

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 18TH-19TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

SIGNS (MATTHEW 16:1-4)

MATTHEW 16 STARTS A TRANSITION TO THE CROSS

In the latter part of this chapter we will see the most important shift in this book, Jesus' move to the crucifixion. Starting in v21 Jesus started to blatantly tell His followers that He was going to "suffer many things...be killed and be raised on the third day."

SO, JESUS WAS IN PREPARATION MODE

Jesus was always teaching the disciples, but now He was going to enlighten them more in spiritual things and start to give specific instructions about how to lead the church.

- **The following of Jesus is both spiritual and practical.** We are to grow in spirit while also applying the teachings of Christ in our daily lives.

THE BAD GUYS TEAMING UP

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two different groups that made up the Sanhedrin. These groups were theological enemies, but they chose to partner because of their mutual hatred of Jesus.

- Similar to chapter 12, the religious leaders ask Jesus for a sign that He is the Messiah.

JESUS HAD ALREADY GIVEN A LOT OF SIGNS

People all over Israel had witnessed Jesus deliver the demonically possessed, raise the dead, heal the sick, and multiple other miracles. **The problem wasn't the evidence, the problem was the willingness to see it.** Jesus rebukes the religious leaders for recognizing weather patterns but not the Messiah they should've been expecting.

"AN EVIL...GENERATION DEMANDS A SIGN"

Jesus was referring to the people that should have known better. God does give us signs all the time (Rom. 1:20), **but arrogance prohibits people from seeing anything bigger than themselves.**

- Jesus would go on to perform the miracle of the Cross, the "sign of Jonah," but even that wasn't enough for the selfish leaders.

MOVING ON FROM FRUITLESS DEBATES

Jesus "left them and went away" because He knew the conversation wasn't going to result in the religious leaders believing Him.

- **Having a conversation with someone that wants to debate more than learn is a waste of our time. We must pray for debaters' hearts to be softened while we spend time with willing learners.**

PROVISION (MATTHEW 16:5-12)

FORGETTING TO PACK THEIR LUNCHES

The disciples should have packed food away from the feeding of the 4000, but instead they forgot and got to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in Caesarea hungry. As they were talking about being hungry, Jesus says, "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

JESUS WANTED SOME TIME WITH THE 12

Since the time of the Cross was getting closer, Jesus set some time aside to further train His disciples. His comment about leaven wasn't about food, but about subtle false teachings.

- **Jesus knew that hard times and distractions open up the door for false beliefs and lies.** Jesus wanted His followers to be alert.

THEY WEREN'T CATCHING ON YET

The 12 thought that Jesus was literally warning them about a leaven that the Pharisees would put in certain vendors' bread.

- **The disciples present physical hunger and worry about the future hindered their spiritual development. If we seek God first, our concerns will be handled by a gracious Father (Matt. 6:33).**

REMEMBERING GOD'S REPUTATION

Because the disciples forgot God's provision in the past, they floundered in the present. Matthew writes that, "Aware of this, Jesus said, 'You of little faith.'" Christians often have a terrible memory of God's past provision. **We must learn to trust God and know deep in our hearts that He greatly loves us.**

"THEN THEY UNDERSTOOD..."

Jesus was frustrated that after doing so many miracles and providing so much for His disciples, they still doubted. Eventually the disciples understood and their faith grew, but **it took some rebuking and chastisement from Jesus. It is the same with us! Sometimes we need tough love.**

MESSIAH (MATTHEW 16:13-20)

SOMETHING NEW IS HAPPENING

Jesus took the 12 further north away from the crowds to further clarify Who He was and what they were supposed to do. This is where the church is beginning to be birthed. Jesus is getting ready to leave in body and empower His followers with His Spirit.

"WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?"

It is possible that Jesus went around to all the 12 and asked this question.

- During the 2 years that Jesus had been with His disciples, they had probably heard every rumor and speculation imaginable. King Herod thought He was John, others thought He was Elijah and the prophet Jeremiah back from the dead.

"BUT YOU...WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?"

Jesus is personal. Despite what others thought, Jesus wanted to know where these men stood on His identity. We will all hear various thoughts on Jesus, **but the question is do we care to know the real Savior? Will we manufacture a god in our image or will we acknowledge the biblical Jesus?**

PETER ANSWERED FOR ALL OF THEM

Peter had been the unofficial spokesperson for the disciples, and though all were asked, Peter answers, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

- It was at this point that their faith was secure and they were able to articulate their faith.

Imagine looking at the face of the living God.

"JESUS RESPONDED..."

Peter was blessed because he was willing to learn the truth. It was not by some kind of physical proof (though there eventually was), but by the desire to know God that Peter followed Jesus.

- **To those with a willing heart, God will reveal Himself to them and the truth will start to unfold over time.**

AN IMPERFECT PERSON BECOMES THE "ROCK"

Peter had made many mistakes, and would make many more, but because of his allegiance and love for Jesus, He appoints Peter as the head of the 1st century church and part of the bedrock of the Christian faith.

- **God's looking for desire, not perfection. God knows we need grace and mercy and He is looking for faithful recipients.**

"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH..."

Jesus was creating an institution that would represent Him on earth when He left. We later learn that **it is only by His Spirit that we can represent His name, character, and principles because we are imperfect.**

- **Though we fail at times, the "gates of hell" will not conquer the true followers of God if we remain faithful to His Word.**

THE "KEYS OF THE KINGDOM"

Peter would go on to be a teacher of the Word of God and contribute to the New Testament. It is the teachers of the scripture like Peter that are the gatekeepers of the truth, and therefore the kingdom of God. **This is not just pastors, but all Christians called to make disciples. We hold the keys (scripture) to freedom.**

BINDING AND LOOSING

The terms "binding" and "loosing" refer to the doctrines of heaven that will be written down and communicated to the world by Peter and the other authors of the Bible.

- There are principles of heaven that if we claim and live out, we release the power of heaven on earth. **It is by good theology that God works through us.**

AN ODD THING TO COMMAND

It wasn't that Jesus didn't want people to know Who He was, but that He wanted people to come to Him with the **correct motives.**

- This is still an issue; many people come to Jesus not to praise and honor Him, but for selfish gain. It is not God's blessings that define Christianity, it is getting to fellowship with Him!

THE EVOLUTION OF A CHRISTIAN

It all begins with **a desire for the truth** regardless of what the truth is. If we want truth, there will be **signs** that lead us to acknowledging a God. The exploration of God will lead to His **Word**, the "Keys to the Kingdom." The Word teaches us that even the most imperfect are **called and loved by God.** The principles of the Word guide us as our lives become more **righteous and holy.** We then become **sanctified**, "binding and loosing" the principles of heaven on earth. As we grow in our faith, **others are touched** by the Holy Spirit in us. We as disciples go out and **make more disciples** of Christ.