

Finding Jesus in Matthew's Gospel

SIGNS and SINS

[Matthew 16:1-12]

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Matthew 16:1-12

The Demand for a Sign

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied "When evening comes, you say 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." They discussed this among themselves and said "It is because we didn't bring any bread." Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you 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 basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

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Where are we now?

BLOCK	NARRATIVE	DISCOURSE	TOPIC	END
Introduction	1-2	-	Infancy stories	-
1	3-4	5-7	Sermon on the Mount	7:28
2	8-9	10	Mission instructions	11:1
3	11-12	13	The kingdom of God	13:53
4	14-17	18	Community	19:1
5	19-22	23-25	Last days	26:1
Conclusion	26-28	-	Passion & resurrection	-

Key question for chapters 14-18:

What does this tell us about God's people?

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Two conversations with Jesus

- 1-4 with the Pharisees & Sadducees
- 5-12 about the Pharisees & Sadducees



Two lessons for us today

- Look out for **signs** [external]
- Look out for **sins** [internal]

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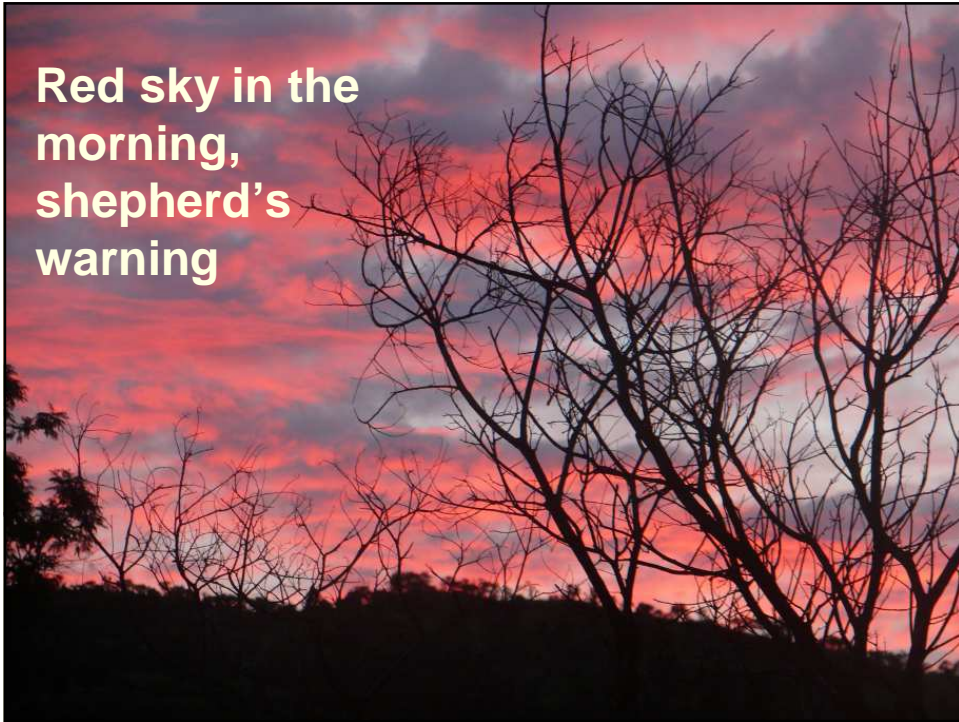
1. Look out for **signs** [verses 1-4]

- Pharisees & Sadducees asked Jesus for “a sign from heaven”
- Second time – see Matthew 12:38
- Was Jesus teasing? Signs in the heavens



Red sky at night, shepherd's delight

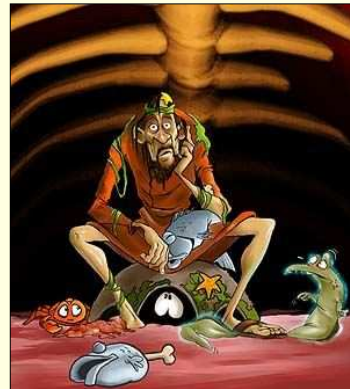
Red sky in the morning,
shepherd's warning



Signs of the times – then

- *Matthew 16:4 “No sign except the sign of Jonah”*
 - See Matthew 12:40-41
 - Jonah / Jesus
 - 3 days & 3 nights
 - death & resurrection
 - preaching & repentance

■ **Jesus is greater**



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Their challenge (1)

- v5 *"You cannot interpret the signs of the times"*
- Confucius: *"When the wise man points at the moon, the fool looks at the finger"*
- It's all about **Jesus**



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Signs of the times – now?

- Still the sign of Jonah
- Any others?
 - Matthew 24-25.



The disciples asked *"Tell us, when will this be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"*

And Jesus answered them...

- Are we looking?
 - Where? How?
 - What are we looking for?



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Signs of The Times



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Signs of the times – Matthew 24

- **Phase 1** [verses 4-6]
 - Popular pseudo-Christian cults
 - Wars & rumours of wars
 - "...not yet"
- **Phase 2** [vv 7-8]
 - Nation against nation (*ethnos*)
 - Kingdom against kingdom (*basileia*)
 - Famines, earthquakes
 - "... beginning of the end"
- **Phase 3** [vv 9-14]
 - Persecution of Christians
 - Loss of faith
 - False religions
 - Wickedness multiplied
 - Gospel preached throughout world
 - "... then the end will come"
- **What is "the end"?** [vv 29-31]
 - "The Son of Man will come"

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And also... 2 Timothy 3:1-5

- Signs in society
 - Times of stress
 - Love of money & self
 - Proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy ...
 - Hedonists
 - Religion as form without power
- Sounds familiar ??
- ***“Are we there yet?”***
 - Don't know (can't know)
 - But don't be surprised – read the signs

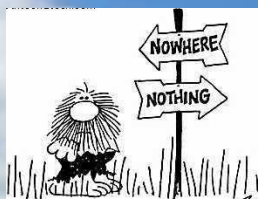
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Our challenge (1)

- Can **we** interpret the signs of the times?

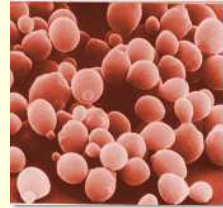
Remember, don't
look at the finger!

It's all about Jesus!



2. Look out for **sins** [verses 5-12]

- *“Beware the yeast of the Pharisees & Sadducees”*
- Discussion of two feeding miracles
 - Matt 14:13-21. **5000** men plus women & children
 - All fed with **five** loaves and **two** fish
 - **Twelve** baskets of left-overs
 - Matt 15:32-39. **4000** men plus women & children
 - All fed with **seven** loaves and a **few** fish
 - **Seven** baskets of left-overs
 - And the meaning is... ???
- It's not about the yeast! [It's a **sign**...]



More about yeast (leaven)

- Small amount added to dough
- Affects whole lump, transforms
- Works invisibly
- Needs sugar to feed on
- Needs to be kept warm



False teaching – then ... and now

- “Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the **teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**”
- **Pharisees** [*Perushim* = separated ones]
 - Devoted to obeying God and his word
 - “the dual yokes of God’s kingship and God’s commandments”
 - Apply scripture to every aspect of daily life (no sacred/secular)
 - Matt 23:2-3, Lk 12:1 “*preach but do not practice*” (hypocrites)
- **Sadducees** [*Zaddukim* = sons of Zadok]
 - Noble priestly caste, preserved & promoted rituals
 - Literal interpretation of written Torah only (no oral tradition)
 - Acts 23:8 Denied supernatural (resurrection, angels, spirits)
 - Sounds like 2 Timothy 3:5, “*form of religion but no power*”

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Their challenge (2) ... and ours

- Don’t allow a small amount of wrong teaching to influence the whole
- Deception (“*I’m alright – not like them...*”)
- Like the Pharisees or Sadducees?
 - Pharisees = rule-based holiness with hypocrisy
 - Sadducees = religious form but denying power
- Even a little? (yeast)
- **Beware** [pay attention]
 - Guard your heart



And finally...



- Look out for **signs** [Matthew 16:1-4]
 - The sign of Jonah – death & resurrection
 - The signs of the times – the end of the age
 - Do we see them? Can we interpret them?
 - *[Hint: Don't look at the finger. It's all about Jesus!]*

- Look out for **sins** [Matthew 16:5-12]
 - False teaching (even small amount)
 - “rules + hypocrisy” = Pharisees
 - “religion – power” = Sadducees
 - Be on your guard

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