



**Portion:**

**Title:**

**SCRIPTURES**

- Matthew 16
- Acts 23:7-9
- Psalm 3:4-5; 37:4

**SIGN ME UP!**

- Show Us a Sign...
- If ANYONE desires to...
- Wash, Rinse, Repeat

*We are a few months into the new calendar year, but it's not so distant that you don't remember that feeling. You know, that "New Year's Resolution" feeling that so many of you had. Maybe the most common tingly inspiration was the one to get in shape. So, what did you do? You hopped in your car and went gym shopping. Keep that sentiment in mind! Try to recall exactly what that felt like.*

*You arrived at your first "test facility" and an eager staff member showed you the ropes. You were just as eager to look around the place because you wanted to see if it was the right fit for your fitness goals. After your tour, the way-to-enthusiastic staff member went right in for the close! And rightfully so, it's not just their job; they believe in what they sell! "Are you ready to sign up?"*

*At this point, there are only three main options on the table: yes, no, and maybe. You've had a little taste of the facility, seen the*

*potential advantages and benefits, maybe even watched a few gym-devotees in action and they were looking pretty good. And you eagerly respond to the pitch; “YES! SIGN ME UP!” Or maybe it a clear “no” for you. There is nothing about the place or the offer that inspires a bite or even a lick. Then there is the standard, “I think I need to think about it a little. It’s got some of what I am looking for, but I did not see exactly what I had in mind.” Welcome to modern-day Christianity!*

*Many people in Christendom today view following Christ the same way they look for the perfect fitness facility. If they don’t see exactly what they are looking, everything that meets their expectations, they pass on the offer. Or, maybe the cost is a bit steep, or the people they encountered were not their “type,” so they just keep shopping around. If it’s not completely obvious this is for them, they will assuredly walk away to look for something else, just like they would in search of the perfect fitness facility, one to “fit their personal flavor and needs.”*

*In today’s study, Jesus calls those looking for a sign of their “perfect flavor Messiah” an “evil and adulterous generation.” This is precisely how so many modern believers either onboard and off-board their relationship with Christ. They are looking for a relationship flavor based on God’s performance in their lives, one that tastes more like a genie in a bottle. A gym membership with a*

*holy and majestic God named Yahweh, well, that seems like way too much work with way too expensive membership dues! If they don't see exactly what they are looking for, it's okay to just bail, right? I want to challenge you today with these sentiments from Jesus; "Are you ready to deny yourself, lift up your cross and follow Him?" Are you ready to say, "Sign me up!"?*

### **PROPHETIC SEED:**

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and **testing Him** asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' **Hypocrites!** You know how to discern the face of the sky, **but you cannot discern the signs of the times.** A wicked and adulterous generation **seeks after a sign**, and no sign shall be given to it except **the sign of the prophet Jonah.**" And He left them and departed." Matthew 16:1-4 NKJV

### **PROPHETIC FRUIT:**

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." Matthew 16:24-25 NKJV

# Let's Set the Scene: Portion in a blurb

## Introduction

Last week in [May I borrow Your Handkerchief?](#) John was beheaded, Y'shua fed 5000 men, plus women and children, and does so again at the end of the narrative, feeding 4000 again by fabricating bread out of thin air. He walked on water as Peter's faith is tested to the max, and multitudes were healed by simply touching His garment.

Then He openly exposed the hypocrisy and false doctrines of religious leaders, who taught and often substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God. He followed up by contrasting the genuine faith of a Gentile woman with the religion being practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, and the manmade doctrine to which they insisted others adhere. Y'shua continued from there to heal thousands. For an excellent understanding of manmade doctrine and legalism see [Religionship or Relationship](#).

This week we watch the religious leaders seek a sign yet again—this time to test Y'shua. We learn about their leaven which Y'shua compares to bad doctrine that can infect and fill everything it touches.

Simon is assigned his new name and we learn the distinction between Peter as the small rock and Y'shua as the massive Rock.

We see there is only one path to knowing the Christ and that is by the Father's will.

The unpleasant future of Y'shua's ministry is becoming clear and Peter does not like it. And Y'shua is not gentle in His admonishment of Peter for his resistance to the truth. You have to join Christ in the suffering that is coming. There is no way around it.

## **Matthew 16**

### **The Pharisees and Sadducee's Seek a Sign**

1. For the second time the religious leaders seek a sign from Y'shua; it seems this time to test Him, quite possibly because He told them once before that there would be only one sign (see Matthew 12:38-42).
2. Y'shua takes a different angle this time.
  - (a) He reminds them that it is a wicked and adulterous generation who seek after a sign, and that none other than the sign of the prophet Jonah will be given.
  - (b) But, He leaves out the three days and three nights detail.
  - (c) And He leaves out details about the repentant men of Nineveh and how the queen of the South (Sheba) was so easily convinced by Solomon.

(d) This time He adds a rebuke, calling them hypocrites for being able to predict the weather by studying the sky, yet not being capable of discerning the signs of the times.

3. Then He walks away from them.

### **The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees**

4. Afterwards, capitalizing on a concept He already taught them in Matthew 13:33, whereas leaven was used to describe how the message of the Kingdom would spread like leaven in dough—add a little and it rapidly multiplies until the whole dough is filled—Y’shua warns His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees—which is their hypocritical doctrine.

(a) Luke 12:1 literally calls, “the leaven of the Pharisees hypocrisy.”

(b) Obviously, the warning here is that bad doctrine and hypocrisy spread like yeast, rapidly and until all that they infect is completely filled with it!

(c) Much later Paul would tap this concept in Galatians 5:9 when he teaches, “A little Leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.”

(d) Unfortunately, they thought His reference to leaven had something to do with the fact that they had taken no bread with them when they crossed back over the Sea of Galilee.

- (e) He knows their thoughts and admonishes them for their wrong thinking.
- (f) Why would My lesson have anything to do with bread, simply because you are hungry and you forgot to bring some?
- (g) How could you so quickly forget the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand and how much bread was left over?
- (h) If we need bread, isn't it obvious that we can call it down from Heaven.
- (i) Bread is not the issue, the bad doctrine of Pharisees and Sadducees is! Then they got it!

### **Peter Confesses Y'shua as the Christ**

5. Y'shua recognizes that His ministry is spreading and He uses the opportunity as a teaching moment for His disciples:
  - (a) "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"
  - (b) The feedback He gets: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or another prophet.
  - (c) Then He turns His attention to His disciples. "Who do you say that I am?"
  - (d) Simon jumps in to answer; "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
6. Y'shua uses that moment to define Simon's inner-circle role in the bringing the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world.

- (a) You are blessed, Simon Bar-Jonah (son of Jonah)
  - (b) You, nor any other human, can arrive at this truth on their own; the Father must reveal it!
  - (c) From now on, you will be formally known as Simon Peter (Simon the rock).
7. What comes next must be appreciated for the nuance because it clarifies everything about Church Structure.
- (a) Pointing at Simon, Y'shua says, "You are Peter (Pétros)..." [literal translation...a stone (a pebble), such as a small rock found along a pathway.]
  - (b) And then pointing at Himself, Y'shua says, "On this rock (petra)..." [a mass of connected rock, which is distinct from (Pétros) which is a detached stone or boulder.]
  - (c) Simon Peter...you are a small pebble sitting on massive stone structure that I will build My church upon, and nothing in Satans armory will prevail against it.
  - (d) And here is what small stones can do if they stay planted on the massive rock...
  - (e) You will have the keys of the kingdom of heaven—authority to access heaven from earth.
  - (f) But by the way, it's not time to tell anyone any of this yet!

### **Y'shua Predicts His Death and Resurrection**



8. Y'shua then begins to reveal the unpleasant part of His ministry that awaits.
  - (a) He is going to be injured and eventually killed by the religious leaders.
  - (b) But, He will be raised the third day (at the end of three full days and nights, as per the sign of Jonah).
  - (c) Impetuous Peter does not like this news at all and actually attempts to rebuke Y'shua for thinking such things.
  - (d) Peter ensures Christ that none of that suffering and killing thing will happen.
9. Y'shua sternly admonishes Peter for his ignorance and arrogance! Here is how it works...lock this into your brain.
  - (a) Any movement or plan that denies or intends to thwart God's will is satanic and offensive.
  - (b) Those beliefs and plans are hatched in the minds of men, and do not come from God.

### **Take Up the Cross and Follow Him**

10. It makes perfect sense that Y'shua would then teach the need to deny ones own thoughts, desires and priorities and be willing to suffer, like He just revealed He would suffer.
  - (a) He even hints at how He will suffer with His analogy. "...take up his cross, and follow Me."

- (b) If you fight to preserve your life you are going to lose everything anyway—you have to give up everything and submit to His will if you want true life.
- (c) Besides, even if you gain everything the world can offer, what good is it if your eternity is damned.
- (d) Is there anything in this life more valuable than your eternal soul? No!
- (e) That was Y'shua's exact message to the rich fool who was obsessed with his growing wealth and his desire to build bigger barns in Luke 12:13-21.
- (f) You can spend every effort to grow your pleasure in this life and what good is it if your soul perishes in eternity?
- (g) In the end you will be rewarded for your choice to submit to God's will, to deny your own thoughts, desires and priorities, and your willingness to suffer for Christ.

11. Then Y'shua makes this bold Statement. "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Matthew 16:28

- (a) He is likely referring to His disciple John, who lived to receive the ends of days revelation we know as the Book of Revelation.

SHOW US A SIGN...

## 1. Looking for proof in all the wrong places...

### A. Challenging Jesus

(1) How is it that you cannot tell what time it is?

(a) Religious leaders looking for excuses...now we see two opposing ideologically religious sects demanding Jesus prove Himself to them.

1. “Then the **Pharisees and Sadducees** came, and **testing Him** asked that He would **show them a sign from heaven**. He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, **but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.**” And He left them and departed.”

Matthew 16:1-4 NKJV

a) As we have been reading through the Book of Matthew, it is rather apparent Jesus’ ministry has been gaining momentum.

- b) People are drawing closer to Jesus and these are the catalysts:
- 1) Healings and miracles!
  - 2) Preaching the Kingdom of Heaven
  - 3) Calling people to turn from a self-appointed righteousness to a righteousness given by God's grace.
  - 4) Moving away from attempting to live according to the works of the law.
  - 5) Surrendering to a born again relationship with Christ.
- c) For the first time in the gospel narrative, we read about the sadducees and Pharisees coming together in an effort to challenge Jesus.

## (2) Ideological Differences

(a) In the book of Acts 23:7-9 we find some clarity about why the the Pharisees and the Sadducees see things differently...

1. And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the ***Pharisees and the Sadducees***, and the assembly ***was divided***. For the ***Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all***. Then a great

clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him? Acts 23:7-9

a) Sadducees say:

- 1) there is no resurrection
- 2) nor angel
- 3) nor spirit

b) Pharisees say:

- 1) We believe in all of them!

## **B. Sign me up? Or Sign me Up!**

(1) The enemy of my enemy is my friend!

(a) Doesn't it seem rather interesting that two sects, who are so divided, gather forces to come against the Lord of glory?

1. The title for today's study has a double-edged meaning.
2. Question: Sign me up? Or...
3. Exclamation: Sign me Up!
4. The religious crowd (inspired by religion leaders) of Jesus' day had been demanding a "sign".
5. You might have heard it said, "Red in the morning—sailor's warning, red at night—sailor's delight!"

- a) The sadducees and Pharisees fall on the “Question” side of the equation... “Sign-me-up?”
- b) If they do not get a sign they can sink their teeth into, they will not believe the words of Messiah.
- c) ***Is that you?*** Are you wading in the shallow end of the pool waiting for Messiah to show you some type of ***“grand sign” that will propel your Kingdom work into gear?***
- d) Do you feel or believe Yahweh owes you that?
- e) Do you not believe the words of Jesus when he said, “Blessed are they who have ***seen and believe.*** But more blessed are those who have ***not seen and believe?***”
- f) Since when does a Sovereign God need to prove anything to anyone?
- g) Who is God? The one performing for the audience or the audience itself?

(2) We really have to love Jesus’ response!

- (a) An evil and adulterous generation ***seeks for a sign,*** but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

1. **The past proves the future:** Jesus' reply helps us understand that the *prophecy written and fulfilled* is the only sign we will ever receive.
  - a) Yes– from time to time we can pray for “confirmation” of God’s will, but that is not the same thing as what is occurring in this narrative.
  - b) The crowd is demanding that Jesus perform something to make them to believe, something they can “believe in.”
  - c) This is not the same as praying to Yahweh and asking Him to direct our steps.
  - d) Yahweh has made it evidently clear that whenever one of His children needs direction, they can most definitely ask for clarification and He will mercifully provide guidance.
    - 1) Trust in the Lord, and lean not in your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Psalm 3:4-5)
    - 2) Delight yourselves also in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

- e) So, don't confuse asking for guidance with what the religious leaders of the day were demanding of Jesus.
- f) Their intentions were improperly placed in the sense that they did not see the "Son of Man" as God in the flesh, but merely a "possible" spiritual being carrying a message for them. That is why they demanded for a heavenly sign.

### C. "Sign of the times"

#### (1) Dig Deeper!

(a) Jesus always causes the hearer to dig deeper in the understanding of what Yahweh is communicating.

1. The very reason we have celebrations of The Lord's Feasts (times and seasons) is to keep in step with the time table in which Yahweh is operating.

a) While we do live in this twenty-four hour continuum, we do also have seasonal changes in the revelation of future events already preordained by Yahweh. Things that WILL come to pass!

1) Jesus challenges the Sadducees, Pharisees and anyone else standing by to hear His words...



- 2) How is it possible to discern the immediate weather patterns, but not be able to discern the more important heavenly timetable?
- 3) For the believer, this ought not be!
- 4) If anyone should be able to understand God's heavenly timetable, it is the born-again believer.
- 5) Hint: No one can discern Yahweh's timetable who is not in a relationship with Him!
- 6) However, it goes without saying that this subject matter (the Lord's Feasts) more often than not generates heat rather than light in Christian circles.
- 7) In a spirit of humility, I suggest you learn to present your case to the believer and unbeliever alike and let Yahweh provide the proof according to His plans.

IF ANYONE DESIRES TO...

## **2. Sign me up!**

### **A. Membership Dues!**

- (1) The Cost
  - (a) What do you truly desire?

1. Then Jesus told his disciples, “***If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if ***he gains the whole world*** and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? Matthew 16:24-25 ESV

- a) In the NKJV translation of the Bible, the word used instead of “would” is the word “desires”.
  - 1) This is significant because in desiring something, it would signify a want or a need.
  - 2) The believer that wants or needs to follow Jesus has to realize what this means.
  - 3) It is not a good ole’ boys club where the benefits are handed out according to accomplishments.
  - 4) This verse has a huge amount of weight in the grand scheme of things!
  - 5) The believer is hereby surrendering all benefits he believes he is owed or deserves for being enlisted into the heavenly calling.
  - 6) John the Baptist lost his head and it was given to a pagan king on a silver platter at the behest of a

1st century “kardashian teenager” by flaunting herself to a committee of powerful men—all because he lived life with a heavenly conviction before he was ever born!

**B. What’s happening in your heart?**

(1) Denying oneself does not come naturally

(a) It is counterintuitive for any of us to deny what we desire.

1. It is much more common for all of us to do the complete opposite. But if we want to live out our heavenly calling, we must begin to practice the uncommon, not the common.

a) If truth be told, you would be hard-pressed to speak to a deceased disciple, who on this side of heaven, thought it was enjoyable to surrender all for God’s glory.

b) Now, if you spoke to any of those disciples on the other side of heaven, I am utterly convinced you would hear a totally different confession.

(2) Financial security or financial bondage?

(a) We can’t live under the belief that Yahweh desires for His disciples to live financially broken lives.

(b) As a matter of fact, I believe the total opposite.

- (c) While it is absolutely true that there are disciples today who will have to do life with minimal finances, while performing their heavenly call.
- (d) There are those who will be called to generate Kingdom wealth in order to propel Yahweh's work on the earth.
- (e) Unless you have been living with your head in the sand, there is no other way to provide for others without money.
- (f) Unfortunately, this world requires finances to buy food and clothing, the very basics of earthly living.
- (g) If your ultimate desire for financial gain is to hoard it all to yourself, and you believe this to be the heart of Yahweh for His children, I would have a real one-on-one with Him and re-discern this topic, as that is definitely not from Him.
- (h) How so? Read the verse again– ***"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if ***he gains the whole world*** and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? Matthew 16:24-25 ESV

WASH, RINSE, REPEAT

### 3. Conclusion

A. Read the entire chapter of Matthew 16 over and over again, until you hear the heart of Yahweh in its proper context.

- (1) First of all, the unbeliever has no business demanding anything from the Sovereign God of the universe!
- (2) Second, the believer can request direction from Him, but at the same time, should not be driven by signs and wonders in opposition to a vibrant relationship with Him in order to ascertain the signs of the times.
- (3) Third, regardless of your understanding of what is currently happening on the earth, you should still have willingly surrendered to doing His work in order to fully live out the last part of the chapter in our study...
- (4) "If anyone would come after me, ***let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"
- (5) How are you doing with "denying yourself"?
- (6) Is that not the hardest challenge you have ever faced? It almost equates to not breathing for some!

(7) How do you feel about this? Are you ready to *Sign Up*?

## QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

### **1. Why were the Pharisees and Sadducees asking for a sign in Matthew 16:1-4?**

- A. How did Y'shua rebuke them with His answer?
- B. What sign did He give them and why? (See also Matthew 12:38-42)

### **2. What ideological differences did the Pharisees and Sadducees have according to Acts 23:7-9?**

- A. Explain this statement: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.
- B. How does that statement apply to the Pharisees and Sadducees in their approach to Y'shua?

### **3. What will it take to truly follow Christ according to Matthew 16:24-25?**

- A. What are you chasing after that is preventing you from going after Y'shua with a whole heart?
- B. What is the greatest challenge you have ever faced that required you to "deny yourself"?
- C. What are you willing to surrender now in order to follow Christ?