

Sunday, October 22, 2017

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What Is the Sign of Jonah?

Matthew 12:38–45

(black Bibles page 817; Children's Bibles page 1178)

Did you ever want a sign from God?

Did you ever *demand* one? (Note: not recommended.)

How is Jonah “a sign” for understanding Jesus? Three ways:

[1] Jonah in the fish *points to* Jesus' Death and Resurrection

- “For just 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.” (Matthew 12:40)

[2] Jonah preaching to the Ninevites *points to* Jesus preaching

- “For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation... The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah...” (Luke 11:32)

Now the subtle but profound one:

[3] God's Word going to the Ninevites (Gentiles) *points to* the Gospel of Christ going to the Gentiles (i.e. all nations!)

- Jesus cites the examples of the Ninevites and the Queen of the South (Sheba) – both are Gentile examples!

- After Jesus rises from the dead, the mission of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles will begin (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10).

- This is another way that the book of Jonah is a foreshadowing sign for something that God will do in Jesus.

The “sign of Jonah” is disappointing and challenging for the Jewish scribes, Pharisees, and crowds:

- It seems like no sign at all! (see Mark 8:12) No immediate miracle on demand like they wanted.

- Jesus challenges them by saying that *his preaching should be enough!* They don't need a sign.

- Jesus gives them an ironic sign in his prediction of his Death and Resurrection: “Some of you will conspire to kill me, but that will only enable the supreme miracle and sign: I will rise again.”

- With the reference to the Gentile Ninevites (and Queen of the South), Jesus is subtly pointing them to an angry Jonah: “What if God brings his Word to the Gentiles like never before? Will you rejoice or be angry?”

Applications for us?