

Matthew 16

Read Matthew 16:1-4: Why do people want to see miracles? Why do so many Catholics and others travel to see apparitions and seek a physical sign from God? Why are hidden codes in the scriptures more interesting to people than the fundamentals of scripture and following Jesus?

Jesus repeats the same message in this chapter that he told the religious leaders in chapter 12. Any time that Jesus repeats himself it is for emphasis. It involves the sign of Jonah. God is declaring that the wickedness of man has come to his attention. He uses the prophet Jonah to warn his audience.

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” (Jonah 1:1-2)

People want an entertaining sign about God; but the message here is about them. We are not God. We cannot clap our hands and tell God to perform for us. In other words, they look for wonders and feats for entertainment. God is not interested in putting on any circus side shows, or revealing himself in these oddities. Signs and wonders are frequently artificial; and used for deception. There is no lack of information or direction towards us required. God does not want to be perceived like a fireworks show, falling star or a mirage. We are not here for God to entertain us like our favorite TV show. He wants to convey that he is looking to us to move forward. More importantly, God does not want us to waste our precious and limited time. We can't toy with him, and merely be entertained by him as we see fit. It is like a parent who tells their child to clean up their room; instead of obeying they tell their parent to provide a puppet show. There is a fundamental issue to deal with. They are not taking God

serious. Even Jonah, the man of God was in rebellion against God; and was as good as dead. The message is: "Play time is over".

"Repent!" "Extreme and imminent danger of destruction is at hand."

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' (Jonah 2:1-4)

And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4)

In effect God is saying trying to sober up a drunken sailor telling him to "Stop it!" "Right now...or get wiped out for your wickedness."

Read Matthew 16:5-12: Jesus is instructing his disciples to not fall into the same trap as the religious leaders. The Pharisees were like leaven. Leaven is a way to explain sin. It spreads through the entire loaf (or from person to person like wildfire). Leaven makes flat bread inflate into a round loaf. Sin and hypocrisy cause a man to exaggerate the substantial content of their self. They desire to be big shots; but have nothing to back it up. Jesus is telling his disciples to never let the message become about them, or their exploits or accomplishments.

I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, (Isaiah 42:8)