

April 12, 2020 – Resurrection Sunday

No Sign Shall Be Given But The Sign Of Jonah

Matthew 12:38–42

Matthew 12:38–40.

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

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

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

Two Important Words

A Sign

Now, in the sign of Jonah, the emphasis is not on the miraculous nature of the sign but on the fact that we are able to see it.

In the Bible, a sign is something that you can see with your own eyes and which conveys a message.

For example in Luke 2:12, in the [Christmas story](#), an angel said to the shepherds, *This will be a sign for you.*

The word ‘sign’ is also used with a negative connotation in [Matthew 26:48](#) where Judas said to the large crowd sent to capture Jesus, *‘I will give you a sign. I will kiss Him on the face. That will tell you that He is the one you have to arrest.’*

So here we find that the scribes and the Pharisees said to Jesus, *‘Give us a sign that we can see and that would prove what You claim to be.’* And Jesus said to them, *‘To this evil and adulterous generation, no sign will be given except the sign of Jonah.’*

This “Generation”

When the Lord Jesus says, ‘This **generation**,’ [which generation is He talking about?](#) We have to understand that the word ‘**generation**’ as Jesus uses it does not have the same meaning as the way we use it in English.

The Sign of the Resurrection

The [point of comparison](#) is between Jonah and the Son of Man, as well as between the Ninevites and this generation.

Jonah was the sign to the people of Nineveh in the same way that the Son of man is the sign to us in this present age.

Is the resurrection the sign that Jesus is talking about? How can the resurrection be a sign to us since we do not see the resurrection?

Comparing Jonah with Jesus

Let us ponder again on the sign of Jonah. Trying to compare Jonah with Jesus, we seem to be comparing apples with walnuts.

So what comparison can we make between Jonah and Jesus? How is Jonah a sign? How is Jesus going to serve as a sign?

Let us put **Matthew 12:40** and **Luke 11:30**, two parallel verses, side by side.

Matthew 12:40. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Luke 11:30. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of man will be to this generation.

Jonah became a sign when he spent three days and three nights in the fish. Notice that Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites only after he was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. And he would become a sign to the Ninevites not only after that event, but because of that event.

In the same way, **Jesus would become a sign** to this generation, to you and me, by virtue of His death and resurrection. And just as Jonah became a sign after the event, so Jesus becomes a sign to us after the resurrection.

The Son of Man

Now here, we need to understand what Jesus means by the term 'Son of man.' Notice that He didn't just say, 'I will be a sign.' He said, 'The Son of man will be a sign.' This expression has as its background the vision in the **book of Daniel** where Daniel saw one like '*a son of man who came to the Ancient of Days and was given dominion, glory and kingdom*' (Daniel 7:13-14).'

IMPORTANT NOTE: Now we begin to see the meaning of the sign of Jonah. The Lord Jesus is telling us: 'I am going to give you a sign. And that sign will be the expression of the power of the resurrection.'

The Sign of Changed Lives

The sign of Jonah is the sign of the resurrection. It is the sign of changed lives. This is what the power of the resurrection is about. The apostle Paul says, from “death to life”. When God transforms a person, He takes him out of the power of sin where death is, to the power of life, where righteousness is. He becomes a completely new person.

Resurrection: Alive to God

There is another point that we must mention. In a sense, **Jonah was literally baptized in the water and rose up to a new life.** While inside the fish, he offered thanksgiving for his deliverance from drowning and finally accepted to be used by God.

There was a spiritual change in Jonah’s heart. **Becoming a Christian is not simply a matter of being baptized. It is a matter of spiritual transformation.**

That is how the world knows Jesus. People see Jesus through you and through me. So, this is what Jesus is telling us in that passage. **That we, in our own life, as Christians, as the church, are the sign of Jonah to this evil and adulterous generation.**

Conclusion:

Perhaps you are right now running away from God. This story tells us about something that you can experience personally. You can know God and the power of His resurrection. The God who saved Jonah can save you. His power is at work today in the world. And Christians, the regenerated people, are the sign that proves that this divine power is real and active.