

## **The Sign of Jonah**

Matthew 12:15-45

February 29, 2004

Peter Hiett

Preaching through the gospel of Matthew is a very challenging task because: 1) it's long and rich, and we can't get to everything, and 2) it's not Greek in its thought pattern. Greek thought is linear—two dimensional; Hebrew thought is more like a mosaic or a picture—three dimensional. So we have to let Jesus and Matthew paint the picture and trust they know what they're doing.

God is also painting the picture through our lives in this world. So each week I preach, I have to look at scripture and also at our world to discern the signs of the times . . .

This week the news was just jam-packed with controversy over the recent Mel Gibson movie. I really liked the movie . . . I just don't understand the controversy. This is how the movie starts:

[Movie Clip]: Mel Gibson is running through a cornfield looking for his son. He finds him staring down a row of corn.

Graham: Morgan, what's happening?

Morgan: The dogs were barking . . . woke us up.

Graham: Are you hurt?

Morgan: I think God did it.

Graham: Did what, Morgan?

Morgan turns his father's head to see the corn stalks flattened in a giant circle. The camera angle changes revealing an immense crop circle.

The movie is entitled Signs. Mel Gibson plays a pastor named Graham who has lost his faith in God because of a personal crisis: He watched his wife die pinned to a tree by a truck. Now he must father his two children without her. His son has life threatening asthma; his daughter is neurotic about stale water, so she leaves glasses of it all over the house; his brother is a washed-up baseball player, who lives with them as well. On top of everything else, he gets *crop circles*. People say they're signs, but he no longer believes in signs.

One night, UFO lights appear all over the world. As he and his brother Merrill are watching the news coverage on this shocking event, Merrill turns to Graham for comfort and faith. Graham says:

There are all different ways you can tell that there's someone really there watching out for us. You see signs. Sometimes they're little ones. You think of someone. The phone rings. They're on the phone. . . . Sometimes they're big, like fourteen lights hovering over Mexico City. Sure, there are a lot of people watching this [news] who think this could be a bad thing. But there are a lot of people watching this who think it's a miracle. A sign of God's existence. It's all in how you look at things, Merrill. What you have to decide is what kind of

person you are. Are you the type who believes in miracles and looks for signs, or are you the kind who just believes things happen by chance?

Merrill says he's a miracle kind of guy. Then Graham tells Merrill about his wife's last words as she died nailed to the tree by the truck: "She told me to 'see' . . . and then she said, 'Tell Merrill to *swing away*.'" Merrill's jaw drops, and Graham laughs and says, "Know why she said that? Because the nerve endings in her brain were firing on some old, random memory of a baseball game. There is no one watching out for us, Merrill. We're all on our own."

Well, the evil aliens attack, and this is how the movie ends.

[Movie Clip from Signs]: We see Bo looking through a window at Merrill swinging a bat at water glasses sitting around the house. The water burns an alien as Merrill attacks the alien with the bat. The camera shot changes to Graham holding Morgan outside on the front lawn. The alien had tried to kill him with poisonous gas secreted from his wrist. Yet Morgan was suffering an asthma attack brought on by stress.

Graham (holding Morgan's limp body): That's why he had asthma. It can't be luck; his lungs were closed . . . his lungs were closed . . . no poison got in . . . no poison got in . . . his lungs were closed . . . his lungs were closed. Don't touch him. Give him a minute.

Bo: Daddy?

Graham: Don't touch him!

Merrill: Graham!

Morgan: Dad? What happened? Did someone save me?

Graham (crying): Yeah, baby, I think someone did.

"Did someone save me?" "Yeah, baby, I think someone did." How? Well, Graham remembered the words of his dying wife pinned to the tree. Then he "saw," and he told his brother to "swing away." Merrill swings at the water glasses left by Graham's daughter. The water burns the alien. And the poisonous gas secreted by the alien to kill Graham's son didn't, because his lungs had closed due to the asthma.

The next scene shows Graham adjusting his clerical collar and heading to church.

So because of his wife's suffering, it was like he died, but because of his wife's suffering, he was, like, born again. In fact, everyone was saved because of the way his wife died on the tree. Then instead of a world with no signs or only evil signs, everything became a sign . . . because of the sign of his wife on the tree.

Well, it's just a movie, but it's interesting because:

1. Some say there are no signs and therefore no meaning.
2. Some say there are only *some* signs (a miracle here or a trick there). Yet that can mean whatever is not a miracle or trick has no meaning. If you spend your life seeking those signs, you're not spending your life seeking what the signs signify.
3. Some say the world is full of signs; it's *all* sign. It's just that people are blind and can't see.

Well, it's just a movie, and I don't get the controversy. You know, people act like Mel Gibson's movie is some form of *crisis*. So let's just read our text, Matthew 12:14:

*But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him. Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known.*

That's really strange . . . because healing them *all* is quite a sign in my book! He healed them *all*, but instead of advertising a miracle crusade, He orders them to "keep quiet." Why? If the healings are signs, perhaps the people can't read them . . . yet. Remember a couple chapters ago we saw that His healings pointed to something in Isaiah 53 about suffering and bearing our infirmities.

Verse 17:

*This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick, till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope."*

He'll be gentle, and He won't "wrangle" or "cry out" in the streets. That is, He'll be a bit different than your standard American pastor or evangelist (the Wranglers). He won't advertise well, almost like His sign will be His refusal of flaunting signs: The sign of no signs—like a "baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" is a sign, the angel said.

But (vs. 18 and 20) He will proclaim "justice" and bring "justice" to victory. Justice is the Greek word "kreesis." It's normally translated "judgment." It's where we get our word "crisis."

Isaiah is prophesying the coming of the suffering servant who proclaims *crisis*. Suffering itself is crisis. Suffering is the crisis of self-control. Suffering is the loss of control, because it's taken or perhaps surrendered.

*Then a blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard it they said, "It is only by Be-elzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand; and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."*

It does make some sense that Satan might *pretend* to cast out Satan, for we know he masquerades as an angel of light. Perhaps a momentary retreat might be a tactic. Well, unlike the Jewish exorcists, Jesus casts out demons with a word, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the kingdom—the kingdom of love.

Love is not a tactic but an actual presence.  
 Love is not a means to another end; love is the end.  
 Love is God, and Satan is powerless against Him.

God's presence is categorically different from what Satan can fake, for God is categorically different. So once you know God, you know what Satan can't know and can't fake. He can fake the *signs*, but not the substance. But now, if Satan is driven out and God is not invited in, you have signs without substance: religion without love, law without spirit, and the last state is worse than the first.

Well, whether or not Satan may pretend to drive out Satan, in verse 25 Jesus says that every kingdom, city, or house divided against itself will not stand. Then, *if*—a big *if*: “If Satan casts out Satan,” etc. Well, ask yourself:

- Is Satan's kingdom divided against itself? Well, yeah. Demons don't delight in loving fellowship with one another.
- Will Satan's kingdom stand? No way! In the Revelation, the harlot hates the beast, and the beast hates the harlot, and Satan's kingdom devours itself.

Come to think of it, have you ever witnessed a kingdom, society, or house in this world that wasn't divided against itself?—where there is no strife and no self-centeredness but every member always seeks the best of the whole?

Our society runs on division: the competitive spirit. Competition means one person wins at another's expense. We all desire to win and not lose; to lose is to sacrifice! No one *chooses* to be a loser, to be the last and least!

It's how we train our children. So they know an “A” doesn't count unless someone else fails. You can't be a winner unless you make someone a loser. You say, “That's only natural,” and that's exactly my point. The kingdoms of this world are fallen, and we can scarcely imagine anything different . . . from evil.

We've even explained life as competition: “Survival of the fittest.” Of course, it doesn't explain *life* but *death*. Life is cooperation; death is competition.

Yet death is the way of this world. So for my life to continue, I must literally feed on another's death: a plant or an animal. It's like there's a memory of a kingdom not divided against itself, but now all creation devours itself. You know, scripture calls Satan “the ruler of this world” (like an evil alien).

Well, I can barely picture a world that would be any different. My favorite philosopher wrote, “I can picture in my mind a world without war, a world without hate. And I can picture us attacking that world, because they'd never expect it.” Jack Handy also wrote, “Before criticizing someone, walk a mile in their shoes. Then when you do criticize them, you will be a mile away and have their shoes.”

Even when we *try* to be good, we're only good by being bad. That is, we can't even imagine a good that's not self-centered, that's not evil. We can't imagine a kingdom that's not divided. We can't imagine a king that's not corrupt at the core. So even if there was a king from an undivided kingdom, how would we see Him? How would we recognize His words? All we'd see, we'd interpret as evil, for it's all we know. It seems we'd be blind to any sign of His kingdom, for we'd be utterly blind to love. And if He came to our world, how would we not

utterly devour Him? For He'd freely give Himself for all. But if we did devour Him, maybe we'd see Him.

*“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! how can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”*

They are utterly blind to the signs of His kingdom, utterly blind to love.

They had just witnessed a blind man healed, but they are the ones truly blind.

They had just witnessed this mute man speak, but they are unable to speak. (They only speak lies, slander, and gossip).

They had just witnessed a demon driven from a demoniac, yet they are the ones enslaved to Satan.

I've seen demons and even Satan driven from people by the Word of God, our Lord Jesus. It is an utterly astounding and shocking thing to witness. The first time I saw it, it scared me to death. Yet I've come to be more frightened of Pharisees than of demoniacs.

Demoniacs know they're in trouble, and their sufferings expose the evil. Pharisees dress evil up as the good, like whitewashed tombs. They are all about signs but have no substance. They slander, envy, and gossip but advertise themselves as good. That's tempting to a pastor. But it wasn't demoniacs that turned Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus never said, “Beware of demoniacs!” He said, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.”

It's here that Jesus warns against “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus.

The Holy Spirit makes us see the

meaning of the signs—

what they point to.

There's great debate about what exactly “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” is. But most Bible teachers agree that if you're worried that you've committed the unforgivable sin, you

*haven't*. For the unforgivable sin is somehow believing that you don't need forgiveness; that is, continually believing that your sins aren't the cause of the death of Jesus; that is, rejecting the cross of Christ.

Well, whatever the case, be extremely cautious about calling things evil that might be good.

And now that brings up a fascinating question: Is this tree [cross] good or evil? What's your knowledge of this tree? Good or evil? Law or also grace? You know that the cross is a tree—the tree. Do you make the tree good and its fruit good, or do you make the tree bad and its fruit bad? This tree of suffering presents us with a crisis.

- Judge the tree good, and the fruit is good: an entire new creation.
- Judge the tree bad and the fruit is bad and all Hell breaks loose.
- Judge this tree, and you find it was judging you.

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign . . . ."*

Adulterers seek signs. (That is, they seek breasts and legs and riches and power and orgasms.) They seek the signs of love more than the beloved. They seek the signs instead of the substance, the signs more than the things signified. They seek the signs of love over the covenant of love—"khehsed."

- Covenant love sacrifices self for the beloved.
- Adultery sacrifices the beloved for self (sacrifices covenant love).

If a covenant lover is married to an adulterer, a heart will get crucified. Scripture says that God is, like . . . married.

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."*

The "evil and adulterous generation" will get no sign but the sign of Jonah. The sign . . .

- is not that Jonah prophesied (like Isaiah).
- is not that Jonah was delivered (spit up by the whale).

- is the opposite of what we would call a sign. It's that he suffered in the belly of a whale three days and three nights.

The sign of Jonah is the passion of the Christ. This is the sign of Jonah: [picture from the movie The Passion, of Christ on the cross]. Do you understand why there is so much controversy surrounding this film? It's because what it portrays is the judgment, the crisis of the world. Jesus said, "Now is the judgment (crisis) of this world." That's why critics are so divided. You may be able to judge cinematography, the acting, and some details, but you don't judge this picture. This picture judges you.

Do you make this tree evil or good?

Do you see the fruit hanging on the tree? Is He good?

1 Corinthians 1:22-24:

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The cross is the sign of the undivided kingdom, the kingdom of love and life invading the kingdom of division and death. Jesus is the way, and His cross is the sign. All other signs point to this sign: that there was no sign, that He chose suffering. He could have called down a legion of angels, but He didn't.

*Healing* reveals that He chose to bear our infirmities.

*Deliverance* reveals that He chose to bear our Hell.

*Prophecy* reveals it has always been His plan to suffer in our place, to reveal His love that we might believe and become the fruit of His tree, part of the undivided kingdom.

That's so good, yet there is no greater offense to the kingdom of Peter Hiett than the cross of Christ. On the cross I see love, and I see what I did to love. So to see the cross of Christ is to die to myself and trust love to save me.

I read that because of the charges of anti-Semitism, Gibson removed Matthew 27:25 from the movie. It's when the Jews cry, "His blood be on us and on our children!" That's ironic, because almost every night I pray that Christ's blood would be on me and my children and my wife. Whenever I can, I come to the table of the Lord and drink His blood. For I've seen His blood burn Satan and saves me.

Unthinkingly that pastor in Denver put up the sign this week: "The Jews killed Jesus." That is 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15. It was written by a Jew—a Pharisee—named Paul, who also wrote that *you* are a Jew and *I* am a Jew: a real Jew (Romans 2:28). For it's not a matter of signs like circumcision but of substance like love. We are the chosen people, the Israel of God, the Bride of Christ. And we've been grafted into the tree; we're even fruit of the tree.

So unless you claim to have caused the death of Jesus (the Passover Lamb), you're not a real Jew, and you're not a Christian at all.

Some people have complained that in The Passion of the Christ there's too much blood. On Wednesday afternoon as I watched the movie, I remember thinking, "There's not enough blood." I thought of my friend raised in the coven. I thought of all the visions in which Jesus had shown her that He was suffering with her—every wound, every fear, every shame.

- He suffered with my friends in Romania, China, and Mozambique.
- He suffered with Peter crucified upside-down and Paul flogged in prison. (Paul wrote, "I fill up the measure of Christ's suffering.")
- He suffered with prisoners in Auschwitz and Dachau.
- He suffered in Nazi guards as they saw their sins.
- He suffers in me and in you every day.
- "He has born our griefs. He was wounded for our transgressions. With His stripes we are healed."

And just think: The suffering we see Christ suffer on the cross is a sign of the suffering He bears there for the sins of the whole world. No movie could ever portray enough blood to demonstrate His grace. He bears Hell for you.

Paul writes that through Jesus, God "reconciles to Himself all things, making peace by the blood of His cross." That must be a lot of blood. He reconciles to Himself *all things . . . all things . . . all things*. So if we stand under the blood, perhaps all things become a sign. Perhaps His blood makes us see that "all things work together for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28).

In Mel Gibson's movie Signs, it turns out that the greatest sign was the one he was afraid to look at: his wife's death. His wife's love was revealed in her suffering as she died pinned to the tree, and it gave meaning to all things. When he read that sign, it gave meaning to all the other signs. He "saw" that there were signs everywhere. Even evil became a sign for the good, who is God.

When we come to the cross and believe God's love revealed in Christ on the tree, Jesus gives meaning to all things by His Spirit. But when we run from suffering, we run from the cross, and our world becomes meaningless. When we seek the signs and avoid the substance, the signs have no meaning.

The meaning is love  
and God is love  
and Christ is God.

Love is revealed on the cross.  
Don't be afraid to see.

Jesus continues:

*"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than*



*himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation.”*

That evil generation sought signs but hated the substance. They got their house in order, but they didn't receive Christ. They rejected the sign of Jonah, and their “last state was worse than the first.”

Sometimes I think America is like that. We love signs like healings, miracles, riches, prosperity, programs, buildings . . . We *love* the signs, but we don't read them. We love the signs but ignore the substance. So we're shocked at the sign of Jonah—the sufferings of Christ.

If we receive Christ, we become His house, and we are made His body. Now, if your body is broken and your blood is shed, then it's really *His* body broken and *His* blood shed.

He didn't come to take away all suffering.  
He came to make all suffering holy—to make it His.

You think your sufferings are meaningless, but when we share them with Him, they are wounds on the body of Christ, the glory of God, and a door to His kingdom. When we suffer in faith (no matter how small), we reveal the love of God. We are the sign of Jonah.

I used to constantly ask God for signs. And I didn't get any (I thought). One night in high school, I dropped to my knees and wept, crying, “Jesus, I can't believe in you any more!” It didn't occur to me until years later that I was speaking to someone who I said I didn't believe in. You see, I *did* believe. I couldn't help it, for I'd seen the sign of Jonah. When I ask *why* do I believe and *why* am I pastor, I remember one moment:

I was suffering in a hospital bed at Swedish Medical Center. I was in fourth grade. Doctors had just taken my left knee apart and put it back together. I've never felt such pain in all my life. It hurt too much to scream. I remember looking up into my father's face as he said, “Oh, Peter, if I could only take your place, I would.”

And I believed him. I believed he would, if he could. I believed he loved me more than himself, and it hurt him. I've always remembered that moment. Something told me that didn't come from the divided kingdom. It was the sign of Jonah.

I've seen it in you. Whenever you surrender your sufferings in faith, they are wounds on the body of Christ, the sign of Jonah to men and to angels.

My father said, “Oh, Peter, if I could take your place, I would.” Of course, my real Father *did*. He bore my Hell in Christ on His tree. So my sufferings are His, yet He still lets me taste them in this fallen world. I taste His suffering that I might know His love for me. It's a communion of suffering, the fellowship of His sufferings where I die and I live *forever*.

So on the night before the Bridegroom was pinned to the tree, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And having given thanks, He took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me. I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom”—the undivided kingdom.

If you come to the table, you're coming to the sign of Jonah. You confess, “My sins nailed Christ to the tree. He died for me. I claim His blood.” You're professing, “I want Him to live His life in me. I want to be His body.” You are surrendering your sorrows. You are exchanging your sorrows for His sorrows, which are miraculously transformed into garments of praise. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel and see it. Amen.

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You know, I haven't been called to preach a movie. I *have* been called to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I like the movie. I hope you go see it. The thing that kind of surprised me, though, was how happy I was. It was almost as if my yoke was easy and my burden was light. I've wondered about why that is. I thought of this verse last night:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15)

I think that once you go to a place like *that* [pointing to the cross] with *Him*, you realize that there's nothing left to fear. So may you "see" and "swing away." In Jesus' name, amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice [Greek: "crisis"] to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick, till he brings justice [Greek: "crisis"] to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope." Then a blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard it they said, "It is only by Be-elzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand; and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Matthew 12:18-28

"Then if any one says to you, 'Lo, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

Matthew 24:23-24

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

Matthew 12:30-32

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment [Greek: "crisis"]: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment [Greek: "crisis"], because the ruler of this world is judged."

John 16:7-11

There are all different ways you can tell that there's someone really there watching out for us. You see signs. Sometimes they're little ones. You think of someone. The phone rings. They're on the phone. . . . Sometimes they're big, like fourteen lights hovering over Mexico City. Sure, there are a lot of people watching this who think this could be a bad thing. But there are a lot of people watching this who think it's a miracle. A sign of God's existence. It's all

in how you look at things, Merrill. What you have to decide is what kind of person you are. Are you the type who believes in miracles and looks for signs, or are you the kind who just believes things happen by chance?

Mel Gibson as Graham in Signs

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Matthew 12:38-41

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather; for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

Matthew 16:1-4

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

I Corinthians 1:22-25

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment [Greek: “crisis”], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

John 3:14-19

Watching The Passion of the Christ is like taking a Rorschach test.

Ted Koppel

“Now is the judgment [Greek: “crisis”] of this world . . .”

John 12:31a

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

I Peter 4:12-13

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church . . .

Colossians 1:24

Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Galatians 6:17

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine.

Philippians 1:27-30

But as long as this world lasts and Christ's Church is in it, it is to be a militant Church. Although it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, woe to the Christian Church when it is triumphant in this world, for then it is not the Church that has triumphed but the world. . . . Did he not come into the world in order to suffer; is not that what he called being triumphant?

Soren Kierkegaard

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment [Greek: "crisis"], because as he is so are we in this world.

I John 4:7-17