

## Lesson 25: Review of Matthew 16:1-12: "Christ Alone: One Sign, One Doctrine"

Jesus was back in Jewish territory and the assault against Him intensified. Thinking they could trick Jesus into showing off the religious leaders demanded a "sign from heaven". He did not give them what they wanted but He did promise a sign; a biblical sign familiar to the leaders. Our lesson also covers the issue of one doctrine. The religious leaders held much power in the eyes of the people. But Jesus warned His followers to avoid the poisoning influence of the false doctrine of the religious leaders.

Let's unpack this interesting passage of Scripture in two sections.

### I. Christ Alone: One Sign (Matt. 16:1-4)

Let us be clear: Jesus is God's sign, and like in the days of Jesus so it is today: people demand another sign or many more signs as proof of God's favor. But, before we look at the verses 1-4 let me ask you, "If Jesus and His person, work and ministry is not *the sign* from Heaven then what could possibly exceed that *sign*?"

The leaders "came to Him and tested Him". Really it should read, "And, Boom! The Pharisees and Sadducees came pouncing on Him, pressing Jesus hard—as if they had their hands in His face." They came pressing Him trying to make Him fall into the "trap" they had sprung to capture Him. Why? You have to think about what a trap is used for. A trap is used to control that which becomes caught. So, you see, these leaders wished to "control" Jesus. If Jesus responded to their demands then who would be in control? Like the devil's attempt to control Jesus when he tempted Him in Matthew 4 so it was here in Matthew 16 with the religious leaders. I believe we would be safe in saying that the religious leaders were the devil's advocate here! There trap was tempting. It dripped with desires to have Jesus "do" something *sensational, spectacular, and special!*

But, consider this question: would they have believed Jesus if He would have performed for them? To answer this, consider Jesus' response to their "trap". Turn to Mark 8:12. Here Jesus reportedly "sighed" deeply and responded in the most direct way He could. Matthew records a scorching rebuke toward the religious leaders. He tells them that they are capable of reading signs; they can forecast and predict the weather. But yet, they refuse to see the obvious "signs of the times". To that He concludes by saying that *no sign will be given except the sign of Jonah*. Remember, Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a fish and, according to Jesus, He would be three days in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40). So, the sign to be given was the sign of His death, burial and resurrection from the dead! Beyond that there is no more awesome and certain sign!

This is true for our day as well. People seem to genuinely seek signs for belief but *the sign* has already been given! Christ has already died, has been buried and has been raised from the dead! What greater sign would you demand? I'm sure you are like me, you would, at times, like to see some tangible sign of the presence of God in Christ. But, friend, let me remind you and encourage you with this: THE SIGN, the sufficient sign for salvation, comfort, life, hope and endurance has been given through His death, burial and resurrection. Now, we can go to the Bible and read the testimony of Christ through the OT prophets and NT apostles as they testify concerning the Living Christ and be certain that Jesus is the God's Messiah!

### 2. Christ Alone: One Doctrine (Matthew 16:5-12)

Sadly, 16:4 concludes with Jesus turning and leaving them. O, how sad when Christ turns from the scoffers. But, we pick up the story on the other side of the lake, the Sea of Galilee. Jesus brought His disciples with Him! They are there with Him! I think this is significant because as we will see, though they didn't always understand what Jesus was saying and what He meant, Jesus never turned from them! He never turns away from His own (Hebrews 13:5)! Are you encouraged by this? I hope so!

This section builds on the previous section. Here the disciples miss understand Jesus' point. He warns them to watch out for the sensual nature of the teaching of the religious leaders. Their teaching was as Paul identified in Colossians 2:21, rules based on touch, taste and feeling. False teaching often zeros in on sight, sound, feel, and experience. But true doctrine, biblical doctrine focuses on Christ as the object of our faith! Besides, as Jesus explained to the disciples in 16:8-11, *making bread* (a great sign) is easy! But, like bread it benefits the participant only briefly. However, let us understand this: While signs only affect a person briefly, false teaching can warp and pervert the heart and mind forever!

Let's conclude positively by saying, if Christ is our true doctrine and if He is at the heart of true doctrine then let's be those people who immerse ourselves in the learning Christ!

Questions for Matthew 16:13-28: “Christ Pointers and Cross Bearers”

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain “A”.

Introduction to Matthew 16:13-28: In our last passage we saw the religious leaders receive nothing that they demanded of Jesus. In our lesson this week we will first see a beautiful scene unfold before us! Peter truly recognizes Jesus not with *signs* but through *revelation*! Peter, at this point, became the first *Christ-pointer* among the followers of Jesus Christ. Secondly, in our lesson we will be challenged along the Jesus’ disciples to be cross bearers.

2. Read Matthew 16:13-20. “Christ Pointers”: **A)** See 16:13-14. What answers did the disciples give Jesus? What do people in “our world” say about Jesus? **B)** In 16:15, how many times does Jesus use the word, “you”? Why is this significant? **C)** What about Peter’s word choice makes you believe that Peter was certain about who Jesus was without any doubt? How does Jesus say Peter knew this? **E)** What does Jesus mean by His statement to Peter in 16:18, “On this rock I will build My Church”? **F)** From 16:20, why do you think Jesus told His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ? (Hint: How much did they really know about the fullness of the meaning of “The Christ” at this point in time?)

3. Read Matthew 16:21-23: “Cross Bearers, pt. 1” **A)** What shocking news did Jesus reveal to them about what “the Christ” had to do? Be specific—What “must” He do? **B)** What does the phrase, “From that time on” imply? **C)** What is wrong with Peter’s rebuke of Jesus? What did his rebuke reveal about his understanding of “the Christ”? **D)** Who did Jesus address when He spoke to Peter? **E)** How do the words, “Get behind me Satan” indicate the nature of Peter’s rebuke of Jesus? See Matthew 4:10 **F)** In 16:23b, Jesus said, “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” What did Jesus mean by that? How was He describing Peter’s mindset, or rather the orientation of his thinking? **G)** Can you share an area where your thinking is not yet aligned with God’s thoughts?

4. Read Matthew 16:24-28: “Cross Bearers, pt.2” **A)** If Jesus is building His Church (16:18) what surprises you, then, from Jesus’ words in 16:24,26? What is Jesus inviting them to do? **B)** How does 16:25 flesh out in real daily living? (see Phil. 2:3-7 for help) **C)** Does Jesus say that we can love God and love the world? Why or why not? **E)** Try to explain what Jesus meant by Matthew 16:28.