

An eye to the throne-room of God is the cure to fascination with the circus of the world. —  
Matthew Harmon

A man cannot live unless he takes his breath, nor can the soul, unless it breathes forth its desires  
to God. —Thomas Watson

The Baptist Catechism (Keach's Catechism)  
1677

*(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)*

Q. 65. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

A. From the creation of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day  
of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to  
the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.

(Gen. 2:3; John 20:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10)

Q. 66. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A. The Sabbath is to [be] sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly  
employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the time in the public  
and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of  
necessity and mercy.

(Lev. 23:3; Isa. 58:13-14; Isa. 66:23; Matt. 12:11-12)

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

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WXTH-LP 101.7 FM— In Richwood

Services:

Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

## THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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### NO SIGN GIVEN

*And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. (Mark 8:11-12)*

Jesus was returning from Decapolis into an area where there was a thicker population of Jews and therefore, the Pharisees were about. And as we read here, they very quickly challenged Him as their manner was everywhere. They were fully aware of the miracles that were an accreditation of His deity and should have identified Him to them as being who He said He was. Earlier in this chapter we find the record of Him feeding the four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes. No doubt, this was reported among them, and the Pharisees would have known it. But nothing had changed, and they were provoked to even greater anger at every event that seemed to confirm Him as the Christ.

Unbelief may be met as an offence (and it often is) or as an occasion for compassion on the lost in that their unbelief is leading toward their own destruction. We tend to reject the unbeliever along with the unbelief. Here we are afforded some insight into the soul level concern of Christ for both the Pharisees and their victims. This is noted in several instances in our Lord's earthly ministry. He told those with Him that He had compassion on the multitude just before He fed them. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He wept as He thought upon the impending destruction of Jerusalem. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine*

*eyes. (Luke 19:41-42).* But to the end they looked for some sensational display and thus challenged Him to show them a sign.

Christ is the ultimate sign given to fallen humanity as to the ability and intent of God to save. Therefore, we must consistently and continually point men to Him as opposed to sensationalism in religion.

In Decapolis Jesus had been with a mixed population of the sort which the Pharisees would have held in contempt. They would have been greatly offended at the thought that He should have had such a following among them not to mention miraculously feeding them. Being the cowards they were, they do not attempt to deny the miracle. But He is in what they consider their territory, and they would defend their position at all costs. He posed a threat to their control of the people, and He was countering their false teachings. So, they issued harsh demands denying all else that He has shown. They missed the obvious from the Old Testament such as: *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (Isaiah 61:1).* They were being specific that there had to be a sign from Heaven such as was given to Gideon, Samuel, Elijah, and others. Such was the testing that challenged Him to depart from His plan and purpose – The Father with Him and in

Him was the witness to His claim, and external signs would have removed Him from that identity. His was rather to display divine love confirmed by the touch of His hand with healing and provision with evident compassion. This was beyond them.

We are drawn to the fact that He sighed deeply in His Spirit. The words here are strong and indicate that He was affected in the very depths of His being. How sadly we read early on that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” This is not recorded for us as a mere historical fact; it is rather that we might know that He experienced it. Here is an example of His own people rejecting Him. Again, we ask the question: If Christ is so affected, should not we be also? We consider the use of such terms as patience, longsuffering, and forbearance with reference to God. In wrestling with the fact of divine sovereignty, we find these things to be difficult to comprehend. In taking on Himself the form of sinful flesh, He took on the ability to experience such as would reveal that which we should seek to imitate.

The question “why doth this generation seek after a sign?” has the implication of why do they seek more than Christ Himself? Thus, it was personal with Him. In every place we are directed to look to Him, the Lamb of God. He is to be the focus of our attention in all things. We would direct all attention to Him as we look to the grace of our God. We might ask the question, why not give them a sign?” But then we must ask, would it have mattered? The answer should be obvious to us. It was the

hardness of their hearts that caused them to reject Him. What of men seeking signs today and the response to them – from faith-healers to the building of magnificent edifices perceived as signs wherein men are moved to run greedily after their errors.

God does not acquiesce to the demands of men. In Matthew’s account it is added that the only sign will be the sign of Jonas (Jonah). This was a distinct reference to the resurrection of Christ, and they denied that as well. They would not have believed had they seen Him walk out of the tomb. They had been rebuked by His wisdom, allowed to witness His power, seen His tenderness in healings, and knew of His ability to provide. These things did nothing to pierce the hardness of their hearts. So, He solemnly declares to them “There shall no sign be given unto this generation.” Ye must be born again!

What a sad note that in the next verse we read “He left them.” He left them to their own reasoning which is based in pride and unwillingness to acknowledge the only sign for this generation. I have been guilty of treating unbelief and error with contempt and have even written off those who practice such. This is not the example our Lord left us. Should we not “sigh deeply” as we consider the untold millions who express hatred for Christ and for His followers? Should we not pray, as have many sufferers, for those who are the persecutors? Our Lord prayed for those who crucified Him noting that they did not know what they were doing. *bhs*

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### If God is not Sovereign

Christians speak often of God’s sovereignty. Reformed Christians speak very often of God’s sovereignty. God’s sovereignty refers to his presence in this world, his authority over this world, and his control within this world. God owns and oversees his creation to such a degree that nothing happens apart from his knowledge, apart from his will, apart from his wisdom. There is nothing we are given that does not in some way pass through his hands.

As we speak of God's sovereignty we have to ensure that we do not speak of it only theoretically, that we do not relegate it purely to the realm of the intellectual, for it is no mere abstract doctrine but one that is sweet and precious and ought to be close to the heart of every Christian. This is a doctrine that gives us hope in every sorrow, that lends meaning to every pain, that gives confidence in every circumstance.

Perhaps it is good to consider some of what would be true if God is not sovereign.

If God is not sovereign we cannot be confident in our salvation. We cannot trust that his gospel is the only true gospel, that his salvation is effective, that his way is the right way. For if he is not sovereign, the will of another being may supersede his, the plan of another may outrival his, the word of another may take precedence over his. Unless God is sovereign, our very salvation is in doubt.

If God is not sovereign we cannot be confident that there is meaning in our suffering. We have no assurance that the difficulties we endure are actually consistent with his will and that he is actually bringing good from bad, light from darkness, laughter from tears. Unless God is sovereign we have no reason for hope as we look to the future and no reason for trust that God will prove that all we've endured is but a light and momentary affliction when compared to the great weight of glory to come.

If God is not sovereign we cannot be confident in evangelism. We will be prone to take credit when others believe the message and prone to take blame when others fail to believe it. We will be prone even to take credit for our own salvation, for if God is not sovereign, than perhaps we are.

If God is not sovereign we cannot be confident that we will remain in the faith. We have no assurance that we will not be swayed by another teaching, that we will not be drawn away by another faith. We have no assurance that God will be proven true when he says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Unless God is sovereign, another powerful being may compel us to reject the faith and be lost forever.

If God is not sovereign we cannot be confident that Christ will return. Though God has promised that Christ will be revealed from heaven and the mighty angels with him, what if another being with greater authority can shut down God's plan or deny God's desire? Unless God is sovereign we look to the future with uncertainty rather than confidence, with hope that is shaky and trepidatious rather than firmly fixed.

But if God is sovereign, we can be confident in our salvation, confident that there is meaning in our suffering, confident that our evangelism will be effective, confident that we will remain in the faith, confident that Christ will return, confident in all God is, in all he does, in all he says, in all he has promised. Our faith is rightly fixed in the God who, in the majestic words of the Heidelberg Catechism, "upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand."

--Tim Challies *Blog, challies.com*

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Prayer is the pulse of the renewed soul—and the constancy of its beat is the test and measure of the spiritual life! – Octavius Winslow