

Seeking Signs

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you have your Bibles, we'll open them up to Mark. We're in actually chapter 8. We're going to be, we finished up chapter 7 last week. Continuing to look at the life of Jesus.

Like we've said before, Mark has less of the teachings of Jesus than you see in some of the other Gospels, but a lot more of the things that he did.

And Mark, it seems, is a book written not just to Jews, not primarily to Jews, I'll say, but it seems like he's writing to a Gentile audience.

People who would be less familiar with Jewish traditions and practices. But his book is really about who is Jesus.

The identity of this man, Jesus. And Mark is a witness giving testimony to who is this man, Jesus. And every year, usually around either Christmas or Easter, there's some kind of magazine, Life Magazine or something, that has a story about, well, who is Jesus?

[1 : 1 2] Who is this man? We actually did a series on that last, or earlier this year. But you open up the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And there you find who is Jesus. And we've just been going through verse by verse through this Gospel of Mark, asking those questions. Today, we're going to look at verse 1 through 13.

And there are two accounts in here. The first one is about the feeding of 4,000 people. Now, that may sound very familiar, because we just talked about feeding a lot of thousands of people.

But the story that we looked at was feeding 5,000 people. So we're actually going to breeze through that pretty quickly, because actually the story is almost, it looks almost identical, very similar.

We'll just look at a few things, because really we kind of covered the original miracle for the 5,000, and a lot of the details there. And the second thing we're going to look at is, Jesus has another encounter with the Pharisees.

[2 : 1 6] This one is fairly brief, at least how Mark writes it. But the Pharisees, again, they're not exactly thrilled with Jesus.

And so they ask him a question. And Jesus is not actually very impressed with their question. He doesn't really like it. And we're going to look at that. They ask for a sign.

They're looking for signs. And so this morning, we're going to be talking about that issue of signs, signs from heaven. But let's go ahead and read. We're going to start with Mark 8, chapter 8, verse 1, looking at this feeding of the 4,000.

In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with me three days, and they have nothing to eat.

And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way, for some of them have come from very far. Then his disciples answered him, How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?

[3 : 23] And he asked them, How many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven. So he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and he gave thanks.

He broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before them. And they set them before the multitude. They also had a few small fish, and having blessed them, he said to set them also before them.

So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about 4,000. And then he sent them away.

He sent them away and immediately got into the boat with his disciples and came to the region of Daumanuta. So again, this is very similar, if you recall, from what we read with Jesus feeding the 5,000 just a couple of chapters earlier.

There's just a few small difference, right? Instead of 5,000 people, or remember when they said the count was 5,000, that was just the men. The women and children were not counted, so it very likely could have been double that, or maybe even more.

[4 : 31] So we'll just look at a couple of things, and then a couple of differences, and then we'll move on. You know, one of the things that I notice here, why did Jesus do this?

Was it because he wanted to impress somebody? Well, that may be part of it. In fact, we're going to be talking about signs. Jesus gave many signs.

And this was definitely a sign about who he was with the ability to multiply food miraculously. But it says in verse 2 the reason why he did this.

He said, I have compassion on the multitude. They're hungry, and if they go home, some of them have to travel very far, and they don't have the supplies to get home without maybe fainting.

And that word doesn't necessarily mean that they just fall over, but just, you know, have some difficulty in getting home without supplies, without food.

[5 : 35] And so he just, he loved them and wanted to feed them, wanted to see them go home with a full belly. And so you imagine with the feeding of the 5,000, part of that was, well, hey, this is an opportunity to show my disciples specifically, but all the rest of the people, who I am, what I can do, that I'm really from heaven.

In this case, I guess there was a part of that, there may have been people there that didn't know who he was, had never experienced his miracle ministry, but his disciples had already seen this.

There was nothing to prove to them, no lesson necessarily for them that they didn't already have. It was mostly just about his compassion, his love for the people.

The only other thing different or thing to point out here is that with the 5,000, the starting amount of food was what? Anybody remember?

Five loaves and two fishes. Five loaves and two fishes. And in this case, there were seven loaves. And then it says later, there were a few fishes, however many that is.

[6 : 48] What's a few? Three, yeah. Everybody has a different idea, right? Because a couple is two, a few is three or more. That's how I go with it, but everybody kind of has a different idea.

The other difference, which is kind of interesting, but is that how many baskets of food were left over after the feeding of the 5,000? Does anybody remember?

12. There was 12. And we talked about that. What's the meaning of that? And I don't know. There's 12 disciples, maybe one for each disciple.

Maybe this was, you know, their provisions for the next leg of their journey. Who knows? But in this case, it's not 12. He still has 12 disciples. It's not like five of them, you know, went off somewhere.

He still has, at least not that we see. But there's a leftover seven baskets. And why is that? Who knows?

[7 : 49] I don't know. You know, maybe they started with seven loaves. So maybe, maybe the seven loaves were from seven different people. And Jesus wanted to make sure that he gave them back their baskets full of the bread since they gave it.

Maybe. Who knows? Sometimes I think people make too much of, you know, details that don't necessarily mean anything. At the same time, sometimes the details do matter.

Don't they? Then it says that he left for Dalmanutha. And that's the only time, really, that we see this location.

And looking up commentaries, nobody really knows where this place is. There's the same account in the book of Matthew about this feeding of the 4,000.

And there it says that he left for a place called Magdala. Magdala. And so again, that's another place that there's not really a lot of certainty where that was.

[8 : 52] Most places in the Bible, most city and the names of places, we can identify today very easily. We know exactly. Sometimes it still has the same name today.

But not always. So this is one of the few cases where there's a place identified that we're really not sure where this is. So there's just some educated guesses from scholars about this name and the location.

And since there's two names, you know, it's easily, you actually see this happen a lot of times in the Bible. Someone will say, oh, he's going here. And another person, talking about the same account, will use a different name.

But a lot of times, it's one person mentions the larger region and another person's actually mentioning the very precise location. And both are true. But there is one just little interesting note.

Magdala. The name Magdala, which is from the book of Matthew, from the account here in Matthew. Can anybody think Magdala? There's somebody who has a name.

[9 : 58] Yeah, Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene. She was a prostitute that trusted in Jesus. And it says that many demons were cast out of her.

That Jesus cast out many demons. And she loved the Lord. She loved Him because of what He did for her. But nobody knows this for sure, but it's just, you know, thought maybe that she was called Mary Magdalene because she was maybe from Magdala.

So just one little interesting note. But we'll continue on. That'll be kind of our coverage there of the feeding of the 4,000. But then we're going to look more closely here at the next three verses.

So Mark chapter 8, 8 again, verse 11 through 13. Then the Pharisees came out and they began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

But He sighed deeply in His spirit. And He said, Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.

[11 : 16] And He left them. And getting in the boat again, departed to the other side. A short little account here.

Matthew has a few more details. Luke actually has a few more details as well. All three of those Gospels mention this account.

The Pharisees came out. The Pharisees, we've just had, I think one or two, I can't remember exactly, instances of the Pharisees having interactions with Jesus up to this point.

In previous instances, it says that the Pharisees came from Jerusalem. They wanted to hear there was Pharisees in Jerusalem. That's the heart of Israel. The place where the leaders of the Jews were.

So that's a hotbed for the Pharisees and the Sadducees. But in this case, it doesn't say they came from Jerusalem. There were Pharisees all over. And so these were likely just Pharisees from the local area.

[12 : 16] Pharisees from the region of Galilee. But notice that Jesus never sought out the Pharisees. They came to him a few times. But he never went to the kind of the hot shots, the big guys, the leaders, the movers and the shakers.

And that's who the Pharisees were. Jesus was a man of the people. He just went to the common, everyday people. He didn't try to go prove himself to the ones with the power and the authority.

He went directly to the people. And he really avoided, at least until the very end. In the very end, he goes to Jerusalem and he enters Jerusalem on a donkey.

And he becomes very, very confrontational with the leaders of Israel in Jerusalem. And we know what happens from there. It says that they sought from him, they were seeking from him a sign.

What is that talking about? A sign. Well, they were looking for some miracle. Hey, Jesus, do a miracle for us. We want to see one of these miracles that we've heard of.

[13 : 29] Some kind of evidence to prove that you are who you say you are. What is a sign? You know, the dictionary definition of a sign is an object or an event whose presence or occurrence indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else.

You see a sign and it points to something else. Maybe something more concrete. We talk about seeing signs of life.

There's movement. We just watched it. We watched a cute little dog rescue movie last night and they thought the dog had died and the dog was just lifeless and then all of a sudden you see the dog move, you know, the little paw moves and we say, oh, that's a sign that the dog is alive.

It's a sign of life. And so they were seeking for him a sign. How do we know that you're legit? You're telling people that you are the Messiah, you're the one that has come that the prophets told us about?

How can we know? We want you to do a miracle for us. They said a sign from heaven and what does that mean? Do they mean they want like something in the heavens to see?

[14 : 57] No, I think this is just a figure of speech when they say a sign from heaven. They want a sign from God. How do we know that you are from God? And then it says this that they did this to test him.

To test him. We want to use this as a test to prove who you are. And here is how Jesus responded.

It says, but he sighed deeply in his spirit. We just saw this last week, didn't we?

With the deaf man. And the same word for sigh, it also can be translated to groan. To groan. With the deaf man that we looked at last week, Jesus sighed and it seems to be a sigh of compassion.

He was feeling compassion for the man because of his condition. In this case, I don't think compassion is at play. What is it?

[16 : 10] It's frustration. You're asking me for a sign. Frustration and I think grief.

Not because of what they ask but for the reasons why they ask it. And we'll talk about that in a second. It says that he sighed deeply in his spirit. What does that mean?

It's just talking about on the depths of his inside, his innermost being. You know, emotions, where do emotions come from? Emotions come from the immaterial part of us.

Now, they're expressed through our physical bodies in many different ways. Sometimes tears, a smile, groaning, sighing, different ways that emotions can be expressed.

But emotions is something that comes out of the immaterial part of us, our inner man, our spirit man, our hearts. One of the things this reminds me of is the story in Genesis where God looked at his creation and the men that he had created.

[17 : 32] It says this in Genesis chapter 6 verse 5, Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and he was grieved in his heart. He was grieved in his heart.

Do you know that God grieves? You know, there are people out there that say, oh God, he's, God can't have emotions, he can't have passions. I mean, what kind of God would have emotions?

But the Bible tells us God grieves when he sees men and women hurting one another, committing acts of violence, abusing one another.

he grieves in the very depths of his heart. So what, how did Jesus respond?

[18 : 40] He sighs and then he says this, why does this generation seek a sign?

Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation. And on the face of it might seem, hey, somebody's asking you, hey, just prove that you are who you are.

And wouldn't Jesus be ready to respond? He wants people to believe in him. Wouldn't he be ready to respond and say, sure, let me do another miracle. I mean, he's been doing them day in and day out for the last almost three years.

why not just do one more? Just one more healing, one more miracle, one more multiplication of food like he just did in the previous verses.

To get a little bit more insight into why Jesus said this, turn over to Matthew chapter 16. We're going to look at the parallel account in here. Matthew chapter 16 and verse 1.

[20 : 06] Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees came and testing him asked him if he would show them a sign from heaven. And he answered and said to them, listen closely to this, 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. You 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 then he left them and he departed.

He gives this little illustration. He said, listen, I know, everybody knows that you know how to interpret signs. There's this common thing that people can use to test the weather, to test whether we're going to have good weather or bad weather.

Today we have weathermen, right? They have all these technology things, you know, weather balloons and stations and however they help us, you know, look forward to the future to see what's going to be in the weather.

[21 : 28] But back then, and even today, where there's less technology, there are signs that you can look for. We actually have a phrase, and I don't know how long it's been around, but I'm sure many of you have heard this.

It goes, red sky at night, sailors what? Delight. Sailors delight. If you're a sailor on the oceans, weather is important, right?

Bad weather isn't just an inconvenience, it could be a matter of life or death. So if you're a sailor and there's a red sky at night, it makes you happy.

Smooth sailing. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning, right? In the morning when there's a red sky, and it has, I don't know all the details, but it has to do with weather fronts and how it causes the color in the sky to change.

But because of those things, you can tell whether the weather is going to be calm or whether it's going to be agitated. The air will be agitated and cause storms and strong winds.

[22 : 38] And so we have this saying now and they had the same thing back then. It's been the same for thousands of years. They knew that if there was red sky at night, things were going to be fine.

The weather was going to be good. But if there's a red sky in the morning, it's a bad omen, a bad sign. Bad weather is to come.

Saying, listen, you know how to look at the signs. You know how to read the signs. Does a sailor look at the signs and he sees the red sky in the morning and says, well, let's go ahead and sail anyway because I need another sign?

Or does he have enough experience to know, no, this is all we need to know that we just need to stay in the harbor today? He calls them a wicked and adulterous generation and he says, listen, there is one sign that you'll get, one sign that I'll give you and it's the sign of Noah.

Not Noah, sorry, Jonah. Those two get mixed up a lot, don't they? Imagine in heaven Noah and Jonah are going to be like, man, you know, people always get us mixed up.

[24 : 03] Except for the sign of the prophet Jonah. And if you remember the story of Jonah, he was asked as a prophet to go to warn the Gentile nation or city of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them because of their wickedness.

And he actually ran the opposite way, no thanks. And he was swallowed, the Bible says, by a big fish, some kind of sea creature, and was in the belly of that fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible as a type and shadow of Jesus being in the tomb, buried for three days and three nights.

And so that's what Jesus is talking about. There's a sign coming. Now they didn't know that. His disciples may not have even known what he was talking about, at least at the time. But he's saying there is a sign. It would be the sign of the prophet Jonah.

So let's ask this question. Are signs bad? Are signs bad? Is it bad to look at signs? I don't think so, not at all.

[25 : 18] In fact, a sign is simply just evidence, right? When you look to the sky and you look in the morning and there's a red sky, it's just evidence for something else that you can't see directly, right?

You can't see the winds, maybe the strong winds that are off into the distance, but you can see the color. That helps you to know that something is coming.

It's evidence. And we should pay attention to signs. We shouldn't ignore them. In fact, you should never believe anything without some kind of evidence.

Christians are sometimes criticized for just believing things without evidence. And is that true? Not at all. I mean, some people may do that, but that is not the claim of Christianity, is that, oh, here's these claims and there's no evidence for them at all, but you just need to believe them.

Is that what Christians teach? No, we provide lots and lots and lots of evidence for the claims of the Bible. So if you tell somebody, you know what, I really think it's going to rain tomorrow, and they ask you why, and you say, well, no reason, the idea just popped into my head.

[26 : 45] Well, why should I believe you? There's no sign to look at, no event, no something that we can observe that points to that being true? That's just foolishness.

So we should look for signs. In fact, the Bible encourages us people to look for signs, to look for evidence. You know, in the law of Moses, when it came to basically a criminal justice specifically, but it extended beyond that, there was this principle that every word, it was talking specifically about testimonies, people testimonies, claims, can be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

If you can get two or three people to testify, to say that they are a witness of something being true, something happening, that's sufficient.

You know, and that's really something that we use in our criminal justice system today. If a judge finds just a few pieces of evidence, and it can be not just physical evidence, it could be, what's the name of the evidence where it's just based on somebody's motive, forget what it's called, circumstantial evidence, yeah, based on the circumstances and motivation, and there's all kinds of things, and they all, you know, maybe two or three or more things, they line up and they point to this claim, this accusation, whatever it might be, being true.

And that's enough. That's enough to convict. Jesus repeated this law of two or three witnesses.

[28 : 49] He says, hey, if your brother offends you, and you have something at odds with him, he says in Matthew chapter 18, go to your brother, talk to him about it, and hey, if he won't reconcile with you, take somebody else, a friend, and then if it doesn't work with him, take a leader of Israel with you.

He calls it the church. At that time, there wasn't the church, the body of Christ like we think about church, but a leader of Israel with you, so that at the word of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

That this conflict, there would be three witnesses regards to what this conflict is all about. You know that Jesus did not expect people to believe what he said just because he said it?

He actually says that. Don't believe me just because of the words that I speak. I mean, anybody can claim anything. In John chapter 10, John chapter 10, verse 37, this is what Jesus said.

if I do not do the works of my father, do not believe me. If I don't do the works of my father, he's talking about his miracle ministry.

[30 : 19] If I don't do things to prove that what I say is true, don't believe me just because I say it. but if I do, sorry, if you do not, if I do not do the works of my father, do not believe me.

But if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works. Believe the works. What's the works he's talking about? The miracles that he's done that you may know and believe that the father is in me and that I am in him.

Jesus his ministry on the earth was full of miracles and they were intended to be a witness, to be a testimony, to be signs of who he was.

In fact, we go back to the beginning of the book of John, the gospel of John, and when we look at his very first miracle, what does he do? He changes water into wine.

That was his very first miracle recorded in any of the gospels. It says this about that. In John chapter 2 verse 11, this beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory.

[31 : 37] Manifested just means to give evidence. He gave evidence for his glory and his disciples, they believed in him. He did one miracle and it was a sign.

Who he said he was was true, that he was legit. His disciples, it says there, they believed in him. They just needed one sign.

Did they get just one? They actually got many, didn't they? That was just the first one, but it says even right then they believed him. A few verses later, I guess a dozen verses later in John chapter 2, it says this, now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did.

People believed him, not just because of the words that he spoke. Now the words that he spoke was one piece of evidence, it was one sign, but by itself, not enough.

But they saw the works that he did, and they believed in him. In Acts chapter 2, verse 22, I think it's Peter is talking to the people of Israel.

[32 : 55] This is after the day of Pentecost or on the day of Pentecost. And he's talking to Israel about Jesus, who was just crucified, I don't know, was it weeks or months earlier, and rose from the dead.

And he says, men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you, by miracles, wonders, and signs.

Which God did through him in your midst. As you yourselves also know, he was attested to, God attested that he was who he said he was because of the miracles, the wonders, the signs that he accomplished.

So signs are an important part of our faith. There have to be signs, there have to be pointers that this thing that we cannot see is true. If there's no pointers, then why believe it?

There's no reason to. So why would Jesus be upset at these Pharisees because they asked for a sign? Ultimately, it was because of their hearts.

[34 : 06] We find out as we see the story of the Pharisees, were they interested? Did they ask for a sign because they really wanted to know that he was legitimate so that they could honor him or worship him or crown him as king, Messiah?

Is that why they wanted to test him? No. In fact, later on here in the book of Mark, we see another engagement with the Pharisees.

And this time, they do another test. They ask him a simple question, and on its own, it's a good question. The question is, should we Jews pay taxes to Caesar, to Rome?

I mean, we're our own people group. We're the Jews. Should we have to pay taxes to Caesar? So Mark, excuse me, Mark 12, verse 15, they say this, shall we pay or shall we not pay?

They finish up the question with that. But it says this, but he knowing their hypocrisy said to them, why do you test me? And then he does answer their question.

[35 : 22] He says, hey, whose picture is on this coin? Give me a denarius. Whose picture is on there? Oh, Caesar. So give to Caesar what is Caesar and give to God's what is God. But he wasn't impressed with their question because he knew what was in their hearts.

You are hypocrites. The only reason you're asking me this question is because you want to try to get me in trouble with Rome. You don't care about the answer. You have a different agenda.

These Pharisees, they had, I'm sure, probably had seen miracles probably that day. they were in the region where Jesus had been doing miracles.

They had probably heard testimonies from probably dozens of people about the things that Jesus had done. So were the Pharisees really not sure who Jesus was?

Were they really unsure about the signs? Did they just need one more sign? Well, let's look at a few more verses. In John chapter 3, Jesus has an interaction with a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

[36 : 36] This is where the famous John 3.16 verse comes in, for God so loved the world. In this interaction with Nicodemus, it says this, John chapter 3, verse 1, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you're a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

I'm a Pharisee. Jesus, we know. We know you have to come from God. We know nobody else could do these signs unless God was with him.

We know. He kind of let the cat out of the bag for the Pharisees, right? And Nicodemus was definitely, it seems, more noble than the other Pharisees.

It seems that his questions were actually legitimate. Later on in the book of John, chapter 11, while the Pharisees, along with the priests of Israel, were plotting to kill Jesus, prophets.

[37 : 56] They also admit that the signs that he performed were legitimate. John 11, verse 47 says this, then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, what shall we do?

This guy is getting the attention of all the people. What do we do about him? And it says this, for this man works many signs. He works many signs.

That's why the people believe in him, because of the things that he does. The next chapter, John 12, verse 37, Jesus enters in to Jerusalem on a donkey and he has lots of interactions with the Israelites, with the Jews there in Jerusalem.

John 12, verse 37, but although he had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in him. This isn't just the leaders, this is the city folk, the people in Jerusalem, the Jews in Jerusalem.

He did many signs there, but they did not believe in him, even though there was lots of evidence right in front of them. You know, so many people seek for one more piece of evidence and it seems like there's always just one more thing that I need to prove who this man is.

[39 : 24] When already there is a series of lots and lots of evidence that comes before. And it seems like it will never be enough. In fact, Jesus spoke to this.

He told a story about a man, two men actually, a rich man who was nameless and a poor man named Lazarus. And the rich man and Lazarus both die.

And one goes and talks about, you know, there's some questions about, you know, this isn't necessarily heaven or hell. It says it's Hades, but there's like the good part and then the bad part.

And there's what's called Abraham's bosom or also called paradise, and then there's this chasm between the other part which is a lot more wretched and, you know, hellish, we'll call it.

And so the rich man, he calls out, he sees there's this chasm and he calls out to Lazarus. He said, nobody can help me, but will you go?

[40 : 38] Maybe God can raise you from the dead. And you can go warn my family about this place. It says in Luke, and sorry if I didn't give the reference, this is in Luke chapter 16, verse 29.

Luke chapter 16, verse 29. Abraham said to him, this is to the rich man, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.

And he said, no, father Abraham, but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. They'll turn to you. If there's somebody who raises from the dead, that will be enough of a sign that they need to turn to God.

But he said to them, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead. God, that was his answer.

Listen, there's some people it's evident that no amount of evidence, no amount of proof is going to be enough. Because there's plenty that has come before that has just been ignored over and over and over again.

[41 : 54] Now, some people did believe the signs that they saw, and we read about a few of those. If you go back to the feeding of the 5,000, at least the account we read of in John chapter 6, after Jesus fed the 5,000, it says this, John chapter 6 verse 14, then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said this is truly the prophet who has come into the world.

It's the prophet that Moses said would come after him. This is the man, this is the Messiah. The signs prove, show that this is true. Therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he departed again to the mountains by himself.

So, there were some people who the evidence was sufficient, but then others specifically with the Pharisees, it wasn't sufficient, and evidently there wouldn't be enough evidence.

So, we'll ask this question, is this something legitimate? Should we ask for signs? Is it appropriate to ask for signs? I think it is fine.

God is okay with people asking for evidence. We need evidence. We need to have evidence of things. We need to have evidence of God, that he exists, that he is real.

[43 : 19] We need to have evidence that Jesus was who he says he was if we're to believe in him. We need to have evidence that Jesus rose from the dead if we're to believe that he has the power of death and hell, which the Bible claims.

We need to have evidence that these things are true. And is there evidence? It abounds. It abounds all over the place.

There are ministries today, people of full-time ministry, they have a ministry, we call it apologetics, a defense for the faith. Just evidence after evidence about a creator, that we were created by an intelligent person.

Evidence for the life of Jesus. Evidence for the miracles that he did. Evidence based on eyewitness testimony of his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.

in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, it says this, this is in Genesis chapter 1, verse 14. Then God said, let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night.

[44 : 44] The lights, lights in the heavens? What's that talking about? The sun, the moon, and the stars, right? And let them be for signs and seasons for days and for years.

These heavenly bodies, therefore, well, day and night, fall and winter, all these things are impacted by the heavenly bodies. But the first thing he says, let them be for signs.

Well, sign of what? Sign that God is there, that he created all this. When you look up into the heavens, Psalm 19 verse 1 says this, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.

The heavens, the stars in the heaven, the moon, the sun, the planets, all these things orbiting around each other and all throughout the galaxy, see, and we can know so much more about all these heavenly bodies today than even they did back then.

Those heavenly bodies declare the glory of God. And the firmament, that's the earth, terra firma as we call it, shows his handiwork.

[46 : 10] But there is skepticism. people say, well, I need proof.

I need proof that there is a God out there, that there is a God who made all this. But is the evidence far away or is it right in front of us?

Imagine you walk through the woods and you see a tree and on the tree is the shape of a heart. Like this. And inside is one initial and then plus another initial.

And you look at that and you think, well, how did that get there? That must have just grown all on its own. Is that what we think? And this is something very simple, right?

There's not a lot of complexity to that shape and those little characters on the inside. But even something as simple as that, we recognize there was somebody behind that.

[47 : 22] Somebody put that there. And we can even know something about who put that there, can't we? Just by a little shape. We can know what kind of person they are, the kind of person that knows what it's like to love, to cherish somebody else.

And so when we look up into the heavens, and you know, we look into the heavens today and we can see a lot of stars, but because of all the lights that we have, we can't see nearly as many stars as they saw back then.

When they looked up into the heavens, there were literally millions of stars that you could see with the naked eye. Millions. The sky just full of them.

Today we have microscopes and we can see the same thing, but with the naked eye, you know, there's definitely lots of them, but not nearly as many as they saw back then.

The heavens declare the glory of the Lord. Lord. And this man Jesus, there were prophets that foretold his coming. They told where he was going to be born, in a town called Bethlehem, which was where Jesus was from.

[48 : 47] His miracles, his teachings, they line up with what the Old Testament prophets taught and said, what Moses taught and said, what the Old Testament scriptures said.

They weren't wildly different, they lined up. Jesus' goodness. He wasn't an evil, rotten man.

He was a good man, full of compassion, gentleness. Not just gentleness, but he was gentle with those who were humble. And then his resurrection from the dead.

And all those who witnessed that. And that is the story of the rest of the Bible. Jesus rose from the dead and he appeared to so many people. He told them, I want you to go and tell others what you saw.

So should we look for signs? There are lots of signs that have already happened and they're recorded in this book. work. And that's where the Bible itself, that's where God points us to.

[50 : 02] Listen, I did all these things in front of many, many people and they wrote it down. Believe them. Even though we don't necessarily see miracles ourselves today, you know, at least not in the same degree that Jesus did them back in his day, we can trust the testimonies of others who did.

Jesus said, or it was Abraham, I guess, that said to the rich man, hey listen, if you don't listen to Moses and the prophets, nothing is going to persuade you. And what was he talking about?

Was he talking about listening to Moses and the prophets speak out loud? No. He was talking about the scriptures. If you are not going to believe what's in the scriptures, scriptures, there's nothing.

There's no other evidence that will prove to you what you need to believe. We'll end with this.

Jesus, when he died and he rose again, people could hardly believe it. And there was one man in particular that's known for doubting.

[51 : 24] Right? One of Jesus' disciples, his name was Thomas. And he got testimony. First-hand testimony from witnesses who saw Jesus.

And these were people that he could trust. They weren't just wild, you know, maniacs out on the street who said, oh, I saw Jesus. These were trustworthy people. People who ultimately laid down their lives for the testimony that they gave.

People who all they had to do was say, you know what, it's a fraud. And they could spare their lives. But they gave up their lives for the testimony that they gave.

These were the kinds of people that he received this testimony from. His dear friends, the other disciples. But he wouldn't believe them. I don't believe it.

I saw Jesus. He died on that cross. He's dead. He's in the grave. And we know what happens next. Jesus comes to him and he appears to him, flesh and bone.

[52 : 34] And he says, Thomas, Tommy, look at the holes in my hands. See them? It's me. Put your finger in my side.

It's me. Look, the holes in my feet. You want to touch them? Here I am. And what did Thomas do? He said, he bowed down before him.

He called him Lord. But this is how this whole account ended. Jesus said, this is John chapter 20 verse 29. Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet they have believed. There are people in the future, they're not going to have the chance to see me in flesh and bone like you have.

They're going to have other evidence. It's not no evidence. They're going to have the testimonies of you and the other disciples and those who will come after.

[53 : 38] And those are the signs. Those are the evidence. That's the testimony that they will have to believe in me. And blessed are those who even though they don't see firsthand, that believe.

There's a great cloud of witnesses. The Bible says that in Hebrews. A great cloud of witnesses. People who have witnessed many miracles that God has done. And we can look to their testimonies in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The scripture is a compilation of those witnesses. We also, the other witnesses that we have today, all the millions of people across the globe who have trusted in Christ.

and we watch before our very eyes their lives transformed. Transformed. Another testimony to God and his greatness that what he has accomplished is true and as real as can be.

Amen. Amen. I will put out this call if, you know, the number one thing the Bible calls us to is to trust in Jesus, that he is the light of the world.

[55 : 00] He is our eternal life. And if we put our trust in him, that he died for our sins, we can have eternal life. Amen. He just asks us to believe that.

And that's it. And we can live with him forever if we're willing to do that. Despite anything that we've done in the past, any sins, anything like that, he's willing to accept us and make us his children that we might live with him forever.

There's plenty of, there's lots of evidence. Let's trust in that and tell him, God, I trust in you. I believe in you. And I want you, I want you to be the savior of my life.

Let's end, because it's Christmas, with a Christmas carol. Would you sing with me? We're going to do Hark the Herald Angel Sing.

These are the angels giving testimony to the savior coming to the earth. This is number 277. If you stand with me, we'll sing this. 277.

[56 : 16] 277. Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.

Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies.

With angelic hosts proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem. Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.

Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the ever-living Lord. Late in time, behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity. Blessed as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.

[57 : 47] Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. Hail the heaven-born prince of peace, hail the son of righteousness, light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, born that men no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. Glory to the newborn king.

Merry Christmas, everybody.