

12:38-40

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 Jonah: For as Jonah 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 Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here. This writer wants to make very clear is made clear by not saying it. He expects you to know exactly what he's saying. He expects you to know the book of Jonah. He expects you to know the story of Jonah. He doesn't expect you to have to have a lesson on whether or not Jonah was a real man and all the things we've discussed the last three weeks; whether or not he was swallowed by a fish and so forth.

So, when we talk about in Luke 11:30 that Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, and here we have the comparison of Jonah's escape or disappearance into the belly of a fish for three days and three nights, apparently, Jesus says in the parallel version in Luke this apparently dead Jonah (who did say, "I'm in Sheol, the land of the dead" in that 2nd chapter) apparently arose from the dead, as pictured by him being vomited up on the beach. This apparently dead and then apparently risen prophet who comes to Nineveh and preaches, is a foreshadow of the very dead and then very alive Jesus who will go to Gentiles and they will repent at His preaching. So, since we have that backdrop, I want to remind us that this is something that took place. Jonah was called about 10 miles away from where Matthew 12 takes place. And he's told to go here to Nineveh, modern day Mosul, and he's told to go there and preach to them.

We find out from Jonah 3:1 The word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time. Not everyone gets a second chance. Jonah's especially blessed. He goes to Nineveh and finds, to his surprise, a repenting people following his message: from the king to the household pets.

Jesus preached peace (Ephesians 2). In Jonah chapter 3, you have Jonah really happy to preach the message. Since he has to go, you might as well preach Jonah's gospel. Now Jonah, what's your gospel? "Well, I have some good news." Well, what is it? "All of Nineveh is going to be torched. And they can whine and complain and cry about it. It doesn't matter. They've got 40 days. Less than six weeks, that place is going up in smoke. And I've just got to go and deliver the good news."

And then there's Jesus. He Himself is our peace. "He made us both one and broke down, in His flesh, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. That He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. That He might reconcile us both to God, in one body, through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And He came and preached peace to you who are afar off and He preached peace to those who are near.

Now folks, you know the context there. Jesus had never been to Ephesus. So how in the world is that possible? As far as we know there is no record of Jesus ever going to Turkey, ever going to modern-day Turkey, ever going to Asia Minor, ever preaching in person to you who were afar off, ever do we find any evidence that Jesus took a trip to Turkey and preached to those. But you know what I believe? I believe that's talking about the Spirit of Christ (John 16:8-11).

Then rest assured, the King is still on the throne and He's preaching peace to those people that you can't be near tonight to give the gospel to. They're condemned in their consciences and they're troubled at their sins, just like you and I were before our conversions to Christ. And by God, they are totally eligible for salvation so long as He is preaching peace to them. But so help me, He follows people to their bedrooms. He follows them to the workplace. It says in the book of Song of Solomon 5 that the Beloved put His hand on the door and when the woman got up out of the bed and opened the door, His perfume was on her hands. And everywhere she went she was reminded of the Beloved One. I promise you there are people walking the earth today that have heard the gospel and the Lord is still preaching to them long after the human being of instrument has been out of their life.

Luke 15 shows our Lord's abode being full of joy because of sinners repenting (regardless of their nationality), but Jonah couldn't get happy about a half a million. You caused quite a commotion the day that Christ found you and you put faith in Him. Heaven came alive the day that you put faith in the gospel. The day that you realized that Christ died for your sins and rose again the third day and was seeking you, and preaching peace to your heart, and you believed on the word of the gospel: all of a sudden heaven knew your name.