

38. Jesus Taught About the Sign of Jonah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is the only one who is able to exercise total power over the demons of Satan. Those who try to cast out demons through any other power will only have temporary success because Jesus is the only One who gives the Holy Spirit to those who repent of their sin and place their faith in Him. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus told those who had evil hearts that the only sign that would be given to them would be the sign of Jonah.

One day, a woman made a statement about being blessed. Jesus then explained that there is a greater blessing by which we can all be blessed. Luke 11:27-28 says, “And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!’ But He said, ‘More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’” Several times during the ministry of Jesus, people tried to say that the family of Jesus received extra blessing, privilege or power. Each time, Jesus used the opportunity to explain that all those who become His true followers also receive this same blessing. Here, we see that this woman tried to say that Mary had received a special blessing. Jesus did not deny the fact that she was blessed.

Instead, Jesus told how any person can receive even greater blessing. The phrase translated “more than that” has the thought that “yes, that is true but even more important is this”. Paul used the word in Philippians 3:7-8 where we read, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Here, the word is translated “yet indeed”. Paul had just listed the things that had brought personal gain to his life before he became a Christian. Then, he said those things were worth nothing compared to what he received by placing his faith in Jesus. That is the same thought that we have here in Luke.

Jesus went on to explain that true blessing comes to those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The word translated “keep” means *to guard or keep something so that it is not violated*. This word is used twice in Acts 21:24-25 where we read, “‘Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.’” In these verses, we see that the church leaders recognized that Paul kept the law and that instructions had been given to the Gentiles about the things that they were to keep so that they were not violated.

Jesus went on to warn about those who seek signs. Luke 11:29-32 says, “And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, ‘This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up

in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.” Jesus warned the crowd that they were part of an evil generation.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, Paul wrote, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The Jews wanted Jesus to give them a sign to prove that He was God. Jesus told the crowd that the only sign that they would receive would be the sign of Jonah. Matthew tells us that some scribes and Pharisees had just asked for a sign. Jesus explained the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:40 which says, “For 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 sign that Jesus gave was His coming death and resurrection.

Jesus also said that the queen of the South (Sheba) would condemn the men of Jesus generation. She had come a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon. 1 Kings 10:6-7 say, “Then she said to the king: ‘It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.’” Solomon had great wisdom but Jesus was much greater than Solomon and the people were rejecting Him.

In the same way, Jesus said that the men of Nineveh would also rise up and condemn the generation that lived during the time of Jesus. The people of Nineveh had repented in sackcloth and ashes at the preaching of Jonah. Jonah 3:5-6 says, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” Here, we see that the people of Nineveh had true sorrow for their sins. In contrast, the people of Jesus day had one greater than Jonah speaking the Word of God to them and they had chosen to reject Jesus and His teaching.

At the same time, Jesus also invited the people to turn to Him for spiritual light. Luke 11:33-36 says, “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also *is* full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body *is* full of light, having no part dark, *the whole body* will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.” Jesus said that the purpose of a lamp is to give light so that people can see. The Word of God was given so that people could receive spiritual light. In addition, Jesus came to give spiritual light so that people could receive spiritual sight.

However, the problem of many of the people of the generation of Christ was that they could not

see spiritual light so Jesus gave another illustration. He said that the eye is like the lamp to the body. A person who has an eye that is good will receive light. Jesus had said earlier in Matthew 6:22-23, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” The word that is translated “bad” in both passages speaks of an evil nature or a bad condition. When this word is used in a physical sense, it speaks of an eye that is diseased or blind. When this word is used in a moral sense, it speaks of evil or wicked. The word is used four times in Matthew 12:34-35 where we read, “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” The hearts of the people were evil so their thoughts, words and actions were also evil.

In contrast, Jesus told them that their whole body could be full of light. Jesus came to give spiritual light to all who would believe. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” In John 8:30-32, Jesus gave a great promise to those who believed in Him. Those verses say, “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’” Jesus came to bring that truth to every person who would believe. Then, Jesus promised in John 8:36, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Jesus offered that freedom to all but many were unwilling to accept the truth and receive that freedom.

One of those who rejected the teaching of Jesus still invited Him to dinner. Luke 11:37-38 says, “And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.” Here, we see that the purpose of the Pharisee was not to show Jesus kindness but rather to look for an excuse to condemn Him. Jesus said in Matthew 23:27, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.” We are going to see in our next topic that Jesus gave a similar warning to the people who were in the house of the Pharisee that day.

We see in this passage that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is concerned about the heart of each person. We want to help our children understand that the Word of God will reveal the thoughts and intents of the heart; if they share the Word of God, He will speak through His Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God instead of their opinions.