

Matt ch 16 vs. 1-12

The sign of the prophet Jonah

Now to bring you into an awareness of what's going on here, ch 15 speaks of the necessity of the heart being right with God. and That defilement or becoming unclean before God isn't so much an outward action, as it is the inward attitude from which the action sprang. Why, because God's not looking to the physical; He's searching your heart, and here's why, it's possible to harness your outward behavior and seem real religious and yet your heart be nowhere near God. That was the case with the Pharisees, Jesus said, you draw near to Me with your mouth and honor Me with your lips but your *heart* is far from Me. And it's pointless to try and be an upright and moral individual in order to please God with out giving Him your heart. Because the bible says that our righteousness before the Lord is as filthy rags.

So if you're trying to be right with God on the basis of what you do or don't do, you're in essences saying that the sacrifice of Gods only Son wasn't necessary for you and you may as well be spitting upon the work of the cross. But Jesus said, I am the way the truth and the life and that no man gets to the Father but by Me. So no amount of good works will get you to heaven, so why do we do good works then as believers? Because they're a natural by-product of Christ dwelling in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, that takes me back to what I was saying a second ago, you can do right things with out Jesus getting your heart.

I know a lot of "good people" but that's irrelevant, but when Jesus has your heart, then He gets the rest of you to. You can be reformed outwardly with out being changed in your heart, but it's impossible to give God your heart inwardly with out being transformed outwardly. You see there's a difference in legalistic works, and letting the Love of Christ flow out of you spilling out in doing good, one is motivated by the flesh, the other is the overflow of the love of God.

So whether I'm clean or unclean before God has nothing to do with my outward appearance, (my hair, my clothes, the foods I eat, or the foods I don't eat.) But it has everything to do with where's my heart at with God, if you're heart is constantly full of hatred, jealousies, selfish ambitions, perversion, or lust, evil thoughts, or bitterness, and things of that nature, you're not right with God. But if you've received Jesus Christ as you're personal Lord and Savior, then hey you've become a "*new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" And there should be evidence of that in your life, by the way you live, the way you act, and the way you speak, not that you'll be sinless because that won't happen until you're face to face with Jesus. But you're being transformed by the renewing of your mind and by the washing of the water of the word into His image from glory to glory, sinning less and less just as by the Spirit of the Lord. So ch 15 stands as a powerful text whereby Jesus educates us on the importance of the position of the heart. and We also see in ch 15 the feeding (not of the 5000) but of the 4000 and we read in vs 39 of ch 4 that after they had eaten, He...

Vs1-4

So once again the Pharisees and the Sadducees enter the picture, and it's interesting to me to see these guys teaming up on the Lord because as far as the beliefs of these 2 parties, they really couldn't of been a whole lot more opposed to one another. and They were far from friendly with each other, the Pharisees were the traditionalist observing not only the law, but as we observed last week even the traditions of the elders. and If you didn't observe all of their interpretations of the law, (which believe me there were volumes of those kinds of books,) then as far as they were concerned that's as good as breaking the law itself. The Sadducees on the other hand didn't observe any of the traditions, they were the religious liberals and if it wasn't written in the Mosaic Law, they didn't acknowledge it, and that type of mentality infuriated the Pharisees.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, angels, spirits, and all of that as to where the Sadducees didn't believe in any of that stuff. And the list goes on but suffice it to say that they didn't see eye to eye on just about everything, but they both were able to agree on 1 thing and that's that neither party liked Jesus. And so they were apparently able to lay their own differences aside long enough to hook up in their endeavor to discredit Jesus and show Him as a heretic. And they asked for, or requested a sign from Him. Now what's interesting is that up to this point all He's been doing is giving signs, He gave 10 specific miracles in ch 8-9 that showed His power and authority over every conceivable area imaginable. He's fed 10-20,000 people twice and now these guys want to see a sign, it's like hello; I see that the lights are on but is there anyone home. But they want to see a sign from *heaven*, in other words something that proves beyond all shadow of a doubt that God is with Him. What exactly they had in mind we're not told, maybe fire called down from heaven, maybe a few of the plagues rained down on the gentiles, who knows. But needless to say they want something bigger and better than what He's done so far. Others have claimed to be healers, so that's not that big of a deal apparently, and so they're demanding that He accredit Himself with some spectacular marvel.

I find the word "testing" here in vs 1 sort of interesting because it's the same word that's used in the description of when Satan came to test Jesus in the wilderness. and So they're testing Him in such a way that they aren't looking to see if He's genuinely the Messiah, they're trying to show everyone else that He's not by discrediting His claims or His ability. In other words they never thought that Jesus could give them the type of sign they were asking for in the 1st place. They were really trying to force Him to prove Himself, all the while not believing He could do what they asked anyway.

You'll never see Jesus doing the miraculous in order to prove Himself, God doesn't need to prove Himself, He knows who He is. and Whether you believe it or not is irrelevant to the fact that He's still God, whether we believe it or not. But He doesn't give them what they want here, why Deut 6:16 "*You shall not tempt the LORD your God*" and that's exactly what they're doing, tempting the Lord to prove Himself according to their standards. Instead, He gives them a very simple illustration to show them (even though they're supposed to be the religious leaders of Israel) their own lack of spiritual discernment.

(Read vs 2-3)

Maybe you've heard the phrase, red sky at night sailors delight, red sky in the morning, sailors take warning. Jesus said, look you guys have all these nifty little ways of discerning the weather and what's going on around you in the physical. They had just asked for a sign from heaven, and so continuing on with their own line of reasoning He's like; speaking of the heavens how is it that you know how to determine what's going on in the sky, but you can't discern what's happening spiritually right in front of your face? The very fact that they asked for a sign shows their lack of ability to discern the signs of the times, they can discern the signs of the skies, but not the signs of the times and Jesus rebukes them for that. Why, because they should've known what was happening, and if these "religious scholars" had been up on their studies they would've known that the Messiah was on the scene, and Jesus was the only one who fit the criterion. You see in the book of Daniel it says quite plainly in 9:25 "*Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.*" In other words 7, 7 yr periods and 62, 7 yr periods which if you do your math you find out that in exactly 483yrs after the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah would come.

He stood right in front of their faces and they couldn't even see it, they were blind, and because of that Jesus rebuked them. I wonder that as we look around today and as we study the scriptures and discern the times in which we live how it is that so many people are blind to the soon return of Jesus. We study the weather and can discern what's going to happen due to the atmospheric pressures and the cold fronts and warm fronts and all the various things and yet so many people *aren't* up on the scriptures and they're blind to the return of Jesus. And they'll be rebuked by the Lord even as the 5 foolish virgins were in the parable of the 10 virgins that we read of in the 1st 13 vs of Matt and they won't enter into the Kingdom. Don't be lulled to sleep, look around you, we're ripe for the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ as He takes His bride unto Himself, and believe me when I tell you, that you want the 1st train out. But continuing on He said (vs 4).

So His response is basically identical to the response that He gave them last time in Matt 12:38,39. and The adulterous generation is basically one who claims to know God but then walks in ways that are contrary to God. Because God looks upon His relationship with His people as one that is very intimate, like a marriage relationship. And anytime God's people walk contrary to Him; He considers it spiritual adultery. So a people that professes to know God and yet walks in wickedness and are enslaved to their own appetites and desires is a spiritually adulterous generation. Much like the United States today, that nation was founded on godly principals and God honored that and we became strong. But to the degree that God is pushed out of that place of centrality in a nation, is proportionate to the degree that you will see that nation decline. And it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the United States is on a massive downward spiral.

Why, because we've pushed God out of the central focus of the nation. We've come to trust in our own power and wealth and have turned our backs on God, who was so gracious in establishing us in those things. Deut 8: says that if "*you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'* ", and that "*if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.*" To turn your back on the lord is to invite His destruction, and I Believe that the only reason that the USA hasn't experienced that yet is out of His grace for the sake of His remnant that are still seeking Him with all their hearts. God is sparing the wicked for the sake of the righteous, and we see that all throughout the scriptures. But believe me when I tell you that unless my nation repents we to will experience God's judgment, God owes nothing to the USA and the same God who has blessed us so abundantly can remove that hedge, and we will fall.

(Vs 4)

The sign of the prophet Jonah, is the sign of His death, burial, and resurrection. That's the one sign that He guaranteed them as absolute proof that He was the Son of God, that even as Jonah was swallowed up, and taken to the bottom of the deep in the belly of that great sea creature. And then was spewed out 3 days later, Even so Jesus would be killed (Swallowed up in death) going even into the heart of the earth, preaching peace and comfort to those in Abraham's bosom, and then 3days later, death unable to keep Him down, He would rise again defeating death. Death now being swallowed up in victory." "*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*" Jesus Christ tasted death so that we don't have to; He suffered the penalty of yours and my sin so that we don't have to. He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*"

That's the question that Jesus is still asking today, do you believe it? Because all eternity ways in the balance, the sign of the prophet Jonah, The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that's the evidence that He submits to you that He is everything that He said He is. The only begotten Son of God, the Lamb of God sent forth out of all time and eternity to bear the shame and reproach of our sin, shedding His blood for the remission of our sin. The bible says that the atonement for the soul is in the blood, the atonement for your soul is found only in the shed blood of Jesus Christ appropriated and applied to your life by faith. Jesus laid it all on the line, prophesying in advance that He would suffer the death of the cross, and on the 3rd day He would rise again. He not only prophesied that He would die, He prophesied the way that He would die, and how long His body would be in the grave and then that He would make a public spectacle of death by defeating death and taking hold of His life and rising again. He said, "*Destroy this temple, (in reference to His body) and in three days I will raise it up.*" And what He was saying was, hey, if I don't suffer the death of the cross, and My body doesn't lie in the tomb for 3 days, and then if on that third day you come to that tomb and My body is still there, you can throw all that I've said out the window and declare Me a heretic, and a liar.

Brothers and sisters that's heavy, I can't think of anyone else in the history of the human race who has dared to ever laid all that they were, and all their credentials on the line based upon the fact that they would be killed, placed in a tomb for 3 days and then bring themselves back to life. That's a serious stake to claim, who wouldn't take that bet? You're trying to tell me that if you don't hang on a cross a bloody mangled mess, die there on the cross, be taken down dead, wrapped up in grave clothes, stuck in a tomb and lay there for 3 days, not 2 not 4, but 3 days. and Then resurrect yourself from the dead, that I can throw out everything that you've ever said as a lie and discredit you completely? Yep, and if someone could do that I'd believe anything they told me. Now in a court of law it only takes 2-3 eye witnesses to establish something as fact, and yet the bible is very clear that there was over 500 eyewitnesses at one time, (not to mention the others that just saw Him here and there, but over 500 eyewitnesses at one time that saw the risen Christ. 1st Cor 15:6

Now what do you do with that? Jesus laid it all on the line with a challenge that's so humanly impossible, that only God could do such a thing, and He delivered. Now the ball is in your court, it's up to you to decide who He is, you can accept Him for who He said He is, the only begotten Son of God, or you can reject His claims, the choice is yours and eternity is in the balance. The evidence is overwhelming, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* Again, Jesus said, I am the way the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me. Peter said, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* The grave of Buddha, occupied, the tomb of Confucius, occupied, Mohammed's grave, no vacancy it's filled. The tomb of Jesus Christ, empty, you won't find Him, He's not there, He's alive and well setting in power at the right hand of the Father. Rev 1:18 Jesus said, *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.”* The sign of the prophet Jonah, was fulfilled in Christ what further proof, or greater sign could be given? So after He told them these things it says here that He left them and departed.

Vs 5-6

Now remember that leaven in the scriptures always stands for something impure and stands to illustrate for us a type of sin, and we always see it referred to in scripture in an evil sense, in both the old and NT. But it was what they used as a starter to cause their bread to rise, and it caused the rising by the process of deterioration, or decay. And what they would do is tear off just a little portion of last week's bread and mix it in with this week's bread and just that little bit would completely permeate and *influence* the whole loaf causing it to rise. and That's the way sin is, it just takes a little bit to completely influence and corrupt not only one person but a whole group of people. Paul the apostle in reference to a certain circumstance that was going on in the Corinthian Church said, *“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump”* In other words just even the slightest compromise can completely corrupt the whole group. And so Jesus is cautioning His disciples to steer clear of those who would influence the purity of the Gospel. But they didn't get it at 1st

Vs7

You see they misunderstood Him, thinking He was in reference to something material, literal bread. And it seems like people were always misunderstanding Jesus, because they were always taking Him in a material sense, when Jesus said the words *I speak are spirit and they are life*. But instead of taking His words Spiritually, they took His words for what they meant physically. Turn to John ch 3

Vs1-2

So Nicodemus comes to Jesus sort of by stealth, at night not really wanting anyone to know the questions that are truly plaguing his heart, matters of securing eternal life, how can I really know if I'll inherit age abiding life? and He begins to warm up to the Lord, kind of buttering Him up, but Jesus never went for that He always cut straight to the chase, and dealt straight with the heart. Why, because as I said earlier the position of the heart is what's so crucial, and Jesus maintaining eternal perspective didn't have the time to mix words. and So He cut through all the peripheral stuff here with Nicodemus and got straight to the issue that was on his heart.

Vs3-10

And then Jesus goes on to explain the process of how one is born again by placing their faith in the only begotten Son of God, that being Himself. But you see Nicodemus couldn't get passed the physical, the material, look at John ch 4 vs 5-15 You see once again she couldn't break through the physical, here she stood face to face with God the Son, and He's offering to quench the deep thirst of her heart and she doesn't get it. Finally Jesus winds up telling her straight out I'm the Messiah you've been waiting for look at vs 25-26 You see she was blinded by the physical, unable to break through the material reasoning into the eternal. Flip over to John ch 6 look at vs 51-66

Vs 63

There it is, Jesus just gave you the key to unlock those sayings of His that seem so strange to us. Leaven of the Pharisees? Living water to drink so that I'll never thirst again? and Then the clincher, we're supposed to eat your flesh and drink your blood? What are you talking about? There's no way that the carnal man can understand these things, why? Because they are spiritually discerned, the words of Jesus are Spirit; to speak carnally or physically wouldn't do anything for you, why, because the flesh profits nothing. Paul the apostle said for I know that in me, that is in my flesh no good thing dwells. There is nothing good about the flesh, it's the Spirit that gives life, and it's the Lords desire to strengthen and nurture, the inner man, that you might have life and that abundantly and so He speaks words that are Spirit and that are life.

Vs64-66

Why, because they couldn't get passed the physical, they were offended when He said they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood to live forever. Jesus desires that we have minds and hearts that are given over to the eternal perspective, that we're a spiritual people that reason spiritually. Not weirdly, or mystically in the Lotus position, but spiritually, that we might gain insight into His heart and His mind that we might be fruitful and effective in our walks and in our relationship with Him. Because God is a Spirit, and those who desire to worship Him *must* worship Him in spirit and truth. But so often we find ourselves like the rest of these people, hung up on the physical, even in our spiritual walk, what do you mean? How often we don't acknowledge God's blessing on our lives unless we see something come about materially.

The things of this world are passing away Paul said in 2 Cor 4:18 that "*the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" But how many of us don't acknowledge the blessing of God unless it's in the here and now? We should be striving to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust don't destroy and thieves don't break in. But all too often we're so eager to worship and praise God for the temporary things He blesses us with and we get all bummed and bent out of shape when we don't see those things. Eph 1:3 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*" how many times have you ever praised God for that? and Yet that by far outweighs anything that this life has to offer, but since we can't spend it on our own selfish pleasures here on earth, we don't tend to be quite as grateful for those things.

May God help us to crucify the flesh and be eternally minded and be ever grateful that the Lord Jesus has done exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think, in becoming a man, taking upon Himself the penalty of our sin and in return offering back to us eternal life. We offered Jesus suffering, shame, agony, shed blood, and death. and He said, "out of My love for you I'll take it", and in return He offers back to us joy, contentment, peace, and everlasting life. And all He wants to hear from you is, "I'll take it" it's a win, win deal for us, and all Jesus wants from you is that His death not be in vain when it comes to *your* life. But that you would take His offer of age abiding life that you might be with Him throughout all time and eternity because He loves you so much. But when Jesus perceived that His own disciples were hung up on the physical back in ch 16 He said in vs 8-12 The legalism on the 1 end of the spectrum, and the liberalism on the other, don't fall into those pitfalls, but maintain simplicity of heart, and worship God in Spirit and in truth.