



Teaching and Parables of the King Pt 1: The Sign of Jonah

August 25, 2019

TEXT: MATTHEW 12:38-42

The Sign of Jonah

Matthew 12:38 (KJV) *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

- Up to this point in Matthew's Gospel, surely His enemies had heard of Jesus' display of power since His "fame hereof went abroad into all that land" (Matt 9:26) and some who He healed "spread abroad his fame in all that country." (Matt 9:31)
- Not only did Jesus give many "signs," He also gave His disciples the power to do them as well! (Matt 10:1) Surely this was known!
- So two questions come to mind on verse 38: 1) What kind of sign were they looking for, and 2) Would they have believed?
- First, given their training in the Law, I think it's plausible they were looking for Jesus to do something similar to Moses to "prove" He was sent by God (Exodus 4:1-9). I honestly think their attitude was **haughty**, something along the lines of: "We see you doing miracles to bless others, but take us in private and do a trick for us, Jesus."
- Secondly, I do not think they were sincere. William MacDonald spoke well of their attitude:

Despite all the miracles Jesus had performed, the scribes and Pharisees had the temerity to ask Him for a sign, implying that they would believe if He would prove Himself to be the Messiah! But their hypocrisy was transparent. If they had not believed as a result of so many wonders, why would they be convinced by one more? The attitude that demands miraculous signs as a condition for belief does not please God. As Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Joh 20:29). In God's economy, seeing follows believing.

Matthew 12:39 (KJV) *But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

- Jesus didn't take the bait. He wasn't going to debase Himself with personal displays of power for their benefit. He had already performed many miracles and "signs."
- In fact, He calls those looking for personal miracles in order to believe in Him, "evil and adulterous."
- This is very strong language. Why?
 1. Seeking such signs is "evil" because it is self-**centered** and carnal. It's as if the creature said to the Creator, "Prove yourself to me." That's some serious **pride!**
 2. Seeking such signs is "adulterous" because it flows from **unfaithful** hearts. Not only would the Pharisees not have believed in this instance, but they also went on to join with pagans against the LORD and declare, "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15)

- Therefore, the only sign they would receive would be one of His ultimate **vindication** as Savior, King, Messiah, and LORD of all.

Matthew 12:40 (KJV) For as Jonas 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.

- Friends, this is the ultimate sign and we are to focus less on miracles and more on the **Gospel!**
- Please do not misunderstand. We believe our God can and still does miracles as He sees fit. He still heals, delivers, and sets free!
- However, just like people in the Old Testament and the New, we don't ultimately believe due to displays of power, but rather we believe when God powerfully reveals Himself to our hearts through the Gospel!
- Signs may open the door to faith in some cases, but only the **Spirit** produces regeneration.

Matthew 12:41 (KJV) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

- Recall the story of Jonah, the reluctant (and cynical!) prophet. Jonah was commanded by God to "go to Nineveh" and "cry against it" because "their wickedness" had "come up before" God. (Jonah 1:2)
- Jonah disobeyed resulting in his eventually being swallowed by a "great fish" and remaining there for "three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17)
- Jonah would eventually be released from the fish and vomited out on dry land. (Jonah 2:10) The LORD would then repeat His command to Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach.
- This time, Jonah obeyed. His message was short but powerful: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" This simple sermon caused a great revival!
- When we compare Jonah to Jesus, we see that...
 - Jonah came looking like the god the Ninevites worshipped. Jesus came looking and sounding like the God of the Bible. (He is!)
 - Jonah preached a short message of destruction. Jesus taught the Words of Life in many ways and in many places.
 - Jonah was a reluctant and disobedient prophet. Jesus was a holy and joyful prophet. Jonah wanted the people's destruction. Jesus wanted the people to have life and that more abundantly!
 - Jonah would go on to die. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father.
- In every way Jesus is **greater!**
- Still, Nineveh repented at the words of a much lesser prophet. Jerusalem did not repent at the words of the King of Kings! What a great judgment and condemnation!

Matthew 12:42 (KJV) *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

- This pagan queen called on the true God through Solomon (1 Kings 10:9); Jesus created Solomon yet the Pharisees did not repent. Again, one who was given “lesser light” walked in greater humility than those who spent their lives studying the Scriptures! What a great condemnation!

SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE VERSES? SOME POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS:

1. Keep reaching out and teaching God’s truths; keep loving your **enemies!**
2. Do not seek signs; seek (and be content with) **Jesus!**
3. Give people the greatest sign: the **Gospel**. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again three days later!
4. Do not allow growing in knowledge to **puff** you up; be humble and stay repentant! (Homework: read and consider the Parable of the Two Sons, Matt 21:28-32)
5. Be encouraged by the “greatness” of Jesus from Matthew 12: He is greater than the Temple (v6), greater than Jonah, and greater than Solomon. In other words, to rightly worship is to worship Him! To understand the prophets is to understand Him! To have true wisdom is to have Him! Be **confident** that our LORD is simply “greater” than any you know, any situation you face, and all that might come against you!

Amen!