

Luke 11:29-32; I Kings 10:1-10; The Sign and the Message I. Seeking a Sign II. Seeking Wisdom III. The Need for Repentance

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, why do you believe? Were you convinced by the evidence and supporting documentation- or did you see some sign and wonder that caused you to acknowledge the truth? As we have seen in recent weeks, faith is a work of God produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It was not the evidence as such- and not even a sign that ultimately caused us to embrace the truth. The fact is, the mind of man is at enmity with the truth of Christ! The natural man does not accept the things of God as I Cor. 2 says. Although it is true that unbelief is irrational- it is also true that no amount of evidence or even signs will ever convince the critic! Our hearts are by nature cold, hard and rebellious! So today we see that Jesus Christ rebukes the unbelief of the sceptic by proving His superiority!

### **I. Seeking a Sign**

Our passage starts with people gathering around Jesus- and if you look back at v. 16- they were constantly seeking a sign. The parallel passage in Mt. 12 says that the crowds were seeking to test Jesus- they refused to believe but instead kept looking for greater and more powerful signs. The problem was not the lack of evidence- the problem was the hardness of their hearts! They were not really looking for a reason to believe- they did not have weak faith that needed to be strengthened. They were enemies of God and were constantly testing Jesus. People should trust God and not seek a miracle! The Word of God is trustworthy and reliable- proving within that it is without error! But this was an evil and rebellious generation. Never satisfied and always wanting more. Remember that back in v. 14 of this chapter Jesus had already cast out a demon. So there were a multitude of powerful signs already given- but the people were never satisfied! It would be like a boss asking you to perform a task a certain way- only to have the standard change once you finished the task! Like a teacher who promises that this would be the last assignment- only to assign a new project when the first one was completed! Always changing the rules so that the work was never finished! That what these people were like! They wanted a sign- and when

they saw one- they asked for another. The word for a sign is “semeion” meaning a mark or token- usually coming in the form of a miracle to prove the message is true. They would only receive the sign of Jonah.

The sign of Jonah was twofold. It speaks to his message and his person. The message of Jonah was simple- as Jonah 3 says- 40 days and Ninevah will be overthrown. It was simple sermon of impending destruction. But the very presence of Jonah was a miracle- a sign of God’s power over life and death- and His mercy in sending a messenger to those in line for destruction. As you remember children, Jonah first tried to run away from God. To flee to the West instead of going North to Nineveh. On the ship sailing for Tarsus the storm blocked Jonah’s retreat. After being thrown into the water, God preserved Jonah’s life and he was escorted to Nineveh in the belly of a great fish. Jonah spent 3 days in the belly of the fish- being buried in the water- experiencing a darkness like death. But the fish spit Jonah out and he was resurrected from the grave- to preach once more. So the sign of Jonah is as Mt. 12 states- the sign of the resurrection. The dead are brought back to life in order to preach! As our text in v. 29 says- these people will be given this sign! Now remember how the religious rulers responded when the dead did in fact rise from the dead? Did they believe? No, they doubled their attack on Christ and His people! When Lazarus himself was raised from the dead- did they believe? No, they tried to kill Lazarus in John 12 because the crowds were following Jesus! When Jesus rose- they concocted a story about the disciples stealing the body! Such is the heart of unbelief! Now we could ask ourselves, why were they so hard hearted? Why wouldn’t they believe after all these signs and wonders that Jesus did? Surely I would believe if someone would rise from the dead! Well- that is the very reasoning of the rich man in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Look at Luke 16:27-31. The conclusion is clear in v. 31- if they refuse to believe the message- if they do not believe after receiving the law and the gospel, no amount of signs will convince them. You see, faith comes by hearing- as the Spirit uses preaching to produce faith within us. No amount of evidence or even miracles will convince us to believe unless the Spirit of God gives us new hearts! So although Jesus was a sign to that generation- bringing both a message and miracles- that

wicked generation would not believe because their hearts were hardened in sin. Thus no other signs would be given. The fact is our minds are fallen into sin as well- our reasoning is corrupted! Evidence is rejected if it does not fit in our worldview. So these people would not believe what Jesus was saying about himself. Like a child who keeps changing the rules of a game, these people would do anything to have their way!

## **II. Seeking Wisdom**

But not only was this generation wicked because they kept asking for signs- and were never willing to be convinced and believe. They also failed to see and seek true wisdom. The next OT precursor to Jesus that we find in our text is the wisdom of Solomon in v. 31. We read earlier from I Kings 10 where the Queen of the South- or the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon because of what she heard about him. This queen sought wisdom and rejoiced in the words of the king. Sheba was known as the land of the south- located in present day Yemen or Ethiopia. Our reading from I Kings says that she came from afar or from the ends of the earth. She has heard a report about Solomon and came to see if it was true. It was particularly the wisdom of Solomon that drew her! Wisdom is known in the NT as "Sophia"- that knowledge, truth and intelligence in order to answer questions. She tested Solomon by asking him hard questions and Solomon knew the answers. She did this until there was no breath left in her- her breath was taken away. Solomon has such knowledge- teaching with authority- that she marveled at him. Does that sound familiar? So this Queen believes the report that was told her- and even more saying that the half was not told! Nothing was hidden from Solomon- he was wiser than all the kings of the earth. So that the Queen finally says- Your wisdom surpasses the report that I had heard. How happy your people must be! Blessed be the Lord your God because the Lord has Loved Israel- and given them a King who can execute justice and righteousness! Wisdom is the right application of God's truth! When the queen has seen all the wisdom of Solomon- she was convinced that the LORD was with Him!

### III. The Need for Repentance

As we come to our final point we see that both the Ninevites and the Southern Queen believed what they heard. Both received a message and embraced it- even though they were Gentiles. Both the Queen and the Ninevites responded appropriately- but these Israelites refused! And on the day of the judgment these will condemn Israel's unbelief! Jesus is pressing the need for faith and repentance- but also acknowledging the stubborn rebellion of the crowds! The arrival of the prophet and particularly His resurrection from the grave should have stirred the heart of these people. Because one greater than Jonah was here- v. 32 says. To be greater here is to be superior- more rightly fulfilling the office. Jonah was a reluctant prophet who was raised from a figurative death to preach a partial message. A greater quality- more excellent preaching is now heard! Jonah's message was one of impending destruction- 40 days and you will be destroyed! Yet the people of Ninevah repented and were saved! Both Jesus and Jonah were prophets from Galilee. But Jesus was so much better! Jonah sulked when the people responded to his preaching- while Jesus prayed for and cried tears for the sake of His people! As Jesus said in Mt. 23, Jerusalem, how I long to gather you as a mother hen gathers her chicks. But you continue to refuse and rebel! Jesus was not the reluctant prophet- but one who said- Here am I, send me! I have come to do your will! But because the people of Jerusalem refused to repent, they received the destruction that was foretold to Ninevah! Yes, Ninevah was spared because they believed the message and the sign of Jonah- but Jerusalem did not! The Gentiles were spared- but the Jews were destroyed in 70 AD with the sacking of the city and the burning of the temple! Jesus promised this destruction in Mt. 24- but the Jews did not believe it! The sign of the Son of Man coming in Mt. 24 was the sign of destruction and death because they rejected the One who was greater than Jonah! So Ninevah was spared even though Jonah wanted it destroyed- and Jerusalem was destroyed even though they were given the perfect prophet! Jesus is also greater than the wisdom of Solomon as v. 31 concludes. Jesus is more excellent than Solomon because in the very next chapter of I Kings we find that Solomon turns

away from the Lord. Solomon loved many foreign women, and they turned him away from wisdom into the foolishness of idolatry. At the end of his life Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord- even making offerings and sacrifices to these false gods. In I Cor. 1:24 we find that Jesus is both the power and the wisdom of God. I Cor. 1 also say that God has made foolish the wisdom of this world- and He is pleased through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. Jews demand a sign and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preaching Christ crucified! At the end of the day, the signs and wisdom that mankind seeks will not save lost humanity. No, God has ordained to use the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe! The need we see here is the need for repentance! Both Jews and Gentiles need to repent from their sins and seek life in the wisdom and power of God- Jesus Christ! Because if you refuse the message that is preached to you, your end will be that of Jerusalem- destruction!

To conclude, the resurrection of Jesus is both a confirmation and condemnation. His resurrection proves His identity- that He is God's greatest/ excellent prophet! But the sign of Jonah will be a sign of destruction upon those who refuse to believe! Jesus Christ rebukes the unbelief of the sceptic by proving His superiority! So let us believe the message that was delivered to us- the message of the cross and resurrection life through the one who is greater than Jonah and Solomon!