

# *Christ is Greater than Jonah*

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4/3/2005 (SUN) | Matthew 12:38-41

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.

(Matthew 12:38-41)

## **Three striking phrases in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew**

**Matthew 12:6** – In this place is one greater than the temple

**Matthew 12:41** – Behold, a greater than Jonah is here

**Matthew 12:42** – Behold, a greater than Solomon is here

Christ was and is a greater display of God's deity than the temple. He was the true tabernacle of God. Jesus was greater than the temple because He gives us better access to God, than the temple ever did... better sacrifice, priesthood, and temple. Christ is a greater manifestation of truth than the temple ever was. Jesus taught the truth, and exemplified the truth in ways that the temple only hinted at. We should have more delight in Jesus Christ, than the Jews had in their temple. Jesus is a living savior.

**Today, we want to consider the second of these great statements: Jesus is greater than Jonah.**

Jonah appears to be a strictly historical book, with the exception of one phrase of prophecy. Why placed among the prophets, and not among the books of history? Partly because it was a book written by a prophet, but mainly because of its historical events are themselves prophecy. Two of the major events in Jonah are prophetic of Christ and His ministry in the New Testament. Jesus invites us to compare and contrast Himself with Jonah. Jonah pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and His inclusion of the gentiles.

When the scriptures themselves tell us to see Christ, then we must accept them without any reservations.

For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

(Luke 11:30)

### **1. Jesus' obedience to God, was greater than Jonah's**

- a. Jonah was anything but submissive to the commands of God

b. Jesus gladly submitted to the commands of God - Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God ([Hebrews 10:5-7](#)). Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ([Philippians 2:5-8](#)). For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ([John 6:38](#)) And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. ([Matthew 26:39-43](#)).

## 2. Jesus' Sacrifice of Himself, was greater than Jonah's

- a. Jonah had to placate the wrath of God by the sacrifice of himself, so that his fellow sailors could be saved. He brought the wrath of God not only on himself, but on those around him. Jonah had to die for his own sins. Jonah brought the wrath of God on others.
- b. Jesus Christ was willing to be cast into the sea of God's wrath against our sins, in order that we might be saved and brought to God. Jesus died for our sins. Jesus took away the wrath of God that was intended for others. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: ([1 Peter 3:18](#)) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. ([1 Peter 2:24](#)) Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ([John 15:13](#)) For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. ([Mark 10:45](#)) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. ([John 6:40](#))

## 3. Jesus' Resurrection was Greater than that of Jonah's

- a. Jonah was in the belly of the fish, 3 days and 3 nights. The fish vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. Jonah experienced a type of death, and a

type of resurrection from that death, and eventually he died a natural death.

- b. Jesus was actually dead in the tomb for three days and three nights. He actually had a separation of His soul from His body. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. ([John 19:30](#)) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ([Romans 6:9-10](#)) Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. ([Romans 4:25](#)) But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. ([1 Corinthians 15:20](#)) O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ([1 Corinthians 15:55-57](#))

#### **4. Jesus' Message was greater than that of Jonah's**

- a. Jonah was not a very hopeful preacher. His message was one of condemnation, one of judgment, no hope, no deliverance, no direction, no encouragement, nothing but judgment and destruction. Jonah hated those to whom he was sent
- b. Jesus' message was full, complete, and clear, he set forth not only the wrath of God against sin and the judgment that would come against them, but He also pointed people to salvation, filled them with hope, reached out to the worse of sinners, and gave them mercy. The worst of sinners are invited to salvation. Those who come to Him, He would in no wise cast out. Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. Jesus loved those to whom He preached. Jesus was greater than Jonah. The whole message of the Lord's Supper is that today is the day of salvation.

#### **5. Jesus' Result was greater than that of Jonah's**

- a. The result of Jonah's ministry was that people got saved. In a generation or two, the people of Nineveh fell away. The work of Jonah did not last. Jew and gentile were not reconciled into one body for any length of time, or any great degree.
- b. The result of Jesus' ministry is that Jew and Gentiles are saved and being saved. When Jesus reached out to the gentiles, the gentiles were brought into the Jewish nation, via the New Covenant. Jesus made them into one body that will continue forever. Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who

hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. ([Ephesians 2:11-22](#))

### **Conclusion:**

A greater than Jonah is here! The call of Jesus Christ in light of all of this, is looking with Jonah's pitiful obedience, self-cause sacrifice due to his own sin. With his disgusting resurrection, with his pathetic message, and limited results: The men of Nineveh believed, and got saved, and if they will get saved through such a pathetic prophet, how much more ought you in the light of Jesus. There is no comparison between Jonah and Jesus. Such a better prophet, who had a better obedience, a better sacrifice, etc. Let us repent and believe. We have far greater light than they ever did. We have a much greater responsibility than they ever had. Having set forth in front of you Jesus Christ today, is He not someone to whom we should look for deliverance and forgiveness from the impending wrath of God. The greater than Jonah has come! If the men of Nineveh could believe, then we ought to believe. Let us declare that belief in the Lord's Supper. Christ has the sacrifice that has delivered us from the storm of God's wrath.