

FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES

January 1, 2017

5. The Result of Exercising Great Faith

Matthew 15:21-28

On this New Year's Day, 2017 I greet you all in the precious Name of Jesus, the Christ, our Lord and Redeemer; and I wish all a Happy New Year! The word happy is a transliteration of the word blessed. I therefore truly wish you God's great blessings in this year. This New Year will be a blessed one for you if you continue to exercise faith in God who owns everything. But you must exercise great faith in Him to receive all the blessings you desire. It does not matter that you are not a Jew but a Gentile. God is no respecter of persons, but whoever seeks Him with their whole heart in any nation will definitely find Him. And He will bless such that seek Him with their whole heart. The Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon, who was a Gentile, received great favor from Jesus because of her great faith and her worship of Christ. Great faith always leads to sincere worship. So as we continue with the overall theme of the "FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES, our sermon today focuses on the Results of Exercising Great Faith in Jesus, the Messiah.

Thus our text of the day reads: "Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." 23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." 25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." 27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." 28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment" (Matthew 15:21-28).

This narrative of Matthew 15:21-28 continued the story of the need of faith that is required of the disciples for building the kingdom of God and how the Jewish leaders lacked such faith. To demonstrate this Jesus left Capernaum and travelled west into the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon, where he met a Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon possessed. This woman was responsive and receptive to the kingdom message and the Messiah. Then in her plea to Jesus she acknowledged that Jesus is the Lord and the messianic king when she cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly". Because she was a Gentile, the disciples would have sent her away, but Jesus remarked that His ministry is to the Jews, not Gentiles. The woman however remained persistent even when Jesus offered a proverbial statement that His ministry is not for the unclean (dogs) but for the children of God. Her response to Jesus indicated that she had great faith and that she understood His remark, but she also observed that even dogs (a derogatory term commonly used then by Jews referred to Gentile) do eat from crumbs that fall from the Master's table – meaning that any Gentile that is responsive and receptive to the kingdom message and the Messiah would also reap the benefit of salvation to become part of God's kingdom with all its benefits. Jesus then commended her for such great faith and healed her daughter.

The take home message is that the Jews, who should have accepted and believed in Jesus, did not; whereas this Gentile woman, who had no reason to do so, did. The difference is that Jesus often

finds great faith where no one would have expected it, but none where it should have been. The lesson for the members of Matthew's community was quite clear that they should not ignore the Gentiles among whom they now lived, for one can find great faith also among the Gentiles. This interprets to the modern Church that it should not ignore the un-churched members of its communities among whom it lives, because you can find great faith also among the un-churched people who can be responsive and receptive to the kingdom message and the Messiah that would bring about repentance, restitution and restoration. Those who respond and receive the kingdom message and the Messiah are given the right to become the children of God with all its privileges, responsibilities and benefits. The apostle John explicitly expressed it as follows: "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He (Jesus) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:9-13).

Finally, allow me to suggest to you that God has granted us a new clean slate to begin a walk of great faith all over with Him in this brand new year. I pray you would be receptive and responsive to the kingdom message and the Messiah to walk in this great faith and reap the benefits of belonging to the kingdom of God. I wish you a wonderful and blessed walk of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in this New Year, 2017 and the Years to come! Happy New Year to all of you!! This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "Final Days of Preparation of the Disciples" is reflected in the following:

- **The Relevance of the Death of John the Baptist**
- **The Significance of the Miracle of Feeding the 5000**
- **The Importance of Jesus Walking on the Sea**
- **The Danger of Hypocrisy**
- **The Result of Exercising Great Faith**
- **And let the church say, "Amen!"**

Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message of repentance? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you exercise your faith and bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES

January 8, 2017

6. Jesus Feeds His Followers

Matthew 15:29-39

In the final days of preparation of His disciples, Jesus concentrated on building their faith in readiness for a continual building of the kingdom of God after His return to the Father. On last Sunday (New Year's Day), we learned that this New Year (2017) will be a blessed one if you continue to exercise faith in God who owns everything. And you must exercise great faith in Him to receive all the blessings you desire whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. It does require faith for anyone to worship even the one whom you delight in. Therefore, great faith is always a prerequisite to sincere worship. God has commanded and promised those who follow Him to, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalms 37:4). And those who trust, delight in and worship Him, the Lord is able to supply all their needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). Jesus, during His ministry here on earth, demonstrated this by feeding an over four thousand-member crowd that had followed Him for over three days without eating anything; and He also healed all their diseases too. In so doing He proved that He is the Lord that provides and meets all the physical needs of those who follow Him with great faith. The followers of Jesus are indeed His disciples. So as we continue with the overall theme of the "FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES, our sermon today focuses on "Jesus Feeds His Followers".

Thus our text of the day reads: "Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. 30 Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. 31 The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. 32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." 33 His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" 34 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish." 35 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. 36 Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. 37 They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 38 The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan" (Matthew 15:29-39).

This narrative of Matthew 15:21-28 continued the story of the need of faith that is required of the disciples for continual building of the kingdom of God. Jesus had just returned to the Sea of Galilee from the region of Tyre and Sidon, where he had met a Canaanite woman and healed her daughter who was demon possessed because of her great faith. Sitting by the mountainside with a large crowd of over four thousand, who had been with Him for over three days without eating anything, He performed many miracles. The people were amazed and praised the God of Israel. But then He did not want to send this crowd away hungry for fear that they may collapse on their way, He had compassion over them and wanted to feed them. They disciples, seemingly with a short memory (forgetting He had fed a crowd of over five thousand with five small loaves and

two fish; and collected twelve baskets of the remnants), asked where can they get enough food to feed such a crowd since they were in a remote area? Jesus took the seven loaves and few small fish the disciples had and fed the more than four thousand people in the crowd with more than seven baskets of food left over. Then, after Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan. The location of Magadan (and in Mark's account, Dalmanutha) is unknown in both cases. In fact, this is the only mention of Magadan and Dalmanutha in ancient literature.

The take home message is that Jesus takes care of all the needs of His followers, no matter how little they have and how great the need. Secondly, the disciples' faith still needed much maturing for them to be prepared to carry on the great work of building the kingdom of God here on earth after Jesus returned to the Father. We too, as His disciples need to allow our faith to mature so that we can continue to carry on the work of building His kingdom by obeying His Commandment to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. To do this, we must seek first His Kingdom and its righteousness, so all these other things (blessings) can be ours as well. I pray you would be receptive and responsive to the kingdom message and the Messiah to walk in this great faith and reap the benefits of belonging to the kingdom of God. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "Final Days of Preparation of the Disciples" is reflected in the following:

- The Relevance of the Death of John the Baptist
- The Significance of the Miracle of Feeding the 5000
- The Importance of Jesus Walking on the Sea
- The Danger of Hypocrisy
- The Result of Exercising Great Faith
- Jesus Feeds His Followers
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message of repentance? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you exercise your faith and bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mtraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES

January 15, 2017

7. The Evidence Is Already There!

Matthew 16:1-4

In this generation, as in every generation, people are always looking for signs. The question I have for everyone today is: Are signs right or wrong? Well, it all depends on your motives and what signs you are looking for. Spiritually, signs are actually for those who lack faith and/or those who are weak in faith as they are constantly looking for signs to predict their future. So in this generation, many rush to the palm readers, the sorcerers, the soothsayers, the magicians, so-called prophets and prophetesses, etc. Jesus describes any generation that still looks for signs as an adulterous one. Let me ask another question: What sign is still left there that would reveal anything new or convince you about the kingdom message and the Messiah? The evidence is already there! After all, the scriptures declare that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). There is no new sign that can be given to the generation that seeks signs to be convinced or to have faith in the kingdom message and the Messiah other than the sign of Jonah. In the final days of preparation of His disciples, Jesus concentrated on building their faith in readiness for a continual building of the kingdom of God after His return to the Father. This is because there are always those in opposition to the kingdom message and the Messiah, who always seek for evidences or signs why they should believe. At this point in His earthly ministry, Jesus faced a group of people who were constantly in opposition to the Kingdom message and the Messiah. In an attempt to discredit His ministry and the message of the kingdom, they tested Him with a cynical request to show them a sign from heaven. Jesus in his response to them, in a sense, said, “Hey, you don’t need another sign because the evidence is already there!” So as we continue with the overall theme of the “FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES, our sermon today focuses on “The evidence is already there!”

Thus our text of the day reads: “The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ 3 and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.[Some early manuscripts do not have When evening comes ... of the times.] 4 A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away” (Matthew 16:1-4).

In this narrative of Matthew 6:1-4 Jesus had just healed the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others; and with compassion had miraculously fed more than four thousand people in the crowd with more than seven baskets of food left over from seven loaves and few small fish. Then, the Pharisees and Sadducees (already defined when we were discussing Matthew 11) came to test Him by requesting that He should show them a sign from heaven. This was a way of opposing Him and His kingdom message. These are two groups who rarely agree on anything, were both theologically and politically enemies, now joined together to continue the attack on Jesus to illustrate their frustration and desperation with the kingdom message He was propagating. Recalled we have not heard much about the Sadducees. In fact, Matthew mentions them seven times only in his Gospel: once in Matthew 3:7; four times in Matthew 16; and twice in Matthew 22. The request for a sign (from heaven, which also meant from God) was intended to trap Jesus and provide evidence that they may use against Him. Jesus quickly responded and

drew their attention to the fact that they already had all the signs they needed and their ability to read natural signs indicated their request was unnecessary. However, He provided them with only ONE sign, the sign of Jonah; and His harsh rebuke likened them to an adulterous generation, which had all the evidence it needed yet still rebels against God, which made them guilty of committing spiritual adultery. This was the second time Jesus was referring to the sign of Jonah. The first time was in Matthew 12:40. In both cases He was referring to His resurrection from the dead. Recall that Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights; so was Jesus in the grave for the same period. The kingdom message includes the death and resurrection of Jesus. For, He came through forty generations, went about doing good, healing the sick and raising the dead. Yet the Jewish leaders conspired against Him and crucified Him. He died, was buried in a borrowed tomb; but early Sunday morning He got up with all power in His hands; and that made the His kingdom message and Messiahship a reality. And all who receive Him and His kingdom message become part of His kingdom. I pray you would be receptive and responsive to the kingdom message and the Messiah, and then walk in faith in this newness of life to reap all the benefits of belonging to the kingdom of God since the evidence is already here! This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "Final Days of Preparation of the Disciples" is reflected in the following:

- The Relevance of the Death of John the Baptist**
- The Significance of the Miracle of Feeding the 5000**
- The Importance of Jesus Walking on the Sea**
- The Danger of Hypocrisy**
- The Result of Exercising Great Faith**
- Jesus Feeds His Followers**
- The Evidence Is Already There!**
- And let the church say, "Amen!"**

Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message of repentance? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you exercise your faith and bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES

January 22, 2017

8. Warning Against Hypocrisy And Lack of Faith Matthew 16:5-12

How many of you have ever baked bread from the scratch? What are some of the ingredients you need? Flour, water or milk, some sugar, some butter, but most importantly yeast. Yeast has a great influence over the texture and quality of your bread. You don't necessarily need a large quantity of yeast to leaven a large lump of dough. Similarly, wherever you are there are people who are always more influential on other people because of their manipulative capacity. They use clever, devious ways to control or influence others or some things as their doctrine or teaching are effective like yeast but in reality they don't practice what they teach. Not quite surprisingly, such people very often lack faith. They are quick to making many rules which they don't follow but expect and ensure that others do so. That is why they are hypocrites and a dangerous group. Hypocrites are actors that say one thing and do the complete opposite. We find hypocrites in the church too. During Jesus' ministry He encountered hypocrites too and He knows how dangerous they are. They say they know God but do things contrary to God's word. This is why Jesus often warned against hypocrisy and lack of faith. Therefore in the final days of preparation of His disciples, Jesus concentrated on building their faith in readiness for a continual propagation of the kingdom of God after His return to the Father. He constantly cautioned His followers to be aware about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were both hypocrites. He likened the influence of their teachings to that of yeast when baking bread. So as we continue with the overall theme of the "FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES, our sermon today focuses on "Warning Against Hypocrisy And Lack of Faith"

Thus our text of the day reads: "When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6 "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 7 They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread." 8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9 Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:5-12).

In this narrative of Matthew 6:5-12 Jesus was concern about the influence of the hypocrites because it would and does affect the faith of disciples by making them ineffective in building the Kingdom of God. Therefore Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the leaven (yeast) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples at that time associated this warning with physical bread which they had forgotten to bring with them. Reminded them of the miracles with the five thousand and the four thousand, Jesus warned His disciple to have faith and be careful of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Finally, the disciples understood that this warning was concerning their need to have faith and about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees who have failed to believe in Him and were teaching others to do the same. Actually they were teaching others to oppose the message of the Kingdom of God and the Messiah. These hypocrites

were busy creating opposition to Jesus and His teaching. Albeit, we know that the kingdom message includes the death and resurrection of Jesus. For, He came through forty generations, went about doing good, healing the sick and raising the dead. Yet the Jewish leaders conspired against Him and crucified Him. He died, was buried in a borrowed tomb; but early Sunday morning He got up with all power in His hands; and that made the His kingdom message and Messiahship a reality. And all who receive Him and His kingdom message become part of His kingdom. I pray you would be receptive and responsive to this kingdom message and the Messiah, and then walk in faith in the newness of life He grants to who believe Him so that you can reap all the benefits of belonging to the kingdom of God. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "Final Days of Preparation of the Disciples" is reflected in the following:

- The Relevance of the Death of John the Baptist
- The Significance of the Miracle of Feeding the 5000
- The Importance of Jesus Walking on the Sea
- The Danger of Hypocrisy
- The Result of Exercising Great Faith
- Jesus Feeds His Followers
- The Evidence Is Already There!
- Warning Against Hypocrisy And Lack of Faith
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message of repentance? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you exercise your faith and bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES

**January 29, 2017 9. The Importance of Peter's Declaration of Jesus as Messiah Matthew
16:13-20**

In life, there is a constant need to evaluate who you are. No wonder, there are times we wonder whether people know who we are. Everybody tries to have a validation from other of who they really are. Have you ever or has someone else ever asked you, "Do you know who I am? Or, perhaps, who do you think I am?" In reality no one else knows who we truly are, except yourself, unless God reveals who you are to them. Often we work on assumptions about knowing other people whereas we have no clue as to who they are. Faith and time are required to know others as God reveals them to us. So there is need for us to know God through faith in His word before we can attempt to know someone else. Surprisingly, sometimes we don't even know ourselves because we have relied on others to tell us who we are. Suppose I ask you (Mt Traveler Church family members), I have now been with you for almost thirteen years, how many of you can truly say they know me? Most of you would say, of course you are the pastor here but how many of you really know I am your pastor? In fact, some people may response that you are that preacher from Africa with a funny accent. Others would say you are that strict and unapproachable pastor. While others would say you are that inflexible pastor that disgraces people openly by exposing their wrong in the public. But let me assure you, unless the spirit of God reveals to you who I am, you will never know me as the shepherd appointed for Mt Traveler at this time for this generation to get it ready for Bridegroom's return.

Similarly, Jesus had been preparing His disciples for several years on how to carry on the work of building the Kingdom of God after He returns to the Father. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus went from place to place teaching about the Kingdom of God which He had established. Then He came to Caesarea Philippi and at that point wondered if the people as well as the disciples knew who He really was? And so He posed the questions: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And, "Who do you say I am?" These are the two most important questions that every human being needs to answer about Jesus. Once you can respond appropriately to these two questions, then you truly know what the church is all about. So as we continue with the overall theme of the "FINAL DAYS OF PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES, our sermon today focuses on "The Importance of Peter's Declaration of Jesus as Messiah"

Thus our text of the day reads: "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, [The Greek word for Peter means rock] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [That is, the realm of the dead] will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be [Or will have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [Or will have been] loosed in heaven." 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah." (Matthew 16:13-20).

This narrative of Matthew 6:13-20 is indeed one of the central texts in the Gospel of Matthew and certainly the central text for the existence of the Church as the messianic community known as the kingdom of God. It is here also that Jesus assigned Peter the high status and responsibility in the Church after His declaration of Jesus as the Messiah. You cannot be assigned a status and responsibility in the church unless you know Jesus personally; otherwise you will thwart the continual building of the kingdom of God. Jesus response recognized that Peter's understanding of who He is was the revelation of God. It was not likely an instant revelation by God or a human ingenuity by Peter but rather that the hand of God the Father can be seen in the process as He works His plan in Peter as attested by prophetic utterance and the powerful miracles of Jesus. In other words God's revelation of Jesus to us is a process that occurs as we learn of Him through His words and works recorded in the scriptures.

A few critical things to note before we wrap up this message: This is the first instance where the community of believers in Jesus is referred to as the Church. Jesus response indicated that Peter was the rock on whom Jesus will build His church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. In actuality it is the truth of Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ that forms the rock foundation on which Christ will build His church. The church actually belongs to Christ, however He had to ensure He put an under-shepherd, Peter whose declaration showed that He knew Christ as the Messiah. Therefore in this narrative, Peter's confession and apostolic office are the bedrock of the messianic community (the kingdom of God) or the church that Jesus claimed He would build. In fact the word church appears in this narrative and then in Matthew 18:17 but elsewhere the reference to the Messianic community is the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven throughout the Book of Matthew. The gates of Hades (realm of the dead or underworld) cannot overcome the establishment of the church because Jesus' death and resurrection secures the church. Therefore death and martyrdom cannot hinder the establishment and growth of the church.

The keys that Jesus offered Peter is Authority through the Holy Spirit. Historically, it is Peter who then preached the first gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost and led to the salvation of the first over three thousand Jewish converts to Christianity after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:17-41); and later on to the first Gentile converts (Acts 10-11). This implies that it is the preaching of the gospel that brings about growth of the church. The same authority is given to the pastors (ministers) who know Jesus and have been filled with the Holy Spirit. These genuine pastors (ministers) are the under-shepherds who God gives them the responsibility to shepherd His flock and continue to build His church that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. The authority is for the shepherd to bind and loose. Binding and loosing were rabbinic expressions in the Jewish tradition with a variety of usage but fundamentally it involves including and excluding people from the Messianic community, and setting rules for the behavior of the community. It is the apostles, beginning with Peter that the responsibility is given to establish the church and the community life within it. In Matthew 16 this has reference to Peter, but later this authority is expressed in regards to all the apostles (Acts 18:18). And it is the apostles that (through their preaching and teaching) authority is given to shape the New Testament church. The implication is that the pastors are the ones now with such authority to shape the life of the community of believers collectively known as the church.

The pastor (minister) must therefore preach and teach the gospel that Jesus came through forty generations, went about doing good, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Yet the Jewish leaders conspired against Him and crucified Him. He died, was buried in a borrowed tomb; but

early Sunday morning He got up with all power in His hands to validate that His kingdom message and Messiahship are a reality. And all who receive Him and His kingdom message have been given the right to become children of God that belong to His kingdom. I pray you would be receptive and responsive to this kingdom message and the Messiah, and then walk in faith in the newness of life He grants to all who believe Him so that you can reap all the benefits of belonging to the kingdom of God. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "Final Days of Preparation of the Disciples" is reflected in the following:

- **The Relevance of the Death of John the Baptist**
- **The Significance of the Miracle of Feeding the 5000**
- **The Importance of Jesus Walking on the Sea**
- **The Danger of Hypocrisy**
- **The Result of Exercising Great Faith**
- **Jesus Feeds His Followers**
- **The Evidence Is Already There!**
- **Warning Against Hypocrisy And Lack of Faith**
- **The Importance of Peter's Declaration of Jesus as Messiah**
- **And let the church say, "Amen!"**

Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message of repentance? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you exercise your faith and bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.