

Greater than the Temple, Jonah, Solomon  
Matthew 12:6,38-42

"But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple" (Matthew 12:6). "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:38-42).

**Matthew 12:1-8.** The encounter of the Lord with the Pharisees over the disciples picking corn on the sabbath day, which they were allowed to do (Deut.23:25). It was not that they picked the ears of corn, but that they did it on the sabbath day. The Pharisees held rather loosely to the first three commandments, but strictly to the fourth, i.e. the keeping of the sabbath (Matthew 23:23). The Lord states that if David the king, when rejected (1 Samuel 21:6) ate the shewbread, then He the Son of David when in a similar situation might also do the same. If the requirements of the Temple worship profaned the Sabbath (Numbers 28:9), He had rights greater than the Temple. If the Temple service would justify what the priests did in their ministrations, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in their attendance upon Him. Christ in a corn field was greater than the Temple.

"For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." Lord of the sabbath, i.e. Elohim is the Creator of the sabbath. Thus He has the authority to open and close dispensations and this was His defence of His disciples picking ears of corn on the sabbath.

**The Lord Jesus Christ came to be Prophet, Priest, and King to Israel.**

Therefore, we see in the Lord Jesus Christ a greater Temple and a greater Priest than the Levite temple priests, a greater Prophet than Jonah, and a greater King than Solomon.

**As Priest**, greater than the temple. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). As the great High Priest, He offered Himself once, not a daily sacrifice as they did. Christ as Priest needed no cleansing for He was sinless. The temple was where the glory of God dwelt, but Christ was greater than the temple. **Christ was the glory of the Temple.** "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22). As Priest, Hebrews 9:24, "to appear" (now) or "to present" Himself in the presence of God for us.

**As Prophet**, greater than Jonah. Jonah was called by God to speak a message to Nineveh, but Christ was **the Sent One from God**. He was the Word made flesh, declaring the Father, and was full of grace and truth (John 1:14,16,18). He speaks as the Living Word. It was prophesied, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut.18:15-18). Christ said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). And, Hebrews 9:26, "hath he appeared" (past) or "to manifest" to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

**As King**, greater than Solomon. Solomon received wisdom from God, but **Christ was the Wisdom of God**. "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Solomon was a great king, "And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years" (1 Chronicles 9:22,23,30). **Christ will reign forever**. Christ is ". . . the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). Christ will sit on the throne forever as prophesied (2 Samuel 7:16). ". . . for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings . . ." (Revelation 17:14). "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16). And, Hebrews 9:28, "shall appear" (future) or "will be seen" the second time without sin unto salvation, i.e. will not come to bear our sin and take away sin.

Matthew ch.1-ch.16:20, we have the record of the King being presented to Israel. This period closes, and from 16:21-ch.28:20, we have the record of the rejection of the King. In Matthew 16:1-20, we see three forms of unbelief:

(1) Vs.1-4, (similar request in Matthew 16:1-4), they demanded a sign from heaven, i.e. the hostility of the natural heart. (2) Vs. 5-12, their blindness and inattention to Divine testimony by miracles to the Person and nature of Christ, i.e. the stupidity of the natural heart. (3) Vs. 13,14, their indifference, indolence, and curiosity respecting the Messiah Himself, i.e. the frivolous nature of the natural heart.

The entrance of the Lord Jesus (through the gospel) reveals and tests the natural heart, it's thoughts, and professions. Where there is no sense of sin and need, the heart is uninterested, but when that need is felt there can be no rest apart from Christ. Curiosity (shew us a sign) excites a carnal interest, but Faith (Thou art the Christ) has need and only finds that need satisfied in Him Who is the Lamb of God and the Son of God.

It was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when He had already given so many. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as Abraham and Gideon, but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief. Christ might justly have said they would never see another miracle, but in His goodness says, they will have one sign of a different kind than all previous signs. It would surpass all the rest, complete and crown them all, i.e. the resurrection of Christ from the dead by His own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonah, and the greatest sign ever given to men. And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift this one off, for they said, "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, *lest his disciples come and steal him away*, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:64). None are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see, i.e. a closed mind.

An evil and adulterous generation, i.e. unfaithful and treacherous in relation to God as viewed morally. As an adulterous wife they departed from that God, to whom by covenant they had been espoused, and were guilty of infidelity. They abandoned the Word of God for their traditions and for the thoughts of men (Matthew 15:1-14; Mark 7:1-16). The heathen represented by the men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba, believed the Word of God proclaimed by a prophet and a king, but Israel refused to believe the Word from the mouth of Him Who was Greater than Jonah and Greater than Solomon. The Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching, but Israel hardened their hearts at Christ's preaching, a Greater Prophet. The queen of Sheba came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but the Jews would not be persuaded by the Wisdom of God, a Greater King.

In verse 40, we have a further explanation of the sign. Christ shall be so long in

the grave and then shall rise again. As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison and came to the land of the living again, so Christ on the third day should return to life and rise out of His grave. This became the gospel revealed to Paul and was sent abroad to the Gentiles as prophecied in Isaiah 42:1-7. Jonah was a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There are two key words in 12:40, "**as**" and "**so**." These two words are sufficient to show that a man's being miraculously kept alive for a particular period can be no type of another's being dead and buried for the same period. As our Lord was raised from the dead at the end of the third day and night, so Jonah must have been as miraculously raised from the dead. Jonah's prayer could have been uttered in the last moments of his life. In any case, the words of his prayer (Jonah 2:1-10) were not written down until after he had been vomited up alive. He would have been **no type** if he had not been dead.

Three days **or** three nights is an idiom, but when both are mentioned, i.e. three days **and** three nights, it is literal. The Hebrew day began at sunset, and the day was reckoned from one sunset to the next sunset, not from midnight to midnight as ours. "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in a day? . . .," in which case a day is reckoned from sunrise to sunset, and "twelve hours of the night," is reckoned from sunset to sunrise. An "evening **and** morning" was thus used for a whole day of 24 hours, as in Genesis 1. This agrees with Paul's testimony, ". . . a night **and** a day I have been in the deep" (2 Corinthians 11:25). When it states "days **or** nights" it is an idiom, which can be a part of three days, i.e. 6:00 P.M. Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday morning at 8:00 P.M.

Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, i.e. a personal illustration of the wrath and the grace of God. The word "sign" makes it evident that the facts of Jonah's entombment in the fish and his deliverance were known to the people of Nineveh, because they repented at the preaching of a dead and risen prophet. But Jerusalem refused to repent when summoned thereto by the dead and risen Christ. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:29-31).

### **THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH.**

Nineveh was the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy and of Babylonian origin. They were a part of the nation which held captive the ten northern tribes of Israel. It was in northern Iraq, north of Mosul and Kirkuk of today. It lay east of the Tigris river and was a walled city of about 90 miles circumference. A city of three days journey (a days journey was considered about 12 miles), therefore, about 36 miles diameter, and had a population of about 1 million people. It was city founded by Nimrod, Genesis 10:11. It was a great city, many inhabitants, great power and dominion, a wicked city, and for sometime ruled over the kings of the earth.

Jonah was told to go and cry against it, preach against the sins, and tell of the sudden ruin unless they repented. Jonah's problem may have been that he did not want any other nation to share in the honour of Divine revelation, yet Jonah knew that Assyria was to be God's sword of judgment against Israel. If Nineveh perished, Israel might be saved. God's mercy might arrest this overthrow of Nineveh. The Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly told Israel, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Nineveh was given 40 days to repent. Forty days in Scripture is the number of probation, testing, and humiliation. Moses, Elijah, and Christ were all tested for forty days. From Pentecost to the destruction of Jerusalem was 40 years probation, but that guilty nation refused to humble itself and repent, even at the preaching and miracles of Christ. God's plan was to

teach Israel by the example of Nineveh how unexcusable was their own impenitence, and how inevitable their ruin. The Ninevites and the Queen believed without even the working of one miracle, but the Greater of them both was rejected though He had wrought many miracles, and all miracles of mercy.

The entire truth of Romans is seen in that grace warned Nineveh of approaching wrath. Thus both the wrath of God and the grace of God demonstrate the love of God. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, "For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (Luke 11:30). They must have heard of his deliverance from the great fish. He was embodied in it for 3 days and 3 nights, and so was a type of Christ who was 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth, a prisoner for our debt. The word "sign" makes it evident that the facts of his entombment in the fish and his deliverance were known to the people of Nineveh. They repented at the preaching of a dead and risen prophet, but Jerusalem refused to repent when summoned thereto by the dead and risen Messiah.

Grace delivered the mariners when they cried (1:14). Grace delivered Jonah when he cried (2:10). Grace delivered the men of Nineveh when they cried (3:10).

### **TYPE OF CHRIST**

Jonah had been a prophet in Israel before being sent to Nineveh. He is named in 2 Kings 14:25, "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amattai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher." This was about 690 B.C. in the period of Jeroboam and the earlier years of Uzziah, (Isaiah 6, the time of Isaiah also). His name signifies a dove and his father's name Amittai means "my truth," therefore, "Jonah, the son of truth."

Nineveh's sin and iniquity is the same as our condition. Jonah rose from the dead to preach a message of repentance to them. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead to justify us from our sin and guilt, and we have heard of it through preaching (Romans 14,15,17).

Jonah was told to go to Nineveh (1:2), and (1:3) went down to Joppa. Christ was sent by God and came to this earth in His incarnation.

1:12-15, Jonah was cast out into the sea. To save the ship's company and perhaps to save his nation by ensuring the overthrow of Nineveh, Jonah was willing to sacrifice his life. Christ came a willing and voluntarily sacrifice unto His own and His own received Him not. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). He was cast out by Israel, "And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him" (Matthew 21:39). Christ said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). It was His presence that caused the tempest. Personally, when Christ was laid in the tomb, the tempest of His crucifixion was over. These men rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but to no avail. Israel attempted to gain righteousness and deliverance by their works and law keeping and would not believe the gospel. Jonah must be cast out, he could not jump out. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The sea (type of mankind) ceased from her raging. Christ made peace through the blood of His cross. Personally, Jonah caused the enmity, but it is who God began the reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

1:14, "let us not perish for this man's life." Concerning Christ, "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50).

1:17, Jonah's grave was a strange one (I believe he was dead.) So was Christ's,

"Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man laid" (John 19:41).

Chapter 2, fore-pictures the experiences of Christ's soul when in hades and reveals that Christ, as during His life, upon the cross, and now upon the throne, trusted God even in that extremity, and called Him "My God" (Psalm 22:1). There are many references to the Psalms in this chapter which is a testimony to their antiquity and inspiration.

2:1,2, Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. (I believe this to be the record given after he was vomited out of the fish.) Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even unto his ears" (Psalm 18:3-6). "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold of upon me: I found trouble and sorrow" (Psalm 116:3). See also Psalm 69:1-3, 14-17; 120:1; 130:1. So it was darkness to Jonah, and had been as destructive too, if mercy had not prevented it. Note Jonah's earnestness and the greatness of the mercy (thou heardest my voice) given to one that was shut up in the grave.

2:3, "the deep" in the midst of the seas. Far from shore, i.e. the bottom of the seas. Christ was in the heart of the earth. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm 42:7). "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves" (Psalm 88:6,7). Floods, billows, waves are equal to our sin being laid upon Christ.

2:4, "I am cast out of thy sight." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalm 22:1). "For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee" (Psalm 31:22). Jonah would look toward God's holy temple, Christ would look to His Father, and we would look to Christ.

2:5, "The waters compassed me about." "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Psalm 69:1,2). The waters represent Christ's sufferings for us even unto death and in which he took our hell for us. The depth represents the deepest hole of the sea and the intensity of His sufferings. "The weeds wrapped around the head" represent the crown of thorns which He bore.

2:6, "the bottoms of the mountains" is an elegant description of the fathomless depths, the place where our sins were cast (Micah 7:19), and to be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12). "The earth with her bars was about me forever" speak of His sufferings." "The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me" (Psalm 18:5). See Psalm 22:12-17; 116:3. "Brought up my life" represents resurrection. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10).

2:7, "My prayer came in unto thee." "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even unto his ears" (Psalm 18:6). "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psalm 42:4).

2:9, "Salvation is of the Lord." "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people" (Psalm 3:8). "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God belong the issues from death" (Psalm 68:20).

2:10, Speaks of the resurrection. Psalm 16:10. "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters" (Psalm 18:16). "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psalm 22:22). "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the mirey clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (Psalm 40:2,3). Christ died and was buried to lay the storm which our sin had raised. He lay in the grave as Jonah did for 3 days and 3 nights, but on the third day He came forth.

Now we have hope and assurance of our own resurrection. Now His messengers can preach the gospel and remission of sins to all nations, which gospel was revealed to Paul and given to him to dispense (1 Corinthians 9:17). God sent a messenger to Nineveh, the Queen of Sheba had no invitation to come nor any promise of being welcome, but through the gospel of the Grace of God we can come with certainty of being received in Christ.

The great lesson in Jonah is that the devices of men shall not frustrate God's purpose, and what He hath said shall come to pass, as shown by the words, "**Now the word of the Lord. . .**" (Jonah 1:1).