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The Sign of the Prophet Jonah

Can you imagine people testing Jesus? This is exactly what the Pharisees and Sadducees did in Matthew chapter sixteen. They asked Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. (verse 1) Jesus tells them that they know how to discern if it will rain or not rain based upon what they see in the sky, but that they are unable to discern the signs of what is going on around them with the signs of the Messiah. (verses 2-3) Jesus calls them hypocrites because they can discern physical things but are failing to discern spiritual things. The only sign they would receive would be the sign of the prophet Jonah. (verse 4)

What is the sign of Jonah that Jesus is speaking of? If we look at Matthew chapter twelve, we see that the scribes and Pharisees had asked Jesus earlier to show them a sign. Jesus had told them then that the only sign they would receive was the sign of Jonah. In verse forty we learn what the sign of Jonah is...

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

The sign of Jonah is that Jesus Himself would be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. We know that Jesus is speaking of His resurrection from the dead. Though He would be placed in the earth of the earth, death could not hold Him. Peter makes this powerful point on the day of Pentecost to prick the heart of the people.

“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” Acts 2:23-24

Jesus could not be held by death. The only sign they would receive was that of His resurrection.

“... declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:4

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”. Acts 5:30-31

And finally Jesus said to Martha while speaking to her about her brother Lazarus' death.

“Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11:23-25

The sign that God has given to us from heaven is the resurrection of His Son Jesus from the dead. It is this fact that declares Jesus to be God's Son.

“... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** (emphasis sdc) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:9-10

STACY

Never Give Up

by Les McGalliard

Sometimes in this old world, we may begin to sense that we are being overwhelmed and that we are helpless in our attempt to call men back to God and to his eternal will. Let me encourage all of us to remember some basic truths that should motivate us:

- 1) God is still God! He has not left us; He has not changed! His blessings, expectations, promises and warnings remain firm.
- 2) It is not our job to force people to accept the truth, but, rather, it is our task to keep preaching the truth. The only way that truth is ineffective is if we allow the world to silence the voice of righteousness, or we begin to timidly question it. God demands loving but fearless messengers.
- 3) Make up your mind that no matter what the world does, you will not compromise with evil. Light dispels darkness. The only way darkness dominates is when we hide our lights. Remember! The Bible still says, go out from their midst, and be separate says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you." (2 Cor. 6:17).

Stop Taking God's Name in Vain

- by Robert Hines

You have been a Christian for years and it is a surprise to hear some of the things you say in conversation, things like, "Oh, my God, I can't believe it" or "My God, what happened" or "God, I'm so tired" or "Dear Lord, what a shame" or "Lordy, what a mess." Your friends are fairly confident these are not prayers and you're not talking to God at all.

You may not even realize what you are saying. It may just be a habit, your long time way of intensifying something you want to say. Whether or not you realize what you are saying, we know what it sounds like. It sounds horrible and completely out of place in your life as a Christian. It sounds like a cheapened worldly use of God's name.

You know that one of Israel's Ten Commandments is "You shall not take the name of the Lord our God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). You know that "vain" here has the idea of "empty" or "worthless." That's what your "Oh my God" is: using His name in an empty and worthless way, a throwaway word rather than the sacred respect the God of heaven deserves and requires.

This worldly use of God's name is condemned in Leviticus 19:12. "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord." The idea in "profane" is of treating something sacred in a common way, and treating something holy in an unholy way, a way that gives it no importance.

Such vain, empty, worthless, profane words are surely a part of what the Lord calls "idle" words in Matthew 12:35-36, words that do no work and accomplish nothing good. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment, For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned."

It is time for you to repent of such talk, and ask the God whose name you have profaned to forgive you and help you change the way you speak to the simplicity He requires. "Let your 'Yes,' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

You would think that as long as you have been a Christian you would have let the Lord get this out of you by now. But you haven't. And so someone who loves you needs to be blunt with you and tell you it's time to stop. You don't sound like a Christian. It offsets any good you have to say. Those who love you want you to stop.