

Matthew 16b

What was Jesus' new emphasis in His ministry to the disciples (v. 21)? Jesus explained to His disciples that His death was near. It would be necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and there suffer many things at the hands of the religious leaders. Eventually, He would be killed, but He would rise again from the dead on the third day. This is Matthew's first prediction of Jesus' death.¹ Jesus' preparation of His disciples for the Cross signaled a significant turning point in Jesus' ministry.²

How did Peter react to the news (v. 22)? Peter was indignant at the thought of his Master enduring such treatment. Catching hold of Him as if to block His path, he protested, "*Never, Lord!*" he said. "*This shall never happen to you!*" Peter obviously did not fully comprehend the Master's plan. He could not understand how Jesus could be the Messiah and yet die at the hands of the religious leaders.³ Peter may have recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but at this point he knew nothing of the Cross.

Apparently, Peter's understanding of Messiah did not include that of a Suffering Servant, which almost everyone in Israel rejected as well.

What did Jesus have to say to Peter (v. 23)? He said to Peter, "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.*" In calling Peter, Satan, Jesus did not imply that the apostle was demon-possessed or Satan controlled. He simply meant that Peter's actions and words were what could be expected of Satan (whose name means *adversary*). By protesting against the Cross, Peter was out of tune with God's will and could potentially become a hindrance to the Savior.⁴

What truths about discipleship did Jesus convey to His disciples (vv. 24-28)?

16:24 Here the Lord Jesus plainly states what is involved in being His disciple: denial of self, cross-bearing, and following Him. To **deny self** is not the same as self-denial; it means to yield to His control so completely that self has no rights whatsoever. To **take up his cross** means the willingness to endure shame, suffering, and perhaps martyrdom for His sake. To **follow Him** means to live as He lived with all that involves.....including humility, poverty, compassion, love, grace, and every other godly virtue.⁵

Self-denial, as Jesus taught it, does not involve denying oneself things (for example, dessert, or ice cream, or even legitimate forms of entertainment), as much as it involves denying one's own authority over his or her life (cf. 4:19; John 12:23-26).⁶

16:25 The Lord anticipates two hindrances to discipleship. **What was the first hindrance?** The first is the natural temptation to save oneself from discomfort, pain, loneliness, or loss. Jesus warned that those who hug their lives for selfish purposes would never find fulfillment; those who abandon their lives to Him, not counting the cost, would find the reason for their existence.⁷

16:26 What was the second hindrance? Riches. “Suppose,” said Jesus, “that a man became so successful in business that he owned the whole world. What good would it do to make all that money, then die, leave it all behind, and spend eternity empty-handed?” Man is here for bigger business than to make money. He is called to represent the interests of his King. If he misses that, he misses everything.⁸

16:27 Next, the Lord reminds His own of the glory that follows the suffering. He points forward to His Second Advent when He will return to earth with His angels in the transcendent glory of His Father. Then He will reward those who live for Him. The only way to have a successful life is to project oneself forward to that glorious time, decide what will really be important then, and then go after that with all one’s strength.⁹

It is perfectly proper to serve Jesus Christ while thinking about a future reward, if our motives are correct (6:19-21), namely, the glorification of Christ rather than self. We will one day lay our crowns at the feet of our Savior. The crown is an expression of a life of faithful service that we performed out of gratitude for God’s grace to us (cf. Revelation 4:4, 10).¹⁰

Both Jesus and Paul urged us to lay up treasure in heaven, to make investments that will yield eternal rewards (6:19-21; Luke 12:31-34; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Note the Biblical truth that judgment will be based on works (“according to what he has done”) (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12-13). At the same time salvation is always based on grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)

What was the startling statement that Jesus made (v. 28)? There were some standing there with Him who would not taste death before they saw Him coming in His kingdom. The problem is that those disciples have all died, yet Christ has not come in power and glory to set up His kingdom. The problem is solved if we disregard the chapter break and consider the first eight verses of chapter 17 as an explanation of His puzzling statement. These verses describe the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration. There Peter, James, and John saw Christ transfigured. They were actually privileged to have a preview of Christ in the glory of His coming earthly kingdom.¹¹

¹ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 58.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 443.

³ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 58.

⁴ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1268.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 448.

⁷ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1268.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 1269.

¹⁰ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 449.

¹¹ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1269.