

Finding Religion, Missing Jesus

Matthew 16:1-12

The Sign the Pharisees Refused to See

Matthew 16:1-4

The timing of their approach is suspect. Jesus has just performed another miraculous sign – feeding 4,000 people – and on the brink of yet another _____ of His identity, His opponents arrive again.

They demand a *sign from heaven*—not because they lacked _____, but because they _____ of what they had already seen. This was not an honest question. It was a trap, an attempt to entangle Jesus and refute his _____ identity.

Jesus responds not with a sign, but with a _____:

“You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times ...”

They could read the _____, but they were blind to the _____.

The “sign of the times” was nothing less than the **appearance of the promised King and His Kingdom** – The Messiah in their midst. And yet, they _____.

Why?

Because they were not _____ observers. Jesus calls them “*evil and adulterous*”.

- **Evil**, because He knew the real condition of their _____.
- **Adulterous**, because though they claimed loyalty to the God of Israel, they were _____ to His purposes, more devoted to their traditions and power than to honoring and glorifying Him.

And so Jesus refuses to give them another sign.

Instead, He offers one final, profound sign: **“The sign of Jonah.”**

What was Jonah’s ‘sign’?

Jonah did not _____ a sign. Jonah _____ the sign!

Thru _____ means God – in great mercy – *ensures* the delivery of a message of hope via _____ thru a flawed prophet to an evil people.

Jonah’s “resurrected” _____ was the _____ that he was God’s prophet.

And now Jesus – a far _____ prophet than Jonah – is here, and a self-righteous people _____ to repent.

And even when _____ of Jesus takes place – His _____ – they will still reject Him.

Using this encounter as a teachable moment, **Jesus offers the disciples a warning:**

Matthew 16:5-12

A recurring theme in the Gospels is the disciples’ slowness to grasp the deeper meaning of Jesus’ teachings. Here, they mistakenly think Jesus is talking about _____ bread, missing the _____ warning.

Jesus rebukes their lack of faith, pointing them back to the miraculous feedings of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21) and the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-39). These miracles demonstrated His divine _____ and _____, revealing that He is the Messiah who not only _____ bread, but is _____.

In contrast, the religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees is – like leaven – pervasively _____.

Jesus’ warning highlights **four kinds of corrupt religion** to guard against:

1. _____ Religion:
2. _____ Religion:
3. _____ Religion:
4. _____ Religion:

Conclusion: Don’t Just Find Religion—and Miss Jesus

Jesus *still* says:

Beware. Watch out for the leaven. Don’t let your faith be poisoned by pride, performance, or pretense.

True religion starts in the heart – and affects everything else!