



SUNDAY CLASS

11/9/08

Key Verses: Matthew 12:38-45

Matthew 12:38 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

The Sign of Jonah

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

"Their address to him, v. 38. They compliment him with the title of Master, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ's servants, who call him Master. Their request is, We would see a sign from thee. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove his divine mission: see Ex. 4:8-9. He came to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him sent of God."

***MATTHEW HENRY COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE



***JONAH PREACHING TO THE NINEVITES

Exodus 4:8-9 (New International Version)

8 Then the LORD said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second.⁹ But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground."

Matthew 16:1 (New International Version)

The Demand for a Sign

¹The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

Mark 8:11-12 (New International Version)

¹¹The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.¹²He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it."

Luke 11:16 (New International Version)

¹⁶Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

John 2:18 (New International Version)

¹⁸Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

John 6:30 (New International Version)

³⁰So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?"

1 Corinthians 1:22 (New International Version)

²²Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom,

Matthew 12:39 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

³⁹ But He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

"He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, v. 39. He fastens the charge, not only on the scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles."

Luke 11:29-32 (New International Version)

The Sign of Jonah

29As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.30For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.31The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.32The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

"His answer to this address, this insolent demand,

1. He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, v. 39. He fastens the charge, not only on the scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles.

They were an adulterous generation,

(1.) As an adulterous brood; so miserably degenerated from the faith and obedience of their ancestors, that Abraham and Israel acknowledged them not. See Isaiah 57:3.

(2.) As an adulterous wife; they departed from that God, to whom by covenant they had been espoused: they were not guilty of the whoredom of idolatry, as they had been before the captivity, but they were guilty of infidelity, and all iniquity, and that is whoredom too: they did not look after gods of their own making, but they looked for signs of their own devising; and that was adultery.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but that of the prophet Jonas.

*****Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humors. "**

Isaiah 57:3 (New International Version)

*3 "But you—come here, you sons of a sorceress,
you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!*

Matthew 16:4 (New International Version)

4 A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

Mark 8:38 (New International Version)

38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

"They shall have one sign of a different kind from all these, and that is, the resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonas this was yet reserved for their conviction, and was intended to be the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. 1:4. That was such a sign as surpassed all the rest, completed and crowned them. "If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this (Ex. 4:9), and if this will not convince them, nothing will." And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, His disciples came and stole him away; for none are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see."

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Romans 1:4 (New International Version)

4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Matthew 12:40 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

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



“Now this sign of the prophet Jonas he further explains here; (v. 40) As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, and then came out again safe and well, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then shall rise again.

[1.] The grave was to Christ as the belly of the fish was to Jonah; thither he was thrown, as a Ransom for lives ready to be lost in a storm; there he lay, as in the belly of hell (Jonah 2:2), and seemed to be cast out of God’s sight.

[2.] He continued in the grave just as long as Jonah continued in the fish’s belly, three days and three nights; not three whole days and nights: it is probable, Jonah did not lie so long in the whale’s belly, but part of three natural days; he was buried in the afternoon of the sixth day of the week, and rose again in the morning of the first day; it is a manner of speech very usual; see 1 Kings 20:29; Esther 4:16; 5:1; Luke 2:21. So long Jonah was a prisoner for his own sins, so long Christ was a Prisoner for ours.

[3.] As Jonah in the whale’s belly comforted himself with an assurance that yet he should look again toward God’s holy temple (Jonah 2:4), so Christ when he lay in the grave, is expressly said to rest in hope, as one assured he should not see corruption, Acts 2:26-27.”

[4.] As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from the congregation of the dead (for dead things are said to be formed from under the waters, Job 26:5), so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave to send abroad the gospel to the Gentiles.

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Jonah 2:2 (New International Version)

2 He said:

*"In my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me.
From the depths of the grave^[a] I called for help,
and you listened to my cry.*

Footnotes:

- a. Jonah 2:2 Hebrew Sheol

Jonah 2:4 (New International Version)

4 I said, 'I have been banished
from your sight;
yet I will look again
toward your holy temple.'

Acts 2:26-27 (New International Version)

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope,
27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Job 26:5 (New International Version)

5 "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them.

Matthew 12:41 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's proclamation; and look—something greater than Jonah is here!

"As a generation that would be condemned by the men of Nineveh, whose repenting at the preaching of Jonas would rise up in judgment against them, v. 41. Christ's resurrection will be the sign of the prophet Jonas to them: but it will not have so happy an effect upon them, as that of Jonas had upon the Ninevites, for they were by it brought to such a repentance as prevented their ruin; but the Jews will be hardened in an unbelief that shall hasten their ruin; and in the day of judgment, the repentance of the Ninevites will be mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, and consequently the condemnation of those to whom Christ preached then, and of those to whom Christ is preached now; for this reason, because Christ is greater than Jonah."

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Jeremiah 3:11 (New International Version)

11 The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.

Ezekiel 16:51 (New International Version)

51 Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. You have done more detestable things than they, and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done.

Romans 2:27 (New International Version)

27The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

Jonah 1:2 (New International Version)

2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Jonah 3:5 (New International Version)

5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Matthew 12:42 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

42 The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look—something greater than Solomon is here!

"As a generation that would be condemned by the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, v. 42. The Ninevites would shame them for not repenting, the queen of Sheba for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is in every thing greater than Solomon.

[1.] *The queen of Sheba had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ, to sit at his feet and hear his word.*

[2.] *Solomon was but a wise man, but Christ is wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.*

[3.] *The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; she was a woman, unfit for travel, the journey long and perilous; she was a queen, and what would become of her own country in her absence? We have no such cares to hinder us.*

[4.] She could not be sure that it would be worth her while to go so far on this errand; fame uses to flatter men, and perhaps she might have in her own country or court wise men sufficient to instruct her; yet, having heard of Solomon's fame, she would see him; but we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties.

[5.] She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, *but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us*: Behold he stands at the door, and knocks.

[6.] It should seem the wisdom the queen of Sheba came for was only philosophy and politics; but the wisdom that is to be had with Christ is wisdom to salvation.

[7.] She could only hear Solomon's wisdom; he could not give her wisdom: but Christ will give wisdom to those who come to him; nay, he will himself be made of God to them Wisdom; so that, upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon."

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***QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON

1 Kings 10:1 (New International Version)

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

1 When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.

2 Chronicles 9:1 (New International Version)

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

1 When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. Arriving with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all she had on her mind.

Matthew 12:43 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

An Unclean Spirit's Return

43 "When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it roams through waterless places looking for rest but doesn't find any.

"The application of the parable makes it to represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation: So shall it be with this wicked generation, that now resist, and will finally reject, the gospel of Christ.

The body of that nation is here represented,

First, As an apostate people. After the captivity in Babylon, they began to reform, left their idols, and appeared with some face of religion; but they soon corrupted themselves again: though they never relapsed into idolatry, they fell into all manner of impiety and profaneness, grew worse and worse, and added to all the rest of their wickedness a wilful contempt of, and opposition to, Christ and his gospel.

Secondly, As a people marked for ruin. A new commission was passing the seals against that hypocritical nation, the people of God's wrath (like that, Isa. 10:6), and their destruction by the Romans was likely to be greater than any other, as their sins had been more flagrant: then it was that wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. 2:15-16."

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Luke 11:24-26 (New International Version)

24"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.'25When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

Matthew 12:44 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

44 Then it says, 'I'll go back to my house that I came from.' And when it arrives, it finds [the house] vacant, swept, and put in order.

Matthew 12:45 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

*4*Then off it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that man's last condition is worse than the first. That's how it will also be with this evil generation."

Hebrews 6:4-6 (New International Version)

*4*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,⁵who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, *6*if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

2 Peter 2:20 (New International Version)

*20*If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

"Let this be a warning to all nations and churches, to take heed of leaving their first love, of letting fall a good work of reformation begun among them, and returning to that wickedness which they seemed to have forsaken; for the last state of such will be worse than the first"

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Revelation 2:4-5 (New International Version)

*4*Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. *5*Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.