



“A Sign”
Jonah 1:15-17; Matthew 12:39-45
September 14, 2008

Introduction: What do we really want from God? Most, if not all, of people's issues with God stem from what they want or expect from God.

What We Want From God

The truth is everyone wants something from God. What do you want from Him? Matthew tells us, *“then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’”* This appears again later in Matthew 16:1-4, when the people ask for a sign from the heavens, but Jesus says again then that they will be given only the sign of Jonah. As you read the Gospels, you clearly see a ripple of changed lives. There are numerous healings and deliverances, which today would be seen as miracles. Crowds followed Jesus to see what would happen. There were limited entertainment options then, such as no radio, tv, movies, computer, etc...The crowds only melted away when Jesus shared with them the true nature of discipleship, which involves self sacrifice and selflessness. Here, the religious establishment was asking for a sign, not because they believed, but because they did not believe. Is our sin and our selfishness getting in the way of our relationship with Jesus? Do we live and think as if we know best or God knows best?

God Gives us a Sign

Are we open to what God wants to give us? Are we hearing what He wants to tell us? Jesus says that the religious folks were not seeking God's will. The sign God wants to give them and us is that of the prophet Jonah. Jesus goes on to say, *“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* This refers to Jonah 1:17, 2:10, where we are told, *“But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights...And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”* In both cases, it is God who is doing something powerful. Some of what Jonah says as well is compelling, *“In my distress I called to the Lord, and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry...But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God...Salvation comes from the Lord.”* Jesus is using Jonah as an analogy for what God will do for Him. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and nights, so will Jesus be in the belly of the earth for that long. Just as only God could save and restore Jonah, so too can only God do that for Jesus. In fact, in this sign, in this miracle, in the resurrection of Jesus, we see the power of God. God can bring back to life those who

are dead. Jesus was really dead. Jesus is now really alive. This should not be a surprise to us, for all throughout Scripture, we see this promise. For example, in Luke 24:4-8, Jesus says, *“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations. You are witnesses of these things.”* The resurrection is a powerful and real promise to us that our God is a God of life.

Being Worse Off

Jesus links this sign with the health of our spiritual condition. After Jesus brings us freedom, we are invited to fill up our souls with Him, rather than what is bad (from the Evil One). Evil likes to return to where it has already been at home. Satan is really not that smart, and in fact, he is lazy and will return to his familiar places the Spirit of Christ is present in such a strong way that he is no longer welcome. God promises to be with us and in us. Do we seek to be with Him and live for Him? As Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20, *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the Law, Christ died for nothing!”*