

What is the sign of Jonah?

Question

Answer

The phrase “sign of Jonah” was used by Jesus as a typological metaphor for His future crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Jesus answered with this expression when asked by the Pharisees for miraculous proof that He was indeed the Messiah. The Pharisees remained unconvinced of Jesus’ claims about Himself, despite His having just cured a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute. Shortly after the Pharisees accused Jesus of driving out demons by the power of Satan, they said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:38–41).

To fully appreciate the answer that Jesus gave, we must go to the Old Testament book of Jonah. In its first chapter, we read that God commanded the prophet Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and warn its people that He was going to destroy it for its wickedness. Jonah disobeyed and ran from the Lord and headed for the city of Tarshish by boat. The Lord then sent a severe storm that caused the crew of the ship to fear for their lives. Jonah was soon thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish where he remained for “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:15–17). After the three-day period, the Lord caused the great fish to vomit Jonah out onto dry land (Jonah 2:10).

It is this three days that Jesus was referring to when He spoke of the sign of Jonah. Jesus had already been producing miracles that were witnessed by many. Jesus had just performed a great sign in the Pharisees’ presence by healing a deaf man who was possessed of a demon. Rather than believe, they accused Jesus of doing this by the power of Satan. Jesus recognized their hardness of heart and refused to give them further proof of His identity. However, He did say that there would be one further sign forthcoming, His resurrection from the dead. This would be their final opportunity to be convinced.

Jesus’ paralleling of the Pharisees with the people of Nineveh is telling. The people of Nineveh repented of their evil ways (Jonah 3:4–10) after hearing Jonah’s call for repentance, while the Pharisees continued in their unbelief despite being eyewitnesses to the miracles of Jesus. Jesus was telling the Pharisees that they were culpable for their unbelief, given the conversion of the people of Nineveh, sinners who had received far less evidence than the Pharisees themselves had witnessed.

But what are we to make of the phrase “three days and three nights”? Was Jesus saying that He would be dead for three full 24-hour periods before He would rise from the dead? It does not appear so. The phrase “three days and three nights” need not refer to a literal 72-hour period. Rather, according to the Hebrew reckoning of time, the days could refer to three days in part or in whole. Jesus was probably crucified on a Friday (Mark 15:42). According to the standard reckoning, Jesus died at about 3:00 PM (Matthew 27:46) on Friday (day 1). He remained dead for all of Saturday (day 2) and rose from the dead early on Sunday morning (day 3). Attempts to place Jesus’ death on Wednesday to accommodate a literal 72-hour period are probably unnecessary once we take into account the Hebrew method of reckoning of each day as beginning at sundown. So it seems that the expression “three days and three nights” was used as a figure of speech meant to signify any part of three days.

God would often use signs (or miracles) in the Bible to authenticate His chosen messenger. The Lord provided Moses with several miraculous signs in order to prove to others that he was appointed by God (Exodus 4:5–9; 7:8–10; 19:20). God sent down fire on Elijah’s altar during Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:36–39). He performed this miracle to prove that the God of Israel was the one true God. Jesus Himself would perform many miracles (or “signs”) to demonstrate His power over nature (Matthew 4:23; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 8:22–24; John 6:16–24). The “sign of Jonah” would turn out to be Jesus’ greatest miracle of all. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead would be God’s chief sign that Jesus was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah (Acts 2:23–32) and establish Christ’s claims to deity (Romans 1:3–4).

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Read: Mathew 12:38-41; 16:1-4; Mark 8:11,12 and Luke 11:16,29-32

1. Introduction

On several occasions during his life on earth, the Lord Jesus referred to the story of Jonah. Each time this happens he is confronting the unbelief of his people. The Saviour declares the good news of redemption and renewal. In him the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. Christ battles against Satan and his kingdom, and Jesus comes to deliver this earth from him. Slowly but surely the devil is forced to give up. Jesus forces him further and further into retreat. Jesus’ preaching is emphasized by signs and wonders. He heals the sick. The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. He even helps people who are demon-possessed out of their difficulties. Through him they become completely normal and regain control of themselves.

In this battle Satan mobilizes the unbelief of the Israelites to arrest the progress of Christ and his kingdom. Sometimes he uses the Pharisees with, or without, the Sadducees and sometimes he uses the “ordinary” people. They try to challenge Christ’s position by asking for a sign. Usually Jesus then refers to Jonah. They receive no other sign from him except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

But what is meant by that? In what way was Jonah a sign for the Ninevites? And how can Jonah be a sign for those in Jesus’ time? And what is the meaning of this sign for us?

This chapter is about these and similar questions. As starting point we will use the scriptures which speak of this sign. (Matthew 12:38-41; 16:14; Mark 8:11,12; Luke 11:16, 29-32).

2. Text notes

A repeated question ↩

The Lord Jesus refers to the sign of Jonah on three different occasions which may be distinguished.

a. The first time (Matthew 12:38-41) it happens as a result of slander by the Pharisees amongst the assembled multitude (Matthew 12:24). The Pharisees were incited by scribes from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22; Matthew 12:38). The inducement was the reaction of the people to the healing of a possessed man, who was blind and dumb (Matthew 12:22). According to the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus drove evil spirits out by Beelzebul, prince of these spirits. In other words, Jesus is an ally of the devil. Therefore they ask Him to give them a sign. This discussion takes place in a house. (Mark 3:20).

b. The second time (Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:11,12), the reference to the sign of Jonah follows the feeding of the four thousand (Matthew 15:29-39; Mark 7:31-37). Jesus leaves Decapolis immediately after the feeding takes place (Mark 7:31; 8:10), crossing the Sea of Galilee. Now the Pharisees, together with the Sadducees, come to Jesus, finding him on the west shore in the region of Magadan (Matthew 15:39). This time the request for a sign stands more on its own. There is no direct occasion for it because of any sort of reaction from the people.

c. The third time (Luke 11:16, 29-32) Jesus refers to the sign of Jonah is during his last major journey to Jerusalem. He stays beyond the Jordan. Now the demand for a sign comes from people in the multitude. It is in reaction to the driving out of an evil spirit from a possessed man who was also dumb.

The reason for the demand. ¶

Why do the people ask Jesus for a sign? What is the purpose of it?

a. The first (Matthew 12:38-41) we read how this question came forward after the healing of a possessed man who was also blind and dumb (v. 22). The multitudes are beside themselves. They are amazed. Their reaction is understandable because the healing happened to a man who was particularly heavily handicapped. All ways of reaching him were blocked. He was not only blind so that he could see nothing of Jesus, he was also in no state to speak or listen. Moreover, he was also possessed by an evil spirit. Such a person is inaccessible to anyone. But Jesus heals him. He makes himself accessible to him, so that all ways to Christ are re-opened. The thoughts of those present (there were many) go in one specific direction. Hesitatingly they ask if Jesus is perhaps the Son of David, the great King who would come. Hence the harsh interference by the Pharisees who immediately react to this line of thinking from the people, as though they have been stung by a wasp. They accuse the Saviour of being an ally of the devil. According to them, that would be why he can do such unimaginable things. The Lord Jesus shows them how contradictory their accusations are. In this way they also slander God's Spirit who works in him. He warns the Pharisees to give up this resistance to him.

owth the demand for a sign. On the basis of the translation in the RSV you could easily think the demand was a friendly and polite one. In reality it is a harsh demand: "we want to see a miraculous sign from you." There is no trace of politeness. The scribes and Pharisees do address Jesus as "Teacher," but they first want proof that he is justified to establish himself as teacher. He must legitimize himself. For them, the miracles he does are not enough. These can be explained in different ways. They ask for a sign that would serve as proof of legitimacy. By this it is clear that they ignore Jesus' warning. They do not want to accept him as the Son of David. They ignore the clear evidence through unbelief. They first dismiss him by calling him a servant of the devil and they immediately follow this with their demand. Jesus may be able to do great things that make a big impression, but they, the scribes from Jerusalem (cf. Mark 3:22), are there to protect the crowds. They must examine Jesus' credentials to attach their stamp of approval. Only then will he be accepted.

b. Matthew 16:1-4 and Mark 8:11-12 are also about the request for proof of legitimacy. The question comes from the circle of the Pharisees and Sadducees, two parties which normally live in tension with each other. The reason for the demand is now not a reaction from the people. It is more or less separate from what has proceeded. The Pharisees and Sadducees remind Jesus of an issue which, according to them, he has not yet made clear to them. He acts with authority. But from whom does he have that authority? He does many miracles but are his deeds legitimized by God? The request for a sign seems to be a good way to test Jesus on this point. They wished for "a sign from heaven." God himself must give the sign. A sign like that of Elijah. Then fire came out of the heavens. Everybody could see that Elijah served God. Could they not also expect such a sign from the Messiah?

After the events of Matthew 12, the Pharisees and Sadducees bother Jesus with this question again. In this they demonstrate a consistent resistance to him. In unbelief they look past the heavenly signs already present.

c. We see the same happening in Luke 11. Jesus drove an evil spirit out of someone who was dumb (v.14). The crowds are amazed as they hear the dumb man speak. Once again the accusation that Jesus drives out evil spirits in the name of Beelzebub is heard (v.15). The difference with other occasions is that now it comes from the people themselves. The same is true of the demand for a sign from heaven. The rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees and Sadducees is now reflected in the reaction of the people. The crowds want to test Jesus too. He first has to prove his legitimacy to them. The resistance to Jesus in the appears to have spread considerably.

Angry and adulterous ¶

In their demand for a sign, the unbelief of the people becomes evident. This is why the Saviour talks about an evil and adulterous generation (Matthew 12:39; 16:4; cf. Luke 11:29). If the people looked at the miracles Jesus had performed, they would have absolutely no reason to doubt. Their doubt is caused by a shortage of love for, and faithfulness to, God. The relationship between God and his people is often compared to a marriage. But a marriage relationship without love and faithfulness will always go wrong. When you assume that the love of your husband is uncertain, you make demands. He must first do this or that, before you can believe that his love exists. While you are busy making your demands, your marriage begins to break up. A marriage cannot exist on a foundation of suspicion. Certainly, suspicion of the Lord should have no place. If you look at Jesus in through the eyes of your love for God, you can have no doubts. You see it happening before your eyes. The blind regain their sight. The lame walk. Possessed people are released from the power of Satan. The love of God illumines everything (cf. Isaiah 29:18,19; 35:5,6; 61:1).

But the people of Jesus' time are evil and adulterous. They do not take the love of God seriously. They consider the possibility that they are being deceived! And this while all God's love in the form of Jesus Christ stands before them. Through him you look directly at the Heavenly Father's heart. All the love God's people need is given to them in Christ. However, the people of those times put Jesus at a distance. God must first show that he is serious about his love. "Evil and adulterous" is therefore a pointed assessment.

The sign is given ¶

In Matthew 12:39 as well as in Matthew 16:4 and Luke 11:29, the sign of Jonah comes to the forefront in a specific way. Jesus says repeatedly that the people of his generation will receive no other sign than that of Jonah, the prophet. The people do therefore receive a sign, a real proof of legitimacy. But it is a very particular sign. It is not instantly the proof they were expecting. It comes across as a riddle, but it will have to suffice.

In Mark 8:12 it looks like Jesus refuses to give a sign. However, the end of the verse can also be translated as an unfinished sentence: "Truly I say to you, if this generation received a sign...!" Jesus "sighs deeply in his spirit". You can see how this demand for a sign affects him. It causes him much sorrow. The implication of his answer would then be "Woe to you if the sign comes! It will not be good. You people who have already seen me do so much will not gain from it. On the contrary, because of this sign the judgment on your unbelief will be heavier."

Thus, in all the texts mentioned, Jesus does respond to the question of his legitimacy even though it is so rudely demanded from him. What Jesus does not do is satisfy the unbelief of his generation. He distances himself from it. This is why they receive no sign other than that of Jonah, a sign which remains a mystery for unbelievers. It can only be understood as proof of legitimacy by faith.

The answer is not always the same ¶

Jesus did not ansoxen outside, and overturned the tables of the money changers. The Jews ask him (John 2:18) "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus gives a puzzling answer here too. "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Going by their reaction, the Jews did not understand him. The disciples too, only understood what he meant, after Christ's resurrection (v.22).

Jonahs legitimization ¶

What does the sign of Jonah consist of? What does the Lord mean, when he points to Jonah? The meaning is that Jesus proves his legitimacy in the same way that Jonah had done so. But what proof of legitimacy did Jonah take to Nineveh? It cannot have been the judgment which he had to pronounce over Nineveh because then the sign would never have become reality. How could Jesus then have referred to that?

Moreover, Jonah's proof of legitimacy is not threatening in itself. Nor is it possible to conclude that from Matthew 16:1-4. The threatening aspect of it is when people reject the evidence in unbelief. Jesus shows in Matthew 16:1-4 that the demand for a sign reveals lack of understanding and lack of faith. His generation does not understand the state of affairs. They close their eyes to reality. By looking at the sky they could see what sort of weather it would be, why then can they not understand the meaning of the sign of the times? Jesus does many signs and miracles which are all proofs of the coming of God's Son. Even though he performs signs and wonders, people cannot see through their unbelief.

Jonah's declaration in Nineveh is not his proof of legitimacy either. That would conflict with what is stated in Luke 11:30. There Jesus says that "Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites." It is not his message which gives Jonah legitimacy, but he, as a person, is the proof that God has sent him. His legitimacy has to do with his appearance as prophet. This is why there is constant reference to Jonah, the prophet. But the sign by which he proves his legitimacy is, evidently, himself.

G. A peculiar sign ¶

How is Jonah himself, his own proof of legitimacy? Matthew 12:40 shows that it has to do with what he has experienced. After having been for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea

9. Is it right that faith comes before experience (cf. section 3.3)? Is that not a cold shower precisely when your life has become cold?
10. What similarity is there between the sign of Jonah and, for example, the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) or a miracle from the Lord Jesus (e.g. Mark 2:1-12)? And what differences can be pointed out?

What is the Sign of Jonah?

In the Gospel for Wednesday (Wednesday of the First Week of Lent) the Lord says, This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah (Lk 11:30). What is the sign of Jonah? Does it apply today?

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke present two signs of Jonah, one of which particularly concerns us here.

First Sign: In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus invokes Jonah in a twofold way: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt 12:40). In this image, Jonah's descent into the belly of the whale is a sign of the Lord's descent to Sheol. For the sake of brevity, I would like to set aside this first sign and go on to discuss the second sign of Jonah. (Matthew's Gospel sets this second sign forth in essentially the same way as does the Lucan version.)

Second Sign: In the Lucan version, read at today's Mass, the mention of the whale is omitted and only this second sign is declared: This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here (Luke 11:29-32).

But what exactly is this (second) sign of Jonah? On one level, the text seems to spell it out rather clearly. Jonah had gone to the Ninevites with this message: Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed (Jonah 3:3). In response, the Ninevites (led by their King) repented, fasted, and prayed. Seeing their actions, God relented and did not destroy them. So on one level the sign of Jonah is the message "Repent or die." Just as the Ninevites heard Jonah's warning, put faith in it, and were spared, so the people of Jesus' time should put faith in His warning to repent and believe the Good News. If they do not, they will meet with great disaster.

What would cause this disaster? The description of the sign of Jonah taps into the historical context of Jonah's ministry, but applied to the people of Jesus' time it has a polemical tone. Let's consider why.

1. When Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, he resisted. He must have thought that it was a no-win situation for him: either they would rebuff his prophecy (and likely kill him) or they would heed his message and grow stronger. (Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the mortal enemy of Israel, and Jonah had no interest in seeing them strengthened.)

2. When Jonah made his announcement of imminent destruction, Assyriads repented, and in their strength they would become a rod in God's hand to punish Israel. Isaiah the Prophet had well described Israel's crimes and said that punishment would surely come upon her from Assyria. God would use Assyria to humble and punish His people, Israel. Here is a key passage in which Assyria is described in this way: ... Assyria, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets (Isaiah 10:5-6).

Here, then, is a deeper meaning of the sign of Jonah: if Israel will not repent, then God will take their power and strength and give it to a foreign land that knows Him not. These foreigners will shame and humiliate Israel, inflicting God's punishment on them.

This is humiliating to Israel on two levels. First, a pagan country would repent while God's own people would not. Second, they are conquered by a foreign and unbelieving people. The destruction by Assyria was a devastating blow to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and resulted in the loss of the ten tribes living there. Only Judah and the Levites were left in the South as a remnant.

Let's apply this understanding of the sign of Jonah, first to Jesus' time and then to our own.

In Jesus' time the sign of Jonah meant that if Israel would not repent and accept the Gospel, God would take it from them and give it to the Gentiles. Jesus says elsewhere to his fellow Jews, Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit (Matt 21:43). Just as ancient Israel's refusal to repent led to its destruction by the Assyrians, so Israel's refusal to repent in Jesus' time would mean destruction by the Romans (in 70 A.D.). This was prophesied by Jesus in the Mount Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:1-25:46, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:5-36). According to Josephus, more than a million Jews were lost in this horrible war.

In our time, I suggest that the sign of Jonah may be active. I know that this may be controversial, but it seems to me that many Christians and Catholics in the decadent West have stopped loving life. Birth rates have dropped dramatically and are well below replacement level. We are on our way to aborting and contracepting ourselves right out of existence. God has loosed judgment on us in the form of the sign of Jonah. He seems to be saying this to us: "Fine, if you do not love life and are not zealous for the faith I have given you, then disaster is upon you. Others in this world still do appreciate larger families and are zealous for their faith. And even if they (like the Assyrians of old) are not Christian, I will use them to humble and punish you. They will grow and increase while you decrease. Perhaps when you are punished by a people who do not respect your religious liberty, you will repent and begin to love life."

In the European Union today, the birth rate is about 1.6 children per woman. Globally, Muslim women average 2.9 children. Do the math and realize that Europe as we have known it is coming to an end. In the United States the birth rate is 1.8 children per woman. In general, the Catholic world in the West is in decline, both in terms of our birth rates and our zeal for the faith. We are surely being diminished by our culture of death and decadent sloth.

Is it the sign of Jonah upon us today in the decadent West? You decide.

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A Christian and his friend, who did not know Christ, were discussing Jesus and His claim to be the only way to the Father (John 14:6). The believer humbly shared the Gospel with his friend to no avail. "If only I could see Jesus do a miracle," the non-Christian said, "then I would believe Him."

Such conversations have occurred repeatedly throughout history, beginning with Jesus and the scribes and the Pharisees. In today's passage, these scholars, no doubt enraged at His harsh words about them (Matt. 12:1-37), ask Jesus for "a sign" (v. 38)—a miracle that unambiguously demonstrates the messianic anointing of Jesus. Apparently, what He has done so far is not enough to convince these men. In their minds the Redeemer's works of deliverance could be attributed to Satan (v. 24). Even if this is not true, they do not think the exorcism of demons is so special since their disciples can also deliver people (v. 27).

The request is not necessarily wrong in itself; God gave Abraham a sign to confirm his faith (Gen. 15). But Jesus knows nothing can convince the scribes and Pharisees. They only seek more ammunition to use against Him. Besides, Jesus will not "bark on command," nor will He satisfy their whims (Matt. 12:39). Matthew Henry comments, "Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humors."

Jesus does, however, promise the "sign of the prophet Jonah" (v. 39). Many first-century Jews believed the Ninevites repented when Jonah preached because they knew God spoke through him, and they knew this because they knew God saved him from drowning (Jonah 1:17-3:10). Similarly, Jesus' resurrection, which is like Jonah's rescue (Matt. 12:40), also signifies God's vindication of Him and affirms the truth of His words (Rom. 1:1-4). Yet even this miracle will not be enough to make Jesus' hard-hearted contemporaries believe (Luke 16:31).

On judgment day, the generation that rejects God's Son will be condemned by the Ninevites and the "Queen of the South" (1 Kings 10:1-13; Matt. 12:41-42). Ironically, these pagans turned to the true God, but most Israelites, who will see the greater sign of their Lord's resurrection, will not believe.

Coram Deo

...there is plenty of evidence of the truth of Jesus in the accounts of His resurrection, the spread of the Gospel, and the lives and societies changed by obedience to His message. Pray that you would always be able to see these proofs for the truth of our Lord's words.

For Further Study

The Mind-Blowing Meaning Behind the Sign of Jonah

Recently I stumbled across what I thought was a rather silly meme:

Oof. Here's the thing: No matter if you believe Jonah is historical or ahistorical (and some Christians, like C.S. Lewis, believed it was the latter), this meme misses the point. Science tells us what nature does when left to itself; miracles happen because nature is not left to itself. Whoever wrote the book of Jonah probably understood that human beings don't normally get swallowed by whales, let alone survive if they did.

But did Jonah survive? No, and yes. Let's read Jonah's parts of the prayer from the whale's belly:

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish, and he said, "I called out of my distress to the Lord, and he answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; you heard my voice...

... "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever. Call to the Lord, O Lord, help from the Lord, O God, and he will answer you. The Lord sent the fish, and it swallowed Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And when the fish vomited him out, Jonah was there."

...and he answered me.

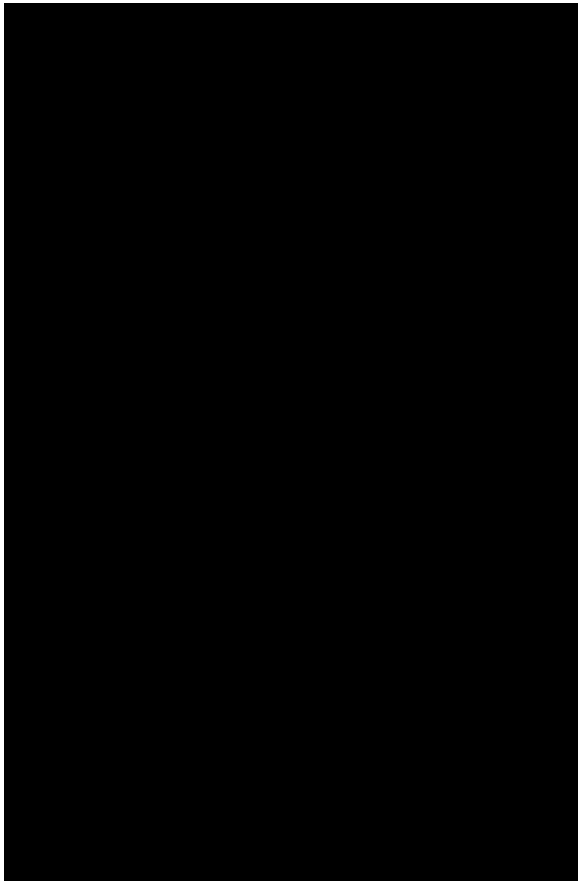
Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

The Mind-Blowing Meaning Behind the Sign of Jonah

By Erik Manning



Recently I stumbled across what I thought was a rather silly meme:



Oof. Here's the thing: No matter if you believe Jonah is historical or ahistorical (and some Christians, like C.S. Lewis, believed in his historicity), the point is that the Bible is not a science textbook. Science tells us what happens when left to itself; miracles happen because nature is not left to itself. Whoever wrote the book of Jonah probably understood that human beings don't normally get swallowed by whales, let alone survive if they did.

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... "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but you have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. "While I was in the belly of the whale, I called to the Lord, and he answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; you heard my voice..."

Let's consider these three key points from this text:

- First, the phrases belly of Sheol and the Pit are Old Testament terms that refer to the realm of the dead. (See Job 7:9, 33:18, Psalm 40:2, 49:14-15, 89:48)
- Secondly, the Hebrew says that his soul or nephesh fainted, meaning he took his last breath like a dying man.
- Lastly, when God says to Jonah "arise" this is the Hebrew word קם . This is the same word Jesus used when he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. Mark 5:41 reads: "Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha Kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!")"

So actually, the atheist has a good point; Jonah probably did die in the belly of a great fish, or whale. God had mercy on him and raised him from the dead, and he was able to carry out his mission.

The Sign of Jonah

OK, so where am I going with this? Remember when Jesus refused to give the Pharisees a sign? What was his reply? He said:

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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. 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."

(Matthew 12:38-41)

To be honest, I've thought before that this was a pretty weak parallel, no offense to Jesus. But this story makes much more sense if Jonah really did give up the ghost only to be miraculously revived to preach to the Ninevites. And there is even more. Like, why are the Ninevites so significant?

Throughout Old Testament history, Nineveh was not a friend of Israel. In the late seventh century BC, Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. The city's king, Sennacherib, laid siege to Jerusalem in 701 BC (2 Kings 18:13-19:37) and I'm sure the Jews never forgot. When the Babylonians destroyed Nineveh in 612, Nahum the prophet practically rejoiced. He calls Nineveh the "city of bloodshed". (Nah 3:1) Jonah probably fled because of these reasons. Like many Jews of his time, Jonah hated Nineveh.

The Sign of Jonah: More Than the Resurrection

By mentioning Jonah, Jesus was being purposely provocative. His death would lead not only to his resurrection but the repentance of the pagan nations that his audience would've despised. The sign of Jonah wasn't just his resurrection but would lead to the repentance of those hated Gentiles.

Now think about this for a second: From Augustine to Aquinas, Christian apologists would point to the success of the church as evidence of the truth of the Gospel. When they argued for the messiahship, divinity, and resurrection of Jesus, they (generally) failed to mention the evidence for an empty tomb or the reliability of the eyewitnesses. They didn't argue about historical probability and evidence, as important as I think that is.

Rather, they simply pointed out the crumbling pagan world around them; Gentile nations that had worshipped idols for millennia miraculously repented, turned, and began to worship the God of the Jews. Isaiah the Prophet also saw this when he said that the servant of the Lord will be "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 42:6-7) Many of the other Psalmists and Old Testament prophets predicted the same thing; that one day Israel would lead to the conversion of the nations.

The Sign of Jonah Has Been Fulfilled

Now look around: Since Jesus' death and resurrection, a tiny band of Jewish vagabond fishermen turned the world upside down, and their effect has been felt for generations until now. In the first century, Christianity spread throughout Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia, and more recently has spread throughout Africa, South America, and even in communist China. Christianity still has a stronghold in North America as well as parts of Europe. Over the past two millennia, billions and billions of non-Jews have repented and worshiped the God of Israel.

So this atheist meme makes a good point. Of course, Jonah wouldn't have survived. Jonah died, rose again 3 days later and his preaching converted the Ninevites. Jesus died, rose again 3 days later and his message through his apostles converted billions of Gentiles over the past 2000 years. The sign of Jonah has been fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection.

Jesus placed Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish on a par with His own resurrection. He compared the experience to His own. After all, Jesus was literally dead before he was resurrected. That is a powerful comparison. Jesus understood death and resurrection to be analogous to death and compares the story to His own life. In fact, he made this story a symbolical statement of His death and resurrection. It was the crowning proof of His deity, and He used it as a prophecy for His own impending death and resurrection. The story of Jonah teaches us that death is a reality that can only be avoided through repentance.

Jesus, for example, told his followers that He would be buried for three days and nights. As a result, He said that the three days and three nights would be the length of His suffering. In addition to Jonah, Jesus told his followers that He would be in the tomb for three days and three nights. The disciples understood this lesson and took it to heart. Those who have suffered, and those who have been afflicted by it, have a special place in their hearts.

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- 5 Stories Of Patience in the Bible- examples of Patience in the Bible
- 23 Bible Verses For Restoration

Jesus's own death and resurrection as a typological model for the sign of Jonah

Jesus mentions the "sign of Jonah" in two of his parables: Luke 11:29-32 and Matthew 12:38-42. The scribes and Pharisees ask him for a sign to prove His authority. But Jesus answers that he will not give additional signs to this evil generation. While Jonah is the sign of God to Nineveh, Jesus is the greater Jonah. Using Jonah as a typological model for His own death and resurrection is an interesting approach to this parable.

It is not clear why Jesus used Jonah as a model for his own death and resurrection. Nevertheless, we can make some assumptions. The ancients believed the sea was the entrance to hell and that Jonah was a sign of God's Son. This is evident from Jonah's burial and resurrected body on the third day, but we cannot say that Jesus was dead when he was buried.

The Pharisees, however, were not convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and so they kept asking him for a sign that would prove his claim. They were not yet convinced by Jesus' claims and accused Him of driving demons. But in response, Jesus said, "You will only see the sign of Jonah when you repent of your sins and believe in the name of the Son of God."

When we think of the sign of Jonah, we immediately think of Christ, but how do we make the connection between Christ and the prophet? The Old Testament, like the New Testament, contains the symbolism of the Old Testament and the New.

While the Old Testament represents Christ, the New Testament reflects Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, it is important to understand how the sign of Jonah compares with Christ, and what that means for Jesus.

The book of Jonah is an excellent example of the power of conviction and the difficulty of deciding whether one's heart is in line with God's. Throughout the book, we are challenged to ask whether our hearts match God's. As we wrestle with this question, we can see a clear connection between Jesus and Jonah. When we think of Jesus as the Son of God, we see a vivid and powerful portrait of Himself in Jonah.

As we see, the Bible is filled with examples of God using signs to authenticate His message. For example, God gave Moses signs to prove that Moses was His chosen one, and God used a flaming pillar on Elijah's altar during the contest with Baal. Similarly, Jesus did many miracles to show His power over nature. One of those miracles would turn out to be His greatest sign of power over nature.

Likewise, the incarnate Christ has the power to save people who would otherwise not be saved. His desire to leave his father's house and the country is reflected in his own flight. The Prodigal Son motif also has the same significance. While Jonah was content to live in the comfort of his home, Jesus joyfully endured torture in order to save the world from sinners.

Jesus's refusal to indulge the Pharisees in their questioning of Christ's legitimacy

The Pharisees and scribes often questioned the validity of Jesus. Jesus frequently addressed them as a generation of vipers and compared them to a place of eternal punishment. These comments show the importance of Jesus' words, especially in light of the upcoming crucifixion. Here, we can see the implications of Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees.

In Matthew 23, Jesus makes an explicit denunciation of the religious leaders. The Beatitudes condemn false religion and cite the Pharisees as the most extreme example. These Pharisees were the most extreme in their religious practices and the furthest from God. By refusing to indulge them, Jesus is demonstrating his sternness towards the Pharisees and his disciples.

The Pharisees' questions are based on the fact that they buried the prophets in the tombs of religious leaders. In this regard, the Pharisees were guilty of slandering the prophets. They also plotted to kill Jesus. Therefore, their question is not entirely unrelated to the question of Jesus' legitimacy. In fact, the religious leaders were the very ones who executed him.

The word woe means sorrow. It carries a sense of imprecation, but can also be compassionate. Jesus' seven woes were solemn declarations of future misery for sinners who refuse to repent. The scribes and Pharisees call down God's judgment and deserve to be pitied. This is why we should recognize and reject such false teachers.

In contrast, Jude makes no reference to his relationship with the Lord. Jude would have argued that his natural relationship with Christ was subordinate to his spiritual one. He would have shrunk from emphasizing this distinction. Because Jude was not a Christian, he would have opposed the authority and mission of Christ. Jude was the only apostle of the Apostles who refused to indulge the Pharisees in their questioning of Christ's legitimacy.

Jude's criticism of the Pharisees' antinomians' lack of reverence for God's holiness and righteousness reflects their attitude toward Christ. These people have been corrupted by the Pharisees, and their questioning of Christ's legitimacy was incongruous. Therefore, Jesus' refusal to indulge the Pharisees' questioning of Christ's legitimacy was crucial in defining the nature of the Pharisees' apostates.

The Pharisees' objection to the Gospel has led to several important differences in interpretation. Acts 6:7 refers to ecclesiastical faith, while Galatians 1:23 is a strong passage in favour of the former. However, the general usage of the New Testament is consistent with the former. As a consequence, we have two possible interpretations.