

# The Sign of Jonah & the Resurrection

(Easter 2025—4/20/25)

Please turn to *Matthew 12:38-42*.

***When Jesus walked the earth some believed in Him, and some didn't.***

Those who didn't ignored the prophetic signs He was already doing that proved Who He was: curing the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, casting out demons, raising the dead, and healing any sickness or disease. He performed most of these miracles in public in front of many witnesses.

Despite this, **some continued to doubt** Who He was and ask for MORE signs. This was Jesus' famous response:

**[Mat 12:38-42 ESV]** 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except **the sign of the prophet Jonah**. 40 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. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

**In case you need a refresher on the story of the Prophet Jonah**, the Lord told him to go to the city of Ninevah to give said people a warning . . . ***AND the chance to repent and be spared of God's wrath***. Jonah resisted the call, fleeing in the opposite direction by ship.

**PAUSE: why didn't Jonah obey God? Why run in the other direction?** Two reasons 1) he hated the Ninevites who had committed terrible acts toward Israel in the past and 2) it was few and far between that God have Gentile nations the chance to repent and be spared! Why not? He didn't have a covenant with those nations back then, only Israel. Some of those nations didn't even know who He was and most certainly didn't worship or obey Him. It was unprecedented that the LORD would have a prophetic word for them and offer to spare them.

**Jonah gets on a ship and a terrible storm is going to capsized it.**

The sailors recognize Jonah has done something to make his God angry and they toss him overboard into the sea. The Bible records that either a whale or large fish swallowed him up

then spat him out on the beach at Ninevah...*meaning he ended up where he was supposed to go in the first place.*

**As he's standing there on the shore** God reminds him to go and give the prophetic warning to the Ninevites and he does. An interesting thing happens:

**[Jon 3:4-10 ESV]** 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. 6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

**Please understand Jonah's angst:** it wasn't just that the Ninevites had done terrible things to his people. **It was the fact that God was giving them a chance to repent, something He almost never did with unbelieving nations.**

**Now let's ask some important questions:**

- Why would pagan unbelievers who worship their own gods listen to a Hebrew Prophet?
- Why would people who hate Israel and had a past of oppression over them, suddenly take his message seriously to the point of calling a citywide fast and dressing in sackcloth and ashes?
- Why didn't they just laugh at him and send him away?

Behold the glory of God! **God took Jonah's disobedience and turned into a convincing miracle**...a SIGN to the Ninevites to take Jonah seriously and repent. *The main god the Ninevites worship was Dagon, the fish-god, who lived in the sea.*

**Did you also know that the sea is compared to the underworld**, to Hell? It's considered a place of darkness and the abode of the dead by most people in the ancient world, including the Hebrews and Ninevites.

**Where did Jonah emerge from?** He was spat out of the mouth of a giant fish from the sea.

**THIS IS THE SIGN OF JONAH.** A man disappears, is brought down to dark depths, then reappears 3 days later...with a message.

**Imagine that you're a Ninevite brought up your whole life to worship the fish god, Dagon.** One day a miraculous event occurs that shakes you to the core: a giant fish appears on your shores, swimming rapidly toward your beach! Things get even crazier when the fish opens its maw and spits out this man...who then says he has a prophetic word for you. **YOU'RE GOING TO HANG ON EVERY WORD HE SAYS AS TOTAL TRUTH.**

**Our God isn't stupid. He knows how to get to people and church: we must accept this.**

- He doesn't always send a shining holy angel speaking King James, sometimes it's a giant fish and an unwilling prophet!
- He doesn't always send a clean-cut preacher to share the Gospel, but maybe a guy in a biker gang.
- He doesn't always send someone properly raised in the church their whole lives to pray for you, but maybe an ex-drug addict or stripper who found Jesus.
- ***The Lord will speak to us in a way that He knows will impact our spirits.*** He'll send the people who will get through to us.

In order for His message to get through to the Ninevites, **God needed to hit them with a sign of Biblical proportions** and got exactly the result He wanted: the Ninevites repented and were spared! This is a big deal because they didn't believe in the Hebrew God!

**Now back to Jesus.** He's labeled His generation as being "wicked and adulterous" meaning they've turned away from the Lord and refuse to listen to Him. Despite Jesus performing all the signs the OT prophesied the Messiah would, ***the stubborn among them still didn't believe.*** Please note that the stubborn never denied the miracles of Jesus, including the people He raised from the dead. As a matter of fact, there was a plot to kill Lazarus after the fact to try and take away from Jesus' glory!

**Therefore Jesus said that the stubborn would receive only the sign of Jonah** and told them exactly what that would be. As we see in Matthew, He was getting pretty famous and from the common man & woman all the way up to King Herod and Pontious Pilate. ***He told them all He was going to disappear into the underworld—"the heart of the earth"*** as He called it and they would have known where He was talking about.

Not such a big deal because everyone dies and goes there.

**But then He said He would going to reappear—walk out of there.**

Matthew doesn't record the people's reaction to this, but at least one of them must have been like *“say what?! Is He claiming He's going to come back from the dead all by Himself?!”*

Even those who had seen Jesus raise people from the dead should have been amazed by this claim because in those cases, *Jesus was the Facilitator*. He was the presence saying “Lazarus, come out!”

But claiming He was going to come back from the dead w/o a human facilitator could only be **done by...God Himself.**

Yet we know what happened!

**[Luk 24:1-12 ESV]** 1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. 5 And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." 8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

**2 angels are standing there,** just as 2 angels stand next to the presence of God on the Ark! They tell the ladies that Jesus is risen! He has beat death!

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**Our Lord appears! They're able to see and touch Him! He did everything He said He would!**

**His resurrection from the dead was the "sign of Jonah" in His time!**

If you begin reading the book of Acts, **you'll notice that a large part of the Gospel the Apostles were preaching is that Jesus rose from the dead.** When John and Peter are brought before the Sanhedrin, they command the Apostles to specifically refrain from telling people that Jesus had risen. They were bugged more about that than anything else!

**Him coming back from the dead was like Jonah being spit out onto the beach by a giant fish.** Fortunately all the Ninevites repented, but imagine if the religious caste had not. Sort of like gov't and MSM today, they would tell people NOT to believe what they were seeing with their own eyes. NOT to listen to the reluctant prophet who has a message God

wants delivered. NOT to be convicted of sin, repent, and cry out to God for mercy. NOT to have hope that God will bless them instead of punishing them.

**When Jesus appeared risen from the grave, THAT was a big problem for the priests and Pharisees.** When the Apostles quickly and boldly spread this news—this sign of Jonah—people believed by the thousands and were saved!

Tell people God will forgive them of their sins, yes. *Also tell them that Jesus rose from the dead and His promise is WE WILL TOO!*

**[Rev 1:17-18 ESV]** 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."