



THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW



Something Greater is Here

Matthew 12:38–42



Matthew 12:38–42

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.”



Matthew 12:38–42

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.”



1. The demand for a sign (12:38)

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”



Proverbs 12:1

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but one who hates correction is stupid.



John 6:30–31

³⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”



2. A sign for the blind (12:39–40)

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.”



If they have not been convinced by what has already happened, what sort of sign can hope to persuade them?

— R. T. France



Numbers 14:11

And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?”



James 4:3–4

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people!



James 4:6

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”



2. A sign for the blind (12:39–40)

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3. A sight of transcendent greatness (12:41–42)

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.”



Jonah 3:4

“In forty days, Nineveh will be demolished!”



Jonah 3:5–6

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.

Repenting Like a Ninevite (Jonah 3:5–9)

3:5	“believed God”	full faith
3:5	“called for a fast”	deep sorrow
3:5	“put on sackcloth”	open shame
3:5	“from the greatest to the least”	widespread humility
3:8	“call out mightily to God”	desperate prayer
3:8	“turn from his evil way” “from the violence in his hands”	radical change
3:9	“God may turn and relent”	gospel hope



Jonah 3:10

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.



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