**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 5** Luke 11:29-54 The Sign of Jonah/Lamp of the Body/Six Woes!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 151-156.

What happens when a person trusts Jesus Christ (John 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Eph. 5:8-14)?
Why must we keep our gaze fixed only on the things of God?

1. Read Luke 11:29-32 along with Matthew 12:38-45. The Sign of Jonah!
2. We learn from Matthew’s account that the Pharisees, the religious leaders over Israel, asked for a sign.
3. What are some of the signs that the Pharisees had already witnessed concerning the deity of Jesus (Luke 3:21-22; 4:40-41; 5:20-26; 7:11-17; 8:50-56)?
4. How do signs (miracles) serve the desires and purposes of our Sovereign God (John 2:11; 10:38; 14:11; 20:30-31)?
5. What do you think was the motivation behind their request? Why do you think they asked for yet another sign?
6. What was Jesus’ response?
7. To what sign did Jesus point them? Do you think it was still an attempt by
the Lord to get them to truly believe or a sign of God’s judgment? Explain
your answer.
8. What key truths to you learn from the article below regarding the sign of Jonah?

The phrase “sign of Jonah” was used by Jesus as a typological metaphor for His future crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Jesus answered with this expression when asked by the Pharisees for miraculous proof that He was indeed the Messiah. The Pharisees remained unconvinced of Jesus’ claims about Himself, despite His having just cured a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute. Shortly after the Pharisees accused Jesus of driving out demons by the power of Satan, they said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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. 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 something greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:38–41).

To fully appreciate the answer that Jesus gave, we must go to the Old Testament book of Jonah. In its first chapter, we read that God commanded the prophet Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and warn its people that He was going to destroy it for its wickedness. Jonah disobediently ran from the Lord and headed for the city of Tarshish by boat. The Lord then sent a severe storm that caused the crew of the ship to fear for their lives. Jonah was soon thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish where he remained for “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:15–17). After the three-day period, the Lord caused the great fish to vomit Jonah out onto dry land (Jonah 2:10).

It is this three days that Jesus was referring to when He spoke of the sign of Jonah. Jesus had already been producing miracles that were witnessed by many. Jesus had just performed a great sign in the Pharisees’ presence by healing a deaf man who was possessed of a demon. Rather than believe, they accused Jesus of doing this by the power of Satan. Jesus recognized their hardness of heart and refused to give them further proof of His identity. However, He did say that there would be one further sign forthcoming, His resurrection from the dead. This would be their final opportunity to be convinced.

Jesus’ paralleling of the Pharisees with the people of Nineveh is telling. The people of Nineveh repented of their evil ways (Jonah 3:4–10) after hearing Jonah’s call for repentance, while the Pharisees continued in their unbelief despite being eyewitnesses to the miracles of Jesus. Jesus was telling the Pharisees that they were culpable for their unbelief, given the conversion of the people of Nineveh, sinners who had received far less evidence than the Pharisees themselves had witnessed.

But what are we to make of the phrase “three days and three nights”? Was Jesus saying that He would be dead for three full 24-hour periods before He would rise from the dead? It does not appear so. The phrase “three days and three nights” need not refer to a literal 72-hour period. Rather, according to the Hebrew reckoning of time, the days could refer to three days in part or in whole. Jesus was probably crucified on a Friday (Mark 15:42). According to the standard reckoning, Jesus died at about 3:00 PM (Matthew 27:46) on Friday (day 1). He remained dead for all of Saturday (day 2) and rose from the dead early on Sunday morning (day 3). Attempts to place Jesus’ death on Wednesday to accommodate a literal 72-hour period are probably unnecessary once we take into account the Hebrew method of reckoning of each day as beginning at sundown. So it seems that the expression “three days and three nights” was used as a figure of speech meant to signify any part of three days.

God would often use signs (or miracles) in the Bible to authenticate His chosen messenger. The Lord provided Moses with several miraculous signs in order to prove to others that he was appointed by God (Exodus 4:5–9; 7:8–10;19-20). God sent down fire on Elijah’s altar during Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:36–39). He performed this miracle to prove that the God of Israel was the one true God. Jesus Himself would perform many miracles (or “signs”) to demonstrate His power over nature (Matthew 4:23; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 8:22–24; John 6:16–24). The “sign of Jonah” would turn out to be Jesus’ greatest miracle of all. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead would be God’s chief sign that Jesus was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah (Acts 2:23–32) and establish Christ’s claims to deity (Romans 1:3–4).[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. The sign of Jonah was a metaphor pointing to the coming death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Read Mark 15 and 16 (the shortest Gospel version of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection).
2. After witnessing Jesus’ death, requesting Pilate to have his burial site guarded by Roman soldiers, and later hearing about the empty tomb, did the Pharisees and other religious leaders come to faith in Him (Acts 7:51-60)?
3. Why do you think the vast majority still refused to believe (Matthew 13:11-15)?
4. Do you believe many religious leaders today in churches and divinity schools across America have similar difficulty truly believing in Jesus? Explain your answer.
5. Read the article below regarding the Queen of the South.
6. What will both the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South pronounce over the generation of Jesus’ day who refused to believe?
7. How did both the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South respond to the wisdom coming forth from the earthly (Solomon) and heavenly (Jesus) sons of David?
8. What has been your response to the wisdom of Christ found in the Word of God? Have you truly repented?

The Queen of the South is mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 12:42 and its parallel passage, Luke 11:31. Jesus says the Queen of the South will bear witness on the Day of Judgment, condemning those Israelites who rejected Jesus as Lord. Jesus identifies the Queen of the South as a queen who visited King Solomon to benefit from his wisdom. From this, we can deduce that she is the Queen of Sheba who came to test Solomon with difficult questions (1 Kings 10:1).

Most biblical scholars believe that Sheba was a city in modern-day Ethiopia or Yemen, and that the Queen of the South was the ruler of that city, a woman of amazing wealth and power. Having heard reports of King Solomon’s wisdom, the Queen of Sheba wanted to find out if what she had heard was true, if there really could be a king that wise. So she traveled to Jerusalem to quiz Solomon with riddles. She also brought a wealth of gifts and spices and jewels from her own land to give to him (1 Kings 10:10; 2 Chronicles 9:9). Solomon answered all her questions (1 Kings 10:3) and repaid her in gifts of equal value. The Queen of the South then returned home (2 Chronicles 9:12).

The Queen of the South has been the subject of many artistic works and legends. Some people also speculate that the Queen of the South is the same woman as the Shulammite mentioned in the Song of Solomon, because of the reference to the Shulammite’s dark skin (Song of Solomon 1:5). However, there is stronger evidence to suggest that the Shulammite came from Shunem, a region near Israel.

Jesus mentions the Queen of the South in the context of Israel’s rejection of their True King. Though she was a Gentile, she traveled a long distance to hear Solomon, and the treasures she brought showed her respect for him and the wisdom he possessed. In contrast, the Jews of Jesus’ time were unwilling to travel any distance to hear the King of kings. The Queen of Sheba’s lavish respect for Solomon stood in stark contrast to Israel’s flat-out rejection of Christ. Yet Christ is greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42). Solomon was a son of David, but Jesus is *the* Son of David. Solomon was rich, but Jesus is the Creator of all riches. Solomon possessed the gift of wisdom, but Jesus is wisdom personified (1 Corinthians 1:30).[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Read Luke 11:33-36. The Lamp of the Body!
2. Read the article below concerning “What did Jesus mean when He said, “the eye is the lamp of the body”?
3. Explain what is meant by phrase “Your eye is the lamp of your body.”

Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). Here our Lord describes the eye as a lamp which lights the entire body. Our eyes are the entrance to our hearts and minds and, as such, they provide a doorway to our very souls. When He referred to “good” eyes, He meant eyes that not only see well, but also perceive well. It is not only what we see, but how we perceive what we see that makes the difference between godliness and ungodliness, between light and darkness. Bad eyes lead to bad perception, but if our eyes are good, our whole person will be illuminated. If we are in a lighted room, we see everything clearly. We can move around obstacles and locate whatever we’re looking for. But walking in darkness results in stumbling, falling, and groping for some secure thing to hang on to.

Our eyes can be used to see that which is good or evil, that which is beneficial or harmful, and the things we see and perceive affect our whole being. If we perceive goodness, that will radiate outward from within our hearts and minds. But if we allow our eyes to linger on evil, we are so affected by what we see that darkness actually begins to emanate from within and can corrupt us and those around us.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Contrast ‘good eyes’ with ‘bad eyes’.
2. Which type of eyes do you have? Explain.
3. Read Matthew 13:13-15 along with 1 Corinthians 2:14. Why do so many of
the people we know have difficulty understanding the truth of the Gospel of
Jesus Christ?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 2 Corinthians 3:15-16. How might these same people come to faith in Christ?
5. Read Luke 11:37-54 along with Matthew 23. Six (Seven)Woes!
6. With these six (seven) woes, Jesus’ points to the problem of the heart particularly with moralistic, legalistic, religious people. Explain the problem of the heart with each woe that Jesus highlights (consider descriptive words such as, hard, blind, proud, selfish, hypocritical, etc.):
7. Comparison of their hearts to an outwardly clean cup and dish (verses 39-41;
Matthew 23:25-26):
8. Their focus on minor issues to the exclusion of major ones (verse 42;
Matthew 23:23-24):
9. Their desire to be noticed and honored by men (verse 43; Matthew 23:5-12):
10. Comparison to grave plots (verse 44: Matthew 23:27-28):
11. Placing burdens on people they refused to carry (verse 46; Matthew 23:1-4):
12. Building tombs to honor the prophets (verses 47-51; Matthew 23:29-32; 33-36):
13. Taking away the key to knowledge; blocking the entrance to salvation (verse 52; Matthew 23:13-14):
14. It has been said that “Religion is like the antidote that keeps you from getting the real thing.” Explain this statement.
15. All these above woes are directed toward people with prideful, hard hearts and blind eyes. What is the cure (Revelation 3:14-18)?
16. What is the condition of your heart? Have you turned to Christ that you might be saved? If you are not sure, why not turn to Him now?
1. “What is the sign of Jonah?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 8, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/sign-of-Jonah.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Who was the Queen of the South?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 8, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/Queen-of-the-South.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “What did Jesus mean when He said, “the eye is the lamp of the body” (Matthew 6:22)?”

Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 8, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/eye-lamp-body.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)