

## The Sign of Jonah the Prophet

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What is the Sign of Jonah? Who is it directed to?

**The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.** He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? **A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.** Matthew 16:1-4.

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.** When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. **But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.** Matthew 12:38-50

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And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, **This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.** The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to **hear the wisdom** of Solomon; and, behold, **a greater than Solomon is here.** The men of **Nineve** shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they **repented at the preaching of Jonas**; and, behold, **a greater than Jonas is here.** **No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.** Luke 11:29-36

### **To See is to Know**

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and **anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Revelation 3:17-19.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall be as gods, **knowing good and evil.** And when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And **the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Genesis 3:4-7.

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“If Adam and Eve had never touched the forbidden tree, **the Lord would have imparted to them knowledge, knowledge upon which rested no curse of sin, knowledge that would have brought them everlasting joy. All that they gained by their disobedience was an acquaintance with sin and its results.**

“**The field into which Satan led our first parents is the same to which he is leading men today.** He is flooding the world with pleasing fables. By every device at his command he seeks to **prevent men from obtaining that knowledge of God which is salvation.**

“We are living in an age of great light; but much that is called light is opening the way for the wisdom and arts of Satan. **Many things will be presented that appear to be true, and yet they need to be carefully considered with much prayer; for they may be specious devices of the enemy. The path of error often appears to lie close to the path of truth. It is hardly distinguishable from the path that leads to holiness and heaven. But the mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit may discern that it is diverging from the right way. After a while the two are seen to be widely separated.**” *Testimonies to the Church*, volume 8, 290.

“The gold that Jesus would have us buy of him is gold tried in the fire; it is the gold of faith and love, that has no defiling substance mingled with it. The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the wedding garment which Christ alone can give. **The eye-salve is the true spiritual discernment that is so wanting among us, for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.**” *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890, par. 10.

### **Preaching is a Sign**

“Christ during His earthly ministry referred to the good wrought by the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh, and **compared** the inhabitants of that heathen center with the professed people of God in His day. ‘The men of Nineveh,’ He declared, ‘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.’ Matthew 12:40, 41. Into the busy world, filled with the sin of commerce and the altercation of trade, where men were trying to get all they could for self, Christ had come; and above the confusion **His voice, like the trump of God, was heard:** ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ Mark 8:36, 37.

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**“As the preaching of Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so Christ’s preaching was a sign to His generation. But what a contrast in the reception of the word!** Yet in the face of indifference and scorn the Saviour labored on and on, until He had accomplished His mission.

“The lesson is for God’s messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the true God as were the Ninevites of old. Christ's ambassadors are to point men to the nobler world, which has largely been lost sight of. According to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, the only city that will endure is the city whose builder and maker is God. **With the eye of faith man may behold the threshold of heaven, flushed with God's living glory.** Through His ministering servants the Lord Jesus is calling upon men to strive with sanctified ambition to secure the immortal inheritance. He urges them to lay up treasure beside the throne of God.” *Prophets and Kings*, 273, 274.

## **John**

**“The warning message of John was in the same lines as the warning to Nineveh, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown’ (Jonah 3:4). Nineveh repented, and called upon God, and God accepted their acknowledgment of Him.** Forty years of probation was granted them in which to reveal the genuineness of their repentance and to turn from sin. But **Nineveh turned again** to the worship of images; **her iniquity became deeper and more desperate than before, because the light had come and had not been heeded.**” *Selected Messages*, book 2, 149.

## **Millerites**

“We were disappointed but not disheartened. We resolved to submit patiently to the process of purifying that God deemed needful for us; to refrain from murmuring at the trying ordeal by which the Lord was purging us from the dross and refining us like gold in the furnace. We resolved to wait with patient hope for the Saviour to redeem his tried and faithful ones.

**“We believe that the preaching of definite time was of God.** It was this that led men to search the Bible diligently, discovering truths they had not before perceived. **Jonah was sent of God to proclaim in the streets of Nineveh** that within forty days the city would be overthrown; but God accepted the **humiliation** of the Ninevites and extended their period of probation. **Yet the message that Jonah brought was sent of God,** and

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Nineveh was tested according to his will. The world looked upon our hope as a delusion and our disappointment its consequent failure, but though we were mistaken in the event that was to occur at that period, there was no failure in reality of the vision that seemed to tarry." *Signs of the Times*, April 20, 1876.

## Christ

**"Now the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ, asking for a sign from heaven.** When in the days of Joshua Israel went out to battle with the Canaanites at Bethhoron, the sun had stood still at the leader's command until victory was gained; and many similar wonders had been manifest in their history. **Some such sign was demanded of Jesus. But these signs were not what the Jews needed. No mere external evidence could benefit them. What they needed was not intellectual enlightenment, but spiritual renovation.**

"O ye hypocrites,' said Jesus, 'ye can discern the face of the sky,'—by studying the sky they could foretell the weather,—'but can ye not discern the signs of the times?' **Christ's own words, spoken with the power of the Holy Spirit that convicted them of sin, were the sign that God had given for their salvation. And signs direct from heaven had been given to attest the mission of Christ.** The song of the angels to the shepherds, the star that guided the wise men, the dove and the voice from heaven at His baptism, were witnesses for Him.

"And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?' 'There shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.' As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, Christ was to be the same time 'in the heart of the earth.' And **as the preaching of Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so Christ's preaching was a sign to His generation. But what a contrast in the reception of the word! The people of the great heathen city trembled as they heard the warning from God.** Kings and nobles humbled themselves; the high and the lowly together cried to the God of heaven, and His mercy was granted unto them. 'The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation,' Christ had said, 'and shall condemn it: because they **repented at the preaching of Jonas**; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.' Matthew 12:40, 41.

**"Every miracle that Christ performed was a sign of His divinity.** He was doing the very work that had been foretold of the Messiah; but to the Pharisees these works of mercy were a positive offense. The Jewish leaders looked with heartless indifference on

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human suffering. In many cases their selfishness and oppression had caused the affliction that Christ relieved. **Thus His miracles were to them a reproach.**

“That which led the **Jews to reject the Savior’s work** was the highest evidence of His divine character. The greatest significance of His miracles is seen in the fact that they were for the blessing of humanity. **The highest evidence that He came from God is that His life revealed the character of God.** He did the works and spoke the words of God. Such a life is the greatest of all miracles.

“**When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees.** He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan’s insinuations. He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride. But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. **Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan?** Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. **When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God’s heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth.** Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, ‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ Ezekiel 36:26. The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. **A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle.** In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God’s witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son.

“**Those who desired a sign from Jesus had so hardened their hearts in unbelief that they did not discern in His character the likeness of God.** They would not see that His mission was in fulfillment of the Scriptures. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus said to the Pharisees, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ Luke 16:31. **No sign that could be given in heaven or earth would benefit them.**” *The Desire of Ages*, 406, 407.

## The Work of the Holy Spirit

**“The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The world can only be warned by seeing those who believe the truth sanctified through the truth, acting upon high and holy principles, showing in a high, elevated sense, the line of demarcation between those who keep the commandments of God, and those who trample them under their feet. The sanctification of the Spirit signalizes the difference between those who have the seal of God, and those who keep a spurious rest-day. When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the keeping of Sunday. Those who after having heard the truth, continue to regard this day as holy, bear the signature of the man of sin, who thought to change times and laws.”** *Bible Training School*, December 1, 1903.

## Leaders Passed By

“The Jewish rulers were in ignorance of the coming of the Just One, because they had not been making ready for him. They had been separating from God by wicked works. The positions in the service of the priesthood were filled by men wholly unfitted for the work,—men who had not hesitated to stoop to falsehood and even murder to gain the coveted honor. They were not ready for Christ’s coming. They had not heard the angel’s message, ‘Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.’ They had not heard the song of the heavenly host, because they were estranged from God. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. **The Lord could not enlighten them; for so great was the darkness surrounding them that they would not have made a right use of the light.**

“The priests and rulers began to ask themselves what these things meant. The shepherds had borne witness regarding the visit of the angels; now men from the far East bore the tidings, ‘We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.’ Men of another nation and faith were the first to herald the advent of the Messiah. If the report of the wise men were true, they, the rulers, stood in an unenviable position before their own people; **for they had been passed by, while strangers were enlightened.**” *Youth Instructor*, October 19, 1899.

## Out of Darkness

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9,10.

**“Those who have been dead in trespasses and sins are quickened to spiritual life.**

The faculties which God has given them for holy purposes are refined, purified, and exalted, and they are led to form characters after the divine similitude....

“Christ draws them to Himself by an unseen power. He is the light of life, and He imbues them with His own Spirit. **As they are drawn into the spiritual atmosphere, they see that they have been made the sport of Satan’s temptations, and that they have been under his dominion; but they break the yoke of fleshly lusts, and refuse to be the servants of sin.... They realize that they have exchanged captains, and they take their directions from the lips of Jesus.** As a servant looks to his master, and as a maid looks to her mistress, so these souls, drawn by the cords of love to Christ, constantly look unto Him who is the Author and Finisher of their faith. **By beholding Jesus, by obeying His requirements, they increase in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Thus they become changed into His image from character to character until they are distinguished from the world, and it can be written of them:** “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10).” *Amazing Grace*, 52.