

“Kingdom People” – Week 23

SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “The Resurrection changed everything!”

As we have studied through the book of Matthew, we have seen and heard some incredible truths regarding Jesus and the Kingdom of God. All of the events of Jesus’s birth fulfilled prophecy on multiple levels. John the baptist fulfilled all prophecy of the one to prepare the way for the Messiah. Jesus has faced temptation in the wilderness with Satan himself. Jesus has given the Sermon on the Mount and in doing so He taught with authority that was unlike anything anyone had ever heard before. He has cleansed lepers, calmed storms, healed demon possessed men, healed paralytics, raised a young girl from the dead, healed the sick, healed the blind, healed the mute, has cast out demons, healed a man with a withered hand, has walked on water, and in many cases has brought healing to those who have simply touched his garments and/or has healed from a distance based entirely off of that person’s faith in Him. As we enter into chapter 16, we come off of the second event where He has fed thousands of people from just a few pieces of bread and some fish. It is here, after all of this has already taken place, where we see the Sadducees and the Pharisees coming together to attempt to discredit Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from Heaven. What? Have they been blind to all that has been going on? Have they not been paying attention? How, after all of that Jesus has already done, can they have the audacity to still ask for a sign! Jesus lets them know that the only sign that will ultimately be given to them is the sign of Jonah. By doing this Jesus not only sets the stage for His coming death and resurrection, and the meaning and purpose of it, but also validates the old testament story of Jonah. In doing so He also validates the truth of all of scripture. What we will see is that these religious leaders are not lacking a sign, they are lacking surrender. We too must understand that we do not need a sign either. Every sign as to who Christ is has been given and in this the greatest sign that we have is His life, death, and resurrection. The issue at hand isn’t needing to see yet more miraculous signs. The issue is whether or not we will believe in who Jesus Christ truly is and therefore surrender our lives to Him and His word. We must take up our cross and follow Christ alone!

Scripture - Matthew 16:1-12 (read entire chapter for clarity)

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ² He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ ³ 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. ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed. ⁵ When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷ And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.” ⁸ But Jesus, aware of this, said, “O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹ How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Proverbs 3:5-8; Jonah 1-4; Matthew 12:38-42; Matthew 16; Luke 11:29-32; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25; Galatians 5

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

There are only two instances in the book of Matthew where the Pharisees and Sadducees join forces: once to observe John the Baptist, and here to question/test Jesus. That may not sound shocking to us, but it was. These groups didn't agree on theology.

- Pharisees: believed in resurrection, angels, and oral tradition. The Pharisees were not a political party and would live under any government that would leave them alone. They prided themselves on strict observance of the law.
- Sadducees: were often from the wealthy class, and they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, living with an attitude of, "Hey, this life is all there is, let's make the most of it."
- These two groups did not run in the same circle. (To give this weight, this would be the equivalent of Republicans and Democrats joining forces to question a newcomer who is threatening both of their standings in culture.)

The Pharisees were self-righteous, proud of being right, and eager to let everyone know it. They heralded themselves as the standard for everyone to attain—the most religious.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, would adjust the rules to fit their self-indulgent desires. Since this world is the end, do it your way.

Why have these two religious groups united? Because Jesus was more disruptive to their systems and followings than their disagreements. When rivals link arms, you know something bigger is happening. A common opponent always transforms enemies into friends.

Matthew 16:1 says they came "to test Him" and asked for a sign from heaven. Imagine that – the One who just fed thousands, healed the sick, cast out demons – and they want a sign. And they wanted a heavenly sign. The miracles Jesus had were not done in seclusion. It's not that they lacked evidence. They lacked surrender.

Jesus essentially says in verses 2-3, "You are good meteorologists, but terrible spotters of the messiah and connecting the prophecies with the person standing in front of you." God has broken His silence and is now, "God made flesh and is dwelling among you," yet they don't see. The ministry of Jesus thus far has been a glimpse of God's victory over sin, suffering, the devil, and his demons.

These two groups are not looking to surrender, but to grow more skeptical and deepen their disdain and distrust for this new miracle worker. Because if He is who He says He is, they will have to surrender their roles of cultural esteem. They would have to admit, "We need a savior for our sins, and we are not it!" Instead they say, "Give us more proof!" More proof?

Key Thoughts

In verse 4 Jesus replies, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." He then left them and departed.

Signs and miracles abounded in the early ministry of Jesus, but for some people, it was never enough. Likewise, today's culture demands more proof: The validity of scripture, the miracles of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus witnessed and recorded by witnesses in scripture and outside of scripture, yet the claim is, "give me more evidence." And until you give me more evidence, I'm going to live life the way I determine is right, because I'm not going to surrender.

The enemy, still to this day, wants us to be consumed with the what-ifs, the questions, give me more proof, yet the burden of proof for Jesus, his earthly and heavenly authority, has been bulletproof for 2,000 years from the shots of skepticism, doubts, and false prophets, legalism, science, and history.

Jesus has already answered these questions pertaining to the demand to give more signs back in Matthew 12:38-41 once again referencing that the only sign would be the sign of Jonah.

The response in both of these moments is interesting for a couple of reasons: 1) Jesus, by connecting the answer to Jonah, is giving validity to one of the most questioned stories in scripture, Jonah and the great fish. Jesus is affirming the authority of all the scripture. 2) Jesus is using the story they would have known to draw them a picture of what was to come upon Jesus:

- Jonah - three days and nights in the great fish.
- Jesus - three days and nights in the tomb (death, burial, resurrection)

The only sign any of us need is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Now they would have to wait a short time to see this come about, but even then, many of them would doubt. Nothing has changed. Still today, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is our only hope and salvation.

But at times in this evil and broken world, we tend to want to see a sign. Instead of surrender, we want control. We want another sign, something else to convince us. The question shouldn't be, "Will Jesus prove Himself through more signs?" The question should be, "Will we believe the sign He has already given?"

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted spectacle. Jesus promised a cross – and an empty tomb. And that sign still divides people today.

Key Thoughts

We have more evidence than the Pharisees and Sadducees had! We have the completed works and life of Christ - His death, burial, and resurrection. We have the church and the miracles of the gospel that have spanned thousands of years. We have the hope of the gospel message of life, death, and resurrection in our lives. We have the completed word of Christ in multiple translations, in multiple languages, and in various different formats. We are surrounded, even in an evil and adulterous world, by blatant movements of God in and around the globe. In our midst - last and even today! Prisoners have been set free - physically, literally, and spiritually. We have those who have been set free from addiction through the power of the gospel and surrender. We have children and adults who have come from broken homes in a broken culture who now call the church, established in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, their home. We do not need more signs, what we need is surrender!

Will you believe the sign He has already given? The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is your hope and salvation. Quit looking for something else. It's not there! Quit filling the hole in your life with another _____ (person, relationship, \$ amount in the bank, spouse, shift of season, substance, question regarding faith). Trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

As we step into verses 5-12 we see that this idea of looking for additional signs is not only in the heart of the religious leaders, but is also in the hearts and minds of Jesus' closest disciples. He graciously reminds them of his provision! But also moves them into a more important conversation. Choose surrender over signs. He warns them against the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees and in doing so is also challenging them to also understand that the only sign that will be given is that of Jonah. It isn't about the bread, the miracles, or the signs, but rather who Christ truly is. We will see later in verses 13-20 that the disciples, especially Peter, understand this teaching and realize who Jesus truly is.

It's been 2,000+, and people are still clamoring, still asking, give us a sign that the return is soon, give us a sign that you are still in control, give us a sign in the evil, broken, death, sickness, and tragedy-stricken world. Give me a horoscope! Give me a glimpse! Answer why my family is suffering! And Jesus has already spoken then and for all time:

- ...but no sign will be given except the sign of Jonah...
- ...no other sign, no other historical marker, no other solution is needed.
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is our hope and salvation.

Will you believe the sign He has already given? Today, surrender to Him. Confess your sins to Him and surrender, and he will restore you, redeem you, and comfort you through no other sign than the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Reflect & Respond

What are some ways in which you have seen or heard people in today's world demand to see a miracle or a sign regarding Jesus? When and how have you perhaps done this yourself?

Where in your walk with Christ do you find yourself still looking for signs and miracles rather than simply living in surrender to His life, death, and resurrection? How has looking for signs and miracles, rather than trusting that His life, death, and resurrection is your only hope, impacted your faith journey?

Jesus warns His disciples in verses 5-12 about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What is He warning about here? Why is it important that we, as His disciples today, also heed this warning?

Proverbs 3:5-8 reads, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." Where are you currently most needing to trust in the Lord and to not lean on your own understanding? As we look at the teaching from Matthew 16 this week, how can you begin to trust and surrender to the work of Christ more than leaning on your own understanding?

Leaven is a yeast that is used in small amounts to impact the entire loaf of bread. Just as a little leaven affects the whole lump of dough. The same kind of leaven tied to false teachings can impact our entire lives if not careful. What "small" compromises in our thinking can significantly impact our spiritual life? What are the "false teachings" in modern culture that threaten to leaven our devotion to Christ? To not see the truth of who He really is?

How does the truth that Jesus's life, burial, and resurrection, as our only hope and salvation, challenge you amidst your current circumstances? How does this truth bring you peace?

Read through the rest of Matthew 16:13-28. Here we see that Peter and the disciples begin to understand who Jesus really is and the importance of placing their faith in Him alone above signs and miracles (vs. 13-20). As we continue in this chapter Jesus says in vs. 24-26, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" Where in your life do you need to deny yourself and what does it look like to "take up your cross and follow Christ?"