

Matthew 22-04-17a

Good morning, welcome to the Resurrection Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are normally in the Gospel of Matthew on Sunday mornings and we will start there, but we are going to have a Resurrection Sunday special entitled The Sign of Jonah. The Sign of Jonah.

We've done many specials over the years, but this is one of the most interesting to me, as usual, whichever one I'm looking at is the most interesting one that I can think of, but I think you will find it intriguing perhaps and certainly thought-provoking. You will, I know, think of things that I have not thought of because it's a very rich and deep connection from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself concerning the wonderful work accomplished on the cross in bearing our sins and the even more wonderful work of resurrection, new life. It was not enough for Christ to die.

It was a requirement that He be raised from the dead and He referred to this Himself in Matthew chapter 16, verse 4, which we will have as our introductory verse for our morning study. But let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, our conversation, our thoughts, our investigation into His Word and cultivate the ministry of His Holy Spirit so that what we look at this morning will not only be interesting, but also edifying. Shall we pray? Father, thank You for each one who has chosen to join with us together this morning in fellowship with the enthusiasm and appreciation for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has done the inestimable work of bearing our sins, of entering us into relationship with You through atonement, through redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, so many facets of breaking down and destroying the wall of separation between us and Yourself.

We thank You for our privileged station as members of the body of Christ in this age. What a unique opportunity You have given us to represent Your Son, the Lord Jesus, on this earth and to accomplish the work that He began when He came the first time. We pray that as we look at that work this morning, that Your Holy Spirit will minister it to each of our hearts, help us to understand it, appreciate it, and have it enter into our thoughts in the days ahead so that it will transform us and renew our minds and thoroughly equip us for every good work.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 16 begins with the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to Jesus, we saw this a few months back, testing Him, asking that He would show them a sign from heaven.

Now, is there anything wrong with signs from heaven? Is this a bad request on its face? Does God spontaneously give signs from heaven? What can you think of that was the first sign from heaven? And as a clue, it was also a sign in heaven. The rainbow after the flood. We've been watching a flood excursus documentary sort of thing here recently,

put on by the Seventh Day Adventists.

They've done a pretty good job. They don't talk about Saturday too much. But they are looking at the record in the rocks and where the fossils are and how the shape of the topography might have been formed.

But back in the days of the flood, God put a sign. It's not in Hebrew, O-T or O-T-H. God gave a sign.

What did that sign signify? What did it signify? I put my bow in the cloud as a sign of the promise that I will never again destroy the world with a flood, at least not one with water. So, God gives signs throughout the scriptures and we don't have time to review them. But you can think, I am sure, of many signs that God gave.

When Moses was at the burning bush and he is being commissioned to go and deliver his people Israel, he says, how can I know and how can the people know that this is really from you? And you've got the leprous hand. You stick it in his robe and pull it out. It's leprous.

Put it in again and pull it out and it's made whole. You have signs that were given in Egypt with the river turning to blood and so on, the Nile River. So, I think we can agree without a lot of biblical support beyond our memories that signs are not intrinsically evil.

God gives signs on purpose, right? So, why does Jesus go on to say here when these Pharisees and Sadducees come and test him asking for a sign from heaven? And he says in verse 4, a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. So, is it okay then if God sends a sign but we should not ask for a sign? Is that the criteria? To just wait for God to send one proactively, such as the shepherds? I had Mary and Joseph on the screen before class started this morning as a reminder that when the angels appeared to the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks by night, they said, when you go in to look for this child, this shall be a sign unto you. You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

God proactively supplied that sign. Gideon asked for a sign, didn't he? Dry fleece, wet ground. Dry ground, wet fleece.

God honored that request for a sign. There have been many others. So, what is the problem? You can see this pretty clearly.

Why is this a bad idea for the Pharisees and Sadducees to ask Jesus for a sign? It isn't what they do, it is why they do it, right? So many times there is not intrinsic evil in an activity or in an action. It is the motivation with which it is done. Taking a human life is a classic example.

There are times when lives need to be taken. It's a deliverance. It's a preservation.

It is justice. It is self-preservation. It is sanctioned, ordained, and in some cases commanded by God to take a human life.

Other times it is one of the most grievous atrocities you can think of. It's why is it done? So, we are told in verse 1 that the Pharisees and Sadducees, this is like saying the Democrats and the Republicans came to him, normally bitter enemies, but they can unite. The enemy of my enemy is my friend or something.

So, in an unusual coordinated attack, these bitterly divided parties come together to put Jesus to the test. He is a threat, a common threat to both of these religious entities. So, they come testing him, asking that he would show them a sign from heaven.

What's the problem with this? We know, we studied this when we did chapter 16. Their motivation is not Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. They are wicked and adulterous.

And, of course, not necessarily literally adulterous. This is spiritual adultery, spoken of throughout the Old Testament in the prophets as a sign of spiritual defection, spiritual disloyalty, spiritual fornication with things that are put in the place of God, violating the very first commandment. So, a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with a sign. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with seeking a sign, but it is why. There are many believers today who want God to provide a sign so they can make a decision.

They'll pray for a sign. Lord, give me a sign. What should I do? Is that a legitimate prayer to pray? It depends.

Why are you asking? Have you gone to the court of first resort, which is the guidance that has already been provided? What is the problem in Matthew 16, verses 1-4? Signs have already been given in abundance. Look at Nicodemus. Clear back in John 3, at the beginning, early part of Jesus' ministry, we know you must be from God.

No one could do the things you do unless he were from God. The blind man in John 9 tells the religious authorities, why do you even have a question about this? Since the beginning of time, who do you think can give sight to the congenitally blind? This man has to be from God. Figure it out.

You keep asking me his name. Do you want to worship him too? And of course, the reason they're inquiring after Jesus. Is inquiring after Jesus a good thing? It depends.

Why are you inquiring after him so that you can destroy him? Are you going to pay off Judas to betray him? Why are you seeking him? It's all about why we do what we do. So signs are given to those who need them in the will, purpose, and timing of God. Sometimes they are provided and sometimes they are not.

There are times when we are asking for a sign and we don't need a sign because we have already been given the information we need to make a decision. And that's the case for these people here. But look at what Jesus says in verse 4. This is our text for the morning.

A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. The prophet is in the parallel that you have in Luke chapter 12. Jonah is a prophet but Matthew's text just says the sign of Jonah.

So you have resident Bible knowledge. What is the sign of Jonah? Jesus is going to repeat this when he says, 4. As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, even so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. So what is the parallel? It's in Matthew chapter 12.

Turn back a few pages to 12.39. On an earlier occasion, verse 38, the scribes and Pharisees said, We want to see a sign from you. This is 12.38.39 of Matthew. He answered and said, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

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 men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And indeed, surely, a greater than Jonah is here.

The queen of the south will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it. She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And indeed, a greater than Solomon is here.

There is an allusion here to the Lord Jesus in his self-sacrifice on behalf of Israel in the first blush and the world. That is his high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek extensively discussed in Hebrews. But interestingly, the two examples given after this sign of Jonah, the men of Nineveh will rise up because a greater than Jonah.

What is Jonah? What's his office? He is a prophet. So Jonah was a prophet. The queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, will rise up and condemn this generation because she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

And indeed, a greater than Solomon is here. What was Solomon's office? He was son of David. What did he sit on? What's his title? What's his honorific? You don't say, hey there, my good buddy Solomon.

What do you call him? King Solomon. Did you ever see Stuart Granger, King Solomon's Mines and all that? He's a king, right? So Jonah is a prophet. Solomon is a king.

Prophet, priest, and king. You see it? Prophet, priest, and king. The scribes ought to know

this.

The Pharisees ought to know this. The Sadducees ought to know this. A greater than any king, greater than King David, greater than King Solomon, and the wisdom of Solomon, wiser than Solomon.

Prophet greater than Jonah. Jonah preached one day and converted an entire region, spoke one sentence, and the whole region got into repentance mode. So, sign of Jonah.

So we say, alright, well, that was a nice short Resurrection Sunday special. Sign of Jonah, three days, three nights in the heart of the earth. Greater prophet, greater priest, greater king than any that has come before.

Amen. Where's the roast? What is our constant reminder when we see allusions to the Old Testament in the New? If someone quotes a verse that says, Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee, what do we know to do? I just quoted one verse in the New Testament, what do we do? You can answer out loud. What should we do? Go back and read the entire context.

So if Jesus alludes multiple times to the sign of Jonah, we probably ought to investigate Jonah, because there's a lot more to this sign than just the three days and three nights. And Jesus expands on that in verse 41 and 42, because there is prophetic testimony. There is a word spoken about Jesus in the Old Testament.

You think about how many times Scripture says, think about Corinthians, when Paul is talking in Corinthians and he says in 1 Corinthians 15, 4, remember 15, 1 through 4, he says, I deliver to you as of first importance that Jesus came and He died and He was buried and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Where does Scripture, the Old Testament, when you see the Scriptures in the New Testament, all Scripture is inspired by God, it's always talking about the Old Testament. The New Testament Scriptures as a body of writing don't exist yet.

So when you see according to the Scriptures, this is the Old Testament. So where does the Old Testament say that Jesus is going to rise from the dead according to the Scriptures? Well, this is a fascinating study and part of this sign, the main part of this sign is the three days and three nights of Jonah. And we're going to look at that more closely here shortly.

But where else does Scripture say and anticipate that Jesus is going to rise from the dead? What is the nature of this sign? Turn to Hosea chapter 6, verse 1. This will, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah. In Hosea chapter 6, Come, let us return to the Lord, for He has torn, but He will heal us. He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

After two days He will revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.

Knowledge of the Lord, wisdom. His going forth is established as the morning. He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.

And in a nutshell, in Hosea 6, the first three verses, you have not only the anticipation of resurrection after three days, personified in the Lord Jesus, who in many ways represents the nation of Israel as an individual, but also His two comings, His former and latter rain comings. So this is the Scripture that anticipates it. The Lord Jesus is going to represent Israel.

He is going to take upon Himself the sins of the nation. Why is He named Jesus at His birth? Why is He called Yeshua? He will call His name Jesus because He will do what? He will save His people from their sins. So He represents, He takes on the sins of Israel and in their place.

So in Isaiah chapter 49, verse three, you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified. And then in verse six, is it too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel? I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. Jesus as the suffering servant, bearing the sins of the people and ultimately of the entire world as a light to His people Israel and a light to the nations.

I am the light of the world. You can find this also in Hosea chapter 14, beginning in verse four, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely for my anger has turned from them.

I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily. I will lengthen His roots like Lebanon.

His branches shall spread. His beauty shall be like an olive tree and His fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under His shadow shall return.

They shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine. Their remembrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard and observed Him.

I am like a green cypress tree. Your fruit is found in Me. Who is wise? Let him understand these things.

Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. The righteous walk in them, the transgressors trip over them.

That's Hosea 14, four through nine. We also saw this in Zachariah, our study of Zachariah chapter three, verses seven through nine. Thus says the Lord of hosts, if you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts.

And I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Remember, he's talking to Joshua, the high priest. And so there is that personification, Joshua as an anticipation of Jesus.

So the recognition of Jesus' death as a baptism, how many times has it been called a baptism in scripture? Jesus says, this is Luke chapter 12, verse 50, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished. Remember when he's talking to James and John and their mother, Mrs. Zebedee, when they come and say, grant that my two sons consider to your right hand and at your left. And Jesus asks a question.

It's a two-part question, isn't it? Can you drink the cup that I'm about to drink? And can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am about to be baptized? Remember that? That is a comparison of baptism to death. I'll give you that reference. It's not coming up in my notes.

You can look it up. We saw it in Matthew. So baptism is a figure for this.

And the judgment of the flood in 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, where the entire population of the earth, except for eight souls perished in water, 1 Peter 3, 20 and 21. Baptism, which corresponds to this now saves you in 1 Peter 3, 21. Israel being baptized in the Red Sea with Moses as they crossed, escaping the Egyptians in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 2. The reason that's important, comparing the baptism in the Red Sea as a passing through death and into the potential for new life is a hidden reference to the three days.

If you read Exodus carefully, from Passover to the crossing of the Red Sea, it's three days. So the blood of the Passover lamb is spilled on Nisan 14, then you have 15, you have 16, and on 17, you have the passage through the Red Sea. So this coming up, just as in water baptism, the figure is buried with him in death, raised to new life.

I've occasionally speculated in the more humorous part of my mind that to really be accurate, a Baptist pastor should dunk you and then hold you down for three seconds, three minutes, three hours, three days, and then it just goes down and comes right back out. It's like Jesus would just go in the tomb and just pop right back out. You've got to stay down there a while.

And I've seen baptisms where because of the weight of the honoree, the pastor had to struggle to get them back up out of the water. It's one of two or three reasons. They actually have in some baptisteries, there's an E in baptistery that a lot of people don't know that it's there, it's baptistery, but there are rubber stirrups bolted to the floor that the baptism victim puts your feet in so that you bend at the knees and then you've got some traction.

How many baptisms have you seen where feet fly up in the air and the head goes down

and the feet come up and it spoils the sobriety and the moment gets kind of spoiled when people's feet are flying up in the air and the pastor is struggling and the person's rolling over and there's baptistry robes and the guy's hip waders. I was very mystified as a child because the pastor would come back out and he'd be completely dry and I thought, how did he change so fast? But he was wearing those hip waders. So he just takes off the outer robe, takes off the hip waders and he's dry.

But the pastor that I saw struggling with this lady, his waders got full of water, then he couldn't get out of the baptistry. Two or three guys had to come and pull him out because he had like 40 pounds of water in those waders. But I digress because we're talking about baptism as a figure for death and coming back out of the water as resurrection.

And there's an interesting parallel because Israel's baptism, where they come out of the water with the potential for new life, is three days after Passover, the first Passover. So it's a very interesting allusion to three days. And when you see the New Testament repeatedly referring to, he was raised according to the scriptures, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, he was buried and raised again the third day according to the scriptures.

It's more than just Jonah. We have the Hosea passage and so on. So here's the point for our first study.

As we think about the wonderful event that we celebrate this morning, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him we share that new life. But he is raised for a purpose. He is raised not just as a symbol, not just as a sign.

God didn't raise Jesus just so that there would be a sign like the sign of Jonah. Jesus said no sign is going to be given to a wicked and adulterous generation except this one. It's a decision point.

What about all of the other signs that Jesus did? Remember John, toward the end of his gospel, says many other signs Jesus did. These are written that you may believe and believing have life through his name. But Jesus did many signs.

So what's the difference between the sign of Jonah and all of the other signs that Jesus did? The other signs are observed and absorbed by those who do respond in faith. Those are not a part of the wicked and adulterous generation. The passage I allude to is John 20, verse 30 and 31.

Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, followers, those who came to him and stayed with him. They're not written in this book, but these are written, and you remember the gospel of John is organized around seven major sign miracles, beginning with the wedding feast at Cana and going forward. These are written that you

may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

So these signs are written for those who believe and have life in his name, but the wicked and adulterous generation that rejects those signs, they get instead the sign of Jonah. So not only is the sign of Jonah a promise of resurrection and new life after three days, but it is a specific sign given to the wicked and perverse for what? Not for life. It is the opposite of life.

It is going to stand as a condemnation. And this is what Jesus says back in Matthew, chapter 12, when he says the Queen of Sheba came, the men of Nineveh saw, men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation, this wicked and adulterous generation. The men of Nineveh who responded to the sign of Jonah are going to condemn this generation.

And what does it mean to be condemned? He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South is going to rise up in the judgment.

So we are sure that Solomon shared the truth of the God of Israel with the Queen of Sheba, and she became a believer, because Jesus says she is going to rise up at the judgment. And this is the judgment of Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, not the great white throne. She is going to rise up and she is going to stand in contrast to these wicked and adulterous generation types, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

She heard it, she believed it, and a greater than Solomon is here. It is important for us to remember that we have been raised in Christ to new life for a purpose. It is to change our minds about areas where we need change of behavior, change of action, change of attitude, change of heart.

The men of Nineveh, even in their identity as non-Israelites, were responsive to a single message calling for repentance. They responded, they repented in sackcloth and ashes, and they are Gentiles. The Queen of Sheba traveled, sought out the wisdom of Solomon, and when she got there, she listened to it.

And she is going to rise up and condemn those who do not do likewise. When we receive wisdom from God, when we hear the truth of the Word of God, it ought to make a difference. We should be visibly different than the world.

And the Queen of Sheba is a Gentile. And Jesus is here, clear back in Matthew chapter 12, warning the Jews that because they are not fulfilling their God-given destiny as God's representatives to shine the light of truth to the world, they are going to be set aside and replaced. And as Jesus is a representative, as God's personification in dealing with the

sin of Israel and with the mission of Israel, what Israel did not do, the Lord Jesus is going to do.

And Jesus Himself is going to be removed from the earth, and there is a replacement for His physical presence, and that's us. We are enjoined, we are commissioned, we are assigned the privilege of representing the Lord Jesus, both in representing to the world the light that calls for repentance, and representing the wisdom that moves us beyond salvation into service and function in God's plan. Well, we have much more to say because we are going to go to the book of Jonah and see what else the sign of Jonah has to tell us.

And it's all in the book of Jonah, at least the seeds of it are in Jonah, and then they sprout in the New Testament. But the sign of Jonah is not just a sign to the wicked and adulterous generation, but it's an anti-sign. It's an opposites picture, and it's a very adulterous generation.

Then the opposite sign of Jonah would be to those who are not wicked and adulterous, right? So we are going to be sort of looking in a mirror and seeing things in reverse, or seeing their opposites when we come to the book of Jonah, and the sign of Jonah, to which we will turn when we come back from our break.