

Folly of Seeking for a Sign

Matthew 12:38-45

Luke 11:24-36

Pharisees Seek a Sign

Texts:

Matthew 12:38-45,

38. Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.”

39. He answered “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40. 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.

41. 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 one greater than Jonah is here.

42. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

43. “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

44. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

45. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Luke 11:24-36,

24. “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’

25. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order.

26. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.’

27. As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”

28. He replied “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

29. As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

30. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.

31. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

32. 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 one greater than Jonah is here.

33. “No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.

34. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.

35. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.

36. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

Commentary:

Matthew 12:38, Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.”

I. Some of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign that what he taught was true.

A. The Jews were always looking for a sign, but refused to accept the signs which were provided.

B. Also remember that these Jews included some who had just accused Jesus of being in league with the devil, of casting out devils by the power of Satan himself.

C. Luke says they wanted a “sign from heaven.” (Luke 11:16)

D. This probably referred to some spectacular wonder in the sky without any particular value to suffering mankind.

E. Jesus had previously refused this type sign as when he did not jump from the pinnacle of the temple. (Matthew 4:6)

F. Jesus did perform miracles to prove his deity.

1. Luke 7:18-22, John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” When the men came to Jesus, they

said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’” At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

2. John 11:42, I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

3. Matthew 16:1, The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

Matthew 12:39, He answered “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

I. An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.

A. The first and twenty-first centuries (generations) are both evil and adulterous, morally and spiritually.

1. Isaiah 57-3, “But you – come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!”

2. Hosea 3:1, The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites,

though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”

3. Ezekiel 16:1-43, “Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a

jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the LORD GOD;) That thou hast also built unto thee an

eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied therewith. How weak is thine heart, saith the LORD GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy

whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.”

B. No sign will be given such an evil generation except the sign of Jonah, the prophet.

Matthew 12:40, 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.

I. This is the essence of the sign:

A. Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale (great fish, sea monster) and was then regurgitated on the shore.

B. Jesus was to be in the tomb three days and three nights and was then to be resurrected.

1. **Psalm 16:10, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.**

2. **Psalm 63:9, They who seek my life will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth.**

3. **Ephesians 4:9, What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?**

Matthew 12:41, 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 one greater than Jonah is here.

I. The men of Ninevah will condemn the Jews of the first century because Ninevah repented at the preaching of Jonah while the first century Jews did not repent upon hearing the preaching of one far greater than Jonah; that is, Jesus the Christ.

II. There's a great day of Judgment coming!

A. **Hebrews 9:27, Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,**

B. **2 Timothy 4:8, Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**

C. **2 Corinthians 5:10, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

Matthew 12:42, The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

I. The Queen of the South (Sheba) will also condemn the first century Jews because:

A. She heard of the wisdom of Solomon and traveled a great distance to see him.

B. A greater than Solomon appeared to the first century Jews in the person of Jesus and they totally rejected him.

Matthew 12:43, 44, “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

I. Jesus here speaks of a wandering demon who:

- A. leaves a man
- B. passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds no rest.

II. Parabolic representations:

- A. The “man” represents Israel in sin prior to the coming of John the Baptist.
- B. The “going out” represents the driving of evil out of Israel by the preaching of John the Baptist.
- C. The “swept and garnished” represent the outward improvement in the Jews following the preaching of John the Baptist.
- D. “Waterless places” were supposed to attract demons.

III. The demons decide to return to the man (Israel), the house they had before left.

- A. They find the house empty, swept, and garnished.
- B. The house was empty!
- C. An empty life (devoid of godliness) is ripe for the entrance of the devil.

D. Israel had not moved forward from John's ministry to appropriate the principles of the kingdom of God.

Matthew 12:45, Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

I. Israel by their rejection of Christ became worse, more corrupt, than before John the Baptist appeared on the scene.

II. The demon gathers a full complement of other demons more evil than himself and repossesses Israel's house.

A. 2 Peter 2:20, If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

B. Hebrews 6:4-6, It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Luke 11:27, 28, As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.” He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

I. In response to the praise of a woman in the crowd Jesus said that those who hear the word of God and keep it are more blessed than Mary who gave him birth.

II. We do not honor Jesus by worshipping Mary. We do honor to Jesus by hearing and obeying his teachings.

Luke 11:33-36, “No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”

I. A lamp is intended to give light to all in the house, not to be placed under a bushel or in a cellar where it does no good.

II. The lamp of the body is the eye.

A. Examine your eye to see that it is righteous giving light to the body rather than evil filling the body with darkness.

B. Check your spiritual visual acuity and perception.

1. Matthew 5:15, Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

2. Luke 8:16, “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

C. The Jews did not recognize the truth, Jesus’ deity. They were dark and spiritually blind.

III. Jesus would provide the brightest light to all by means of his death, burial, and resurrection.

Folly of Seeking for a Sign

Questions

1. Some _____ and _____ of the _____ said, “_____, we want to see a _____ from you.”

2. Jesus replied, “A _____ and _____ asks for a _____! None will be given it except the sign of the _____.”

3. What was this sign to which Jesus made reference? _____

4. The _____ of _____ and the _____ of the _____ would condemn the people of Jesus’ day. Why?

5. What is the meaning, application of Jesus’ parable of the evil spirit related in Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-36? _____

6. A woman in the crowd called out, “_____ is the _____ who gave you _____ you.” Jesus replied, “_____ rather are those who _____ the _____ of _____ and _____ it.”

7. What was the point Jesus was making by the parable of the lamp mentioned in Luke 11:33-36? _____

8. What sign, miracle could Jesus have performed that would have convinced the Jewish leadership that he was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah? _____

9. There’s a _____ of _____ coming!

10. We must all appear before the _____ of _____, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the _____, whether _____ or _____.