

So You Want a 'Sign' From God?

by Ray Comfort

The Bible teaches that those who demand a sign from God will not receive one, but rather the cross of Jesus Christ, which is the only sign that God will give.

Scripture: Matthew 12:25, Matthew 12:38, John 7:17, Romans 13:14, 1 Corinthians 1:19

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

Ray Comfort preaches about a man named Tony who grapples with the truth of the Bible and the need for a Savior as he faces a life-threatening situation. Through Tony's journey of doubt and contemplation, he is confronted with the reality of his sins and the urgent need for repentance and trust in Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, obedience to God's will, and the foolishness of seeking further signs when the Scriptures already reveal the truth of our sinful state and the provision of the cross as God's parachute for our souls.

Transcript

Tony sat patiently on the "red-eye" flight, and passed the long hours of the night by reading a Bible that his wife had given to him a few hours earlier. She had convinced him that he had sinned against God by violating the Ten Commandments. What she said was true. Tony had broken the Commandments. He had lied and stolen, and he knew that if he stood before God on Judgment Day he was in big trouble. The words of Jesus echoed in his mind: "Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already with her in his heart."

The opened pages brought back a flood of childhood memories from his days at Sunday school. He remembered a number of Bible stories. Of course, there was the one was about Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, and rising on the third day. Then there was the story that put the fear of God in Tony as a child. It was the narrative of the man who ignored the things of God and instead stored up treasures on earth. God said to him, "You fool. Tonight your soul shall be required of you." Others stories such as Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, Moses and the Red Sea, and Daniel and the Lion's den came to mind as well.

His wife had also insisted that he needed the Savior. She warned, "If you die without Jesus Christ, you will face the Law that you have broken, and it will be harsher than the law of gravity. You must repent, and trust Jesus...like you would trust a parachute to save you."

Tony had a dilemma. How could he know if the Bible was true? Who wrote it? Was it written by God or by men? Could he trust its words? He glanced at two gospel tracts his wife had put into the Bible. One was titled, "Scientific Facts in the Bible." It listed about a dozen scientific facts that were written in the Scriptures thousands of years before man discovered them. That didn't impress Tony at all. He wanted concrete evidence. The other publication was called "The Bible is Full of Mistakes." Despite the title, the tract actually listed biblical "signs" of the end of the age. These signs were said to be earthquakes, famines, violence, diseases, lawlessness, wars, occult interest, the increase in travel and in knowledge, and a number of other things. As he glanced over the "signs," Tony mumbled, "These have always been around."

There was one prophecy that did impress him though. It was the one about the Jews obtaining Jerusalem. In 1967, the Jews regained Jerusalem for the first time in 2,000 years. This was an event that Jesus said would take place as a sign of the end of the age. It was interesting, but it wasn't enough. He wanted to know who actually wrote the Bible and whether or not he could trust it. Was it indeed "written by God" as it so often claimed to be, or was it simply written by men?

Another thought that his wife had mentioned was that God had deliberately filled the Bible with stories that would be offensive to anyone with a proud heart. His purpose in doing this was so that all who came to Him for salvation would have to come through the lowly door of humility; God "resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." As Tony sat contemplating these thoughts, he admitted that that was a common thread throughout the Bible, from Adam and Eve, to David and Goliath, to Jonah and the whale, to Daniel and the lion's den, to Noah and the Ark, to Sampson and Delilah, to Jesus being born in a stable, and walking on water. Anyone with any intellectual dignity would never stoop to believe such trite fairy tales. "Stoop" was the operative word. To believe in the Bible one would certainly have to come down a notch or two. If that was indeed what God had done, the words of Jesus did then make sense: "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes" (Matthew 12:25, italics added).

All these thoughts and reading made Tony's eyes suddenly feel heavy. He closed them momentarily. As he signed deeply, he heard a sober male voice over the speaker system. It was the captain warning that the plane had serious engine trouble, and that it was about to crash! He then informed the passengers that there was parachute under their seats, and after reading the instruction booklet that was in the seat pocket in front of them, they were to immediately put on the parachute.

As Tony took hold of the publication, he read the bold print on the cover:

"Important! Emergency Parachute Instructions...

your life depends on your understanding of these instructions."

He opened it further and saw step-by-step directives. It spoke of the importance of strap adjustment. It also said how to avoid being sucked into the jet engines, where to locate the rip cord, when to pull it, how to make sure the parachute didn't become twisted, and how to land without serious injury.

As he looks at its words, he wondered who authored the publication. Was it the parachute manufacturer, the airline, or did someone else pen it? Another even more urgent warning came over the speaker system. The sober voice said that the aircraft door was about to open, and that cabin pressure would suddenly drop. It said that it would be too late to put on the parachute once the door was opened. The voice said,

"Put it on now!"

Tony ignored the warning. His mind was absorbed with other thoughts. "Who was it that wrote the instruction booklet? Was it some weirdo? Or was it authored by the airline? What was their purpose in writing it? Perhaps it was written by the parachute manufacturer, or then again, it may have been..."

His thoughts were stopped mid-sentence by a deafening roar. The aircraft door had been opened. Cabin pressure dropped. In a split second, air was sucked from Tony's lungs. His eyes filled with terror as he gasped for precious air. Suddenly, he was ripped from his seat and pulled towards the open door. With all his strength, he held onto a seatback as the irresistible vacuum pulled him closer to the opening. His fingers weaken. In an instant, he was gone...sucked into the blackness of the night.

As he plummeted in unspeakable terror towards the unforgiving earth, ten words echo in his mind, "You fool. Tonight your soul shall be required of you."

Suddenly Tony awoke. The open Bible was still on his lap. His hands were dripping with sweat. His breathing was fast and heavy. It was a nightmare. His wide eyes fell onto a passage of scripture:

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness..." (1 Corinthians 1:19, 22--23).

The Jews had the Law, but they wanted further evidence. If they were honest and humble of heart, the cross would not be "foolishness" to them. They had violated the holy precepts of God's Law and were in big trouble. It was because of this knowledge that they should have understood why they needed a Savior to blot out their sins, but (like Tony) they still wanted some sort of "sign."

The Greeks, however, didn't have the light of the Law to humble them. They were still in the dark as to their true state, so in their proud ignorance they didn't see any need for any sacrifice for their sins. Therefore the cross didn't make any sense. It was foolishness to them.

To the proud Jew, the cross was a stumblingblock (something they could not get around), and to the Greeks, it was foolishness (something that made no sense).

Tony then found himself in the Book of Matthew, where he read:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you. But he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12: 38--40).

Can you see what the Bible is saying? Jesus told those who wanted a "sign," that it wouldn't be given. They had the Law and the prophets--the Instruction Book made the issue clear. The Law showed them their great need; the prophets showed them their Savior. If they did what the Scriptures said to do, they would be saved. Their demand for a further sign wasn't justified. The only "sign" that would be given was the cross--God's parachute.

If you have never repented and put your trust in the Savior, the question of who wrote the Bible isn't relevant or even important at the moment. What matters is that if you don't obey its instructions you will perish...and that could happen in an instant. As you suddenly begin to realize your true danger and how foolish you have been in demanding some sort of a sign, your heart may begin to beat a little faster. It may even begin thumping...and suddenly overload a weakened wall. You could have a heart attack and drop dead even before finish reading this paragraph. Death's irresistible vacuum (often suddenly) sucks 140,000 people through its black door every 24 hours. Your predicament doesn't leave you in a position to contemplate, procrastinate, or to even to negotiate. You are a desperately guilty criminal who stands condemned before a holy and angry judge. You deserve an immediate death sentence. However, the Judge is rich in mercy and He offers you the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

What are you going to do? Argue further? Come to your senses. Simply put on the parachute. Do what the Bible commands: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and you will then know the divine accuracy of the Instruction Book.

The biblical order for salvation from death is always obedience to the will of God first, and then (after obedience) comes knowledge of the truth:

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself...Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 7:17, 21.32, italics added).

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