

Jesus and the Sign of Jonah

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Date: 06 September 2009

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[0 : 0 0] open them to that page what page number is it 797 i guess all right keep that open because i want to go through this together we're in the middle of a series we're in the book of matthew and we're taking a look at the person and work of jesus and what that means for us as followers of jesus so just a quick recap on last week i talked about um how in the past in in the old testament time from the time that god called a man named abram out of a land he and promised him a a nation that that a nation would be made of him from that time up until jesus god's blessing god's favor god's god's the the faith in the one true god was contained in one people one race that race being the jews that god's favor and blessing had was put out in a particular way in covenant promises and blessings limited to those people and that those people had been given a land called the promised land a land that meant a lot to them theologically that it was representative of god's blessing and favor that they were a particular people in a particular land that was blessed by god in a particular way and also at that time the men though god has created all of us men and women in the image and likeness of god with equal dignity and worth and value the men of that time had elevated themselves above the women on on the spiritual scale that they would pray prayers like god i thank you that i'm not a woman that you have blessed me by making me a man and in that story last week we saw that jesus exploded out of that um restricted blessing of god in certain people in a certain place and he went into a land that belonged to gentiles and not jews and that he spoke to a woman and not a learned man and that he was in speaking there to a gentile to an ancient enemy of israel of the jews and that he blessed that woman and healed her daughter and that he also went on and blessed thousands of people up to 15 20 000 people by feeding them all gentiles all people who had traditionally been outside of god's favor in that particular way and it all pointed to the fact that the the the door that the sun was dawning on a new day in salvation history that god from from this point on from the point where jesus came on the scene that god would start blessing those outside of the jewish race people like many of us here tonight most of us here tonight that the fact that australians are here today gentile descendants of greeks and anglos and so on not jewish people the fact that we're here today worshiping jesus is evidence of god embracing all people all cultures you'll notice at the end of matthew 28 jesus says to his disciples go out into all the nations and make disciples of them that was an amazing thing that we saw last week that huge changes were starting to appear in the way that god dealt with his people in the way that god redeemed his people and tonight we're going to see that there's a bunch of people in this passage that just do not get that that fact and they do not get who jesus is i wonder if you've ever been at a party or after church or something and you're the center of attention you've got a bunch of people around you and you're telling them a story or a joke and you get to the punch line and they just everyone's just standing there like this they just don't get it they don't get what you've been saying at all this happens a lot i'm seeing a lot of it on your faces right now

it's kind of worrying do you know what i mean you're telling a story as clearly as possible you might have told it a few times and no one gets it that's how jesus feels in this story we're going to see the pharisees and sadducees these are very well respected very learned very educated knew their bible better than anyone else theologically trained men who do not get what jesus is about or who he is and it's because they're evil they've got evil hearts and they reject jesus and we see in his own disciples his own best mates his own his own students just don't get what he's talking about either they've been with him for so long and they don't get it because they're forgetful and because they lack faith so let's jump into it we're just going to go through it verse by verse so let's start with number one this is chapter 16 verse 1 it says the pharisees and sadducees came and to test jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven so as i said jesus has been outside of jewish territory he's been with the the gentiles the pagans the the people outside of god's blessing and

there he's been in a way welcomed by them and he's done miraculous things there and people have bowed down and worshipped the god of israel remember that and no sooner is he back into jewish territory but he's being rejected again that god's very own people cannot see who jesus is they're not welcoming him they've come to test him to trap him to get him to say something so that they can go and arrest him and kill him or just reject him or whatever but they've come to test him and so the pharisees this is weird the pharisees and the sadducees have come together to test jesus this is weird because these two groups of people didn't get along at all they're having arguments about all sorts of things the pharisees believed in the resurrection like when you die you're resurrected like we believe the sadducees didn't believe in that the pharisees had elevated the teaching of men remember two weeks ago the tradition of the elders they'd elevated that up to the level of the word of god sadducees hadn't done that they had huge disagreements they are enemies and yet they've come together to test jesus this happens a lot right this happens a lot in churches like this like it's a great ministry of this church we bring together enemies and make them friends in their common hatred of us right so we'll get because we believe in the bible and we kind of try and preach as honestly as we can we'll get really left-wing kind of liberal pro-gay people like that who will who are angry at us because we say things like sex outside of marriage is a sin and and sex is to be between one man and one woman who are committed to one another for life and so they hate us but then the right-wing people who hate the the kind of gay set they hate us as well because we have electric guitars in our service and and sing songs songs that aren't the psalms and we do stuff like that so we bring together people who hate each other in their common goal of hating us it's a beautiful thing and it happens with jesus as well um it happens elsewhere if you look up don't look it up just take my word for it luke 23 um luke 23 12 i've got it here this is jesus is about to be killed and uh it says the chief priest and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing him this is when he's on trial even herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him then they put an elegant robe on him and sent him back to pilot this is it that same day herod and pilot became friends with each other before this they had been enemies so they become friends in their mutual hatred of jesus and wanting to put him to death and this is what happened with the the pharisees and the sadducees they didn't like each other but they both hated jesus so they've come together for the goal of getting him killed and they come to him and they say show us a sign from heaven jesus show us a sign this is like so many of us today we ever come across people this might be you i'd believe in god if he just showed up if he sent an angel to me you know and appeared to me and said god is real i believe in him if he performed a miracle you know if the roof lifted off the church right now i would believe in god we are we are like this aren't we we ask for proofs we ask for signs and so they've come to jesus asking for a sign he's done so many signs he just fed four thousand fifteen thousand twenty thousand people when you count women and children with some bread and fish he's just healed a woman's daughter who was possessed by a demon that just happened you know a day ago let alone all the other stuff he's done that they know about and yet they still come and ask for more and we are so like this in so many ways what's his response verse two he says remember he doesn't mind coming back at them he doesn't mind fighting with them and he comes straight back at them and says when it is evening you say it will be fair weather for the sky is red and in the morning it will be stormy today for the sky is red and threatening you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky but you cannot interpret the signs of the times what is he what's he going on about here has everyone ever told you that that rhyme red in the morning shepherds or sailors warning red in the night shepherds delight it's an ancient way of telling the weather i'll give you a 45 second explanation i should have got vaughn to do this he works at the weather bureau but here's the thing right weather comes from west to east in most parts of the world that's how it happens here the weather comes across from the west to the east okay so if in the morning if it's red in the sky everyone's looking at me really hard i'll look over this way if it's red in the sky means that the sun has been rising in the east it shines across to the west and it's red in the sky because it's reflecting off the clouds so you know the west is over here now the west is providing the weather and there are clouds there because you can see the redness the reflection of the sun so the west weather comes along with the clouds we know it's going to rain red in the morning shepherds warning it's going to rain okay remember that red at night the sun sets in the west and we can see the redness which means there are no clouds blocking the view so when the western weather comes across there is no clouds with that weather so it's going to be good weather probably all that to say that that's how they interpret the weather back here before the weather channel and everything else and his point is stick with me his point is you can pick that sign

but you can't see the sign that's right before your eyes that being me Jesus Christ you can look up in the sky and you can tell if it's going to rain if it's going to be sunny what the weather is going to be like but the signs of the times that point to me Jesus being here as the Messiah you can't pick it remember a couple of weeks ago he said the Pharisees were blind guides they were blind leading the blind and everyone falls into a pit when that happens the people who knew the Bible that well knew the Old Testament that well with all of its promises and prophecies about Jesus who he was going to be and what he was going to do that this promised Messiah that everyone's hanging out for when he finally comes they don't see him they don't interpret the signs of the times they don't get it they're blind guides they can't see that the dawning of the kingdom has come that Jesus is inaugurating a whole new kingdom it's going to be a kingdom of redemption for all people across all nations and all cultures and all times and so he says to them an evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign but no sign will be given to you except the sign of Jonah and then he left them and went away if you know Matthew you'll know that he said something very much like this before back in Matthew chapter 12

Matthew 12:39 or 38 and following I'll read it for you because it gives us more context than some of the scribes and the Pharisees said to him to Jesus teachers teacher we wish to see a sign from you always asking for a sign but he said to them an evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah and here's why for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster so for three days and three nights will the son of man be in the heart of the earth the people of Nineveh at the proclamation of Jonah oh sorry the people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah and see something greater than Jonah is here here's what he means flesh this out a bit why has he gone to Jonah why is he talking about this sign of Jonah what does it mean here's the thing quick recap on Jonah

[14:12] Jonah was an irritable pugnacious irresponsible ungrateful disobedient prophet of God alright and God said to Jonah what I want you to do is go to the Ninevites to Nineveh this massive city one of the biggest cities in the world and I want you to preach to them effectively the gospel right that God is angry at sin and if they don't repent they're going to hell that's basically the message he was given to give and the reason he didn't want to go to Nineveh and preach that message was because he hated the Ninevites and it was fair enough because the Ninevites the Bible tells us were into kind of sacrificing their own sons and daughters they drank the blood of their enemies they were a dreadful people they were like Tasmanians right they were they were really bad people and what Jonah knew was that if he went and preached to them God would save them right they would turn back to God and he didn't want them to be saved so he rebelled and he got on a boat and he went the exact opposite direction towards Spain probably anyway the opposite direction to Nineveh and what God did was organise for him to get back to Nineveh so the sailors he was with on the boat chucked him overboard a sea monster

Jesus says or a massive fish swallowed him and took him back where? to Nineveh so he thought alright let's get this over with he walks into Nineveh he says God's really angry at sin you've got to repent he'll save you if you do then he walked off and the whole city every single person in the city right up to the king became a follower of Jesus became a believer in the God of the Bible here's why Jesus points them to this example number one the Gentiles are going to be like the Ninevites the Gentiles the non-Jews the people who these Pharisees and Sadducees didn't believe would ever have the blessing or grace of God are going to turn and repent and become Christians just like the Ninevites did he says you're going to see a sign and it's going to be millions of Gentiles becoming Christians I'll give you that sign secondly he spells it out here in this chapter 12 reading that just as

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights as the fish made its way back to Nineveh so Jesus when he dies is going to be in the ground for three days and three nights he says I'm going to give you two signs number one Gentiles are going to get saved in the droves evidence of that here tonight like in me and you the second sign I'm going to die I'm going to be in the ground I'm going to be completely dead and God's going to raise me from the dead for your sin guys this is the gospel you heard that word before the gospel the good news it's a message and it's right there Jesus Christ God's son in human form without sin should not have been punished for sin deserves no punishment no death no condemnation he chooses voluntarily and willingly to die on a cross the most humiliating excruciating painful death the word excruciating is from the Latin which means out

of the cross right so die on the cross is excruciating he chooses that and the subsequent anger of God and wrath of God and rejection by God so that you and me

Gentiles pagans rebels could be saved that's the sign that he's given these teachers that's the gospel let's move on let's go to verse 5 when the disciples reached the other side he's left them now he's left the Pharisees they haven't repented they haven't come to acknowledge Jesus for who he is and so he turns aside and now he's on his way to the cross from this point on he's on his way to the cross to die for us when the disciples reached the other side they'd forgotten to bring any bread Jesus said to them watch out and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees they said to one another it is because it is because we have brought no bread that's what Jesus is going through that silence that what what are they talking about

Jesus just started teaching them watch out beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees and they're worried about not having any bread is he talking about yeast because we don't have bread they don't get it at all the Pharisees don't get it because they're evil and adulterous that is they worship idols rather than worshipping God they're worshipping their own status instead of worshipping God they've rejected Jesus who is God's son that's why they don't get it but the disciples haven't got it because they're forgetful and because they lack faith let's see why let's keep reading verse 8 Jesus became aware of it what they were saying talking about bread and he said you of little faith why are you talking about having no bread do you still not perceive do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many basketfuls you gathered or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many baskets you gathered he doesn't want to talk about bread he's not talking about bread he wants to talk about something entirely different which we're going to see in a minute but even if there was an issue with the bread why are they worried he's just fed 40,000 people with a couple of lunchbox fulls of food and yet they're still coming back to bread they're thinking of their stomachs they're thinking of practical things they're so forgetful they've forgotten what Jesus has just done in providing for them are we like this how often do we forget what God has done in our life the miracles

[21 : 24] I'm talking about the big miracles name the biggest miracle that God's ever done in your life how about if you're a Christian the fact that you're saved that is the biggest miracle that's ever happened in your life if you're a Christian that's a miracle if you understand how sinful you are how evil you are in your heart if you understand how much God how much you deserve to be condemned and rejected by God then you'll understand that the biggest miracle in your life is that you're a Christian that God has granted you grace and belief and how often do we forget that we should be reminding ourselves daily of how good God is to us how we don't deserve his grace and his goodness but we're forgetful and so when we minimize how great a miracle it is that we're saved we start to maximize the little worries we have in life like am I going to get an A plus or just an A

I don't know I'm freaking out about this or am I going to get 90 in my T.E.R. or whatever it's called today I don't know what it is but these kind of things these little worries right down to what am I going to eat they become huge issues for us when we minimize the miracle that God has done in our life in saving us same thing here they don't have any bread and they're worried about it because they've forgotten how good Jesus has been to them and how powerful he is to work miracles to provide for them that's why he says have you forgotten how many basket loads we gathered up after I did that miracle he goes on how could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees he says it again then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees here's what yeast means we can be forgiven for not getting this they can't because it was common in that time to think of yeast in terms of evil there's a lot of kind of Jewish cultural heritage there but it's enough to know that yeast represented evil so what he's saying is you've got to be very careful about the evil that's in the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees these men these disciples were so used to hearing this teaching and soaking it up and just thinking they must be right they've got the theological degrees they know their bible he's saying beware of that because there's yeast in their teaching what does yeast do anyone make bread you guys know then right you put yeast in the flour and then you put it aside and the yeast works its way through the whole entire loaf Paul talks about this in his epistles in the bible and that's what evil teaching can do you start listening to a bit of evil teaching and pretty soon it works its way right throughout your understanding you start to have a bit of evil teaching at the front from the church and it starts to work its way right throughout the church

I start teaching you that you know Jesus was one of many gods and he wasn't really the son of God he was really an angel or something and pretty soon given enough time that teaching starts to make its way throughout the church beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees he's not talking about bread he's talking about being really discerning with what you hear and what you believe this is really important for us today I've already talked about Oprah once I promised myself I wouldn't do it twice but I mean this is there's a pagan chick in the Old Testament a false prophet called Orpah and I think they kind of got the letters wrong because you with me she's a modern day false prophetess with a lot of stuff she said and we get this throughout all of our media I mean every week there's something in the age that is completely sacrilegious and so what Jesus is saying to us is beware of the yeast of modern day media you're going to hear a lot of evil teaching and you've got to make sure it doesn't get into your system because it's going to spread and it's going to corrupt you we have to be so careful about this the

Pharisees lack understanding because they're evil and they reject Jesus the disciples lack understanding because they're forgetful and they lack faith I want to finish with this I want to encourage us we have no excuse in this church I've got to tell you we've got no excuse here to lack understanding I mean in a way the disciples can be an encouragement to us because they just never get it and that's how we feel at times we just don't get it and so we see them in the Bible and they kind of make it feel a little bit better but really we have no excuse not to get it I mean not to get the big picture about Jesus and the gospel what the Bible teaches us not here at this church you've got too many really good opportunities to learn all about this stuff if you're here tonight and you don't have a lot of understanding it may be because you're new and that's fine it's great to have you we want you to stick around we want you to grow an understanding it might be that you're not a Christian and then we don't expect you to know a whole bunch of stuff because the

[27 : 11] Holy Spirit that's given to us when we become Christians helps us in our understanding but if you're here tonight and you're just lazy like you'd just rather watch so you think you can dance than come to church or whatever you just can't be bothered coming out to a Bible study or a church service or you can't be bothered asking someone here to help you to learn the Bible better you've got no excuse for lack of understanding here young guys there are so many older men who I talk to at 8am on a Sunday morning here who are gold they've been Christians for 40 50 60 years and they just they get it and you've got no excuse not to tap into that get them to buy you a milkshake once a week and talk to you about faith right because they're not blind guides you won't fall into some of the pits that you keep falling into they'll guide you around that that's called a mentor it's called a spiritual counselor we got heaps of them here women same thing there are brilliant older women in this church that we should be tapping into as a resource to learn and to grow we have no excuse to be with that understanding so I encourage you particularly us

I'm talking about us our kind of generation stretching it here to include myself but you know that that block 15 to 30 that generation us we are really really hopeless at this growing and understanding being disciplined praying reading our Bible coming to things showing up regularly being committed to our small groups our church services we're hopeless let's just admit it repent of it change because we don't have any excuse I'm going to leave you with that uplifting thought I'm going to pray for us that God would help us in this to give us understanding to know who he is father I just want to pray for all of us here tonight and I completely include myself in in that group who is slack and who is lazy who lacks understanding and who has no excuse father I pray tonight that we wouldn't leave tonight until we've grasped the gospel who Jesus is what he did what that means for us lord if anyone here lacks understanding please give them courage to ask someone and not to leave until they know that father if any of us here just lack understanding in biblical truth in theology in in in biblical things lord please put it on our hearts to be committed to the the many many different ways in this church that we can learn and grow father for those of us here who are seasoned christians who have been around for a while and who have learned by your grace lord please give them opportunities to teach us who are younger either younger in years or younger in faith please give us the grace to accept that instruction lord please please save us from ever being like the pharisees who are wicked and evil and rejected jesus lord don't let anyone leave tonight rejecting jesus lord please encourage us to walk with you to follow you and to grow in understanding for jesus sake amen