, to stand aside and get out of the way, our Lord added, "For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." This means that Peter was thinking as a man, not thinking as God thinks. And Satan is happy as long as we think as men. He doesn't want us to understand the truth of God. And so Peter was "an offence" to the Lord, a stumbling-block! It is apparent from this that there was still much work that the Lord had to do in Peter's heart to get him to think like God was thinking, and like the Lord Jesus was thinking.

Peter had a lot of trouble trying to use the ways of men to serve his Lord. He was doing that when he pulled out his sword and cut off Malchus' ear. This has been, throughout the history of the Lord's people, one of our greatest problems. We see it going on every day, people doing the Lord's work, or trying to, by employing the ways of men. And when we do, we are playing right into the hands of our Lord's Enemy. It may appear like things are being accomplished in people's lives, but, for the most part, it is only a stumbling-block, a counterfeit.

We can understand why Peter felt the way he did. It was because of his great love for the Lord. But that which seemed so wise to him was that which would have kept our Lord from ever becoming the Savior of His people.

Concl: What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this whole time that the disciples were with the Lord in Caesarea Philippi?

We can certainly see from Peter's experience how much we need to recognize our dependence upon the Lord to teach us the truth. I will always be thankful for what Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to tell us about our need to be taught by the Holy Spirit. He warned us that we could pass our classes at the Seminary with high grades, but go out of the Seminary with very little of the truth written upon our hearts. Men can study the Scriptures all of their lives without coming to the Lord, or understanding the basic truths of His Word.

We can also see that we can be very clear on one doctrine, but completely confused on another. The teaching we receive always has to be tested by the Word of God. Peter could have learned the truth from the OT, but obviously he hadn't.

Then notice that the Lord regulates our teaching. The Lord knows when we are ready, and how best to teach us. Cf. John

16:12, "I have many things to say unto you..."

Finally, we can see that one of our major struggles in our lives and in our service will continue to be that we need to know the ways of the Lord and the thoughts of the Lord. He doesn't do things our way, nor does He think the way we think. But His blessing comes to us when we do things His way, and think His thoughts. That is where Peter struggled. And this is where we will find some of our greatest struggles, too.