

Text: Luke 11:29-36

Title: A Sign Sought

Truth: Jesus reveals the problem was not the lack of a sign, it was a problem in the spiritual life of those request the sign.

Date/Location: Sunday July 14, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

Remember Luke 11:16 where some put Jesus to the test. They wanted to see a sign from heaven—a spectacular miracle that would prove He is the Messiah. Yet they ignored the repeated miracles that proved His power over nature, demons, sickness, death, and the guilt of sin when He extended forgiveness to those to whom He ministered. These miracles *were* signs that He is the Messiah, yet they did not believe in Him.

I. Diagnosis of the People’s Spiritual Condition, v. 29a

- A. The narrative justifies us to take a dim view of their demand for a sign. Such demands, even from our own hearts, are not honest, kind, or faith filled. Anyone who “tests” God is not in the right.
- B. Jesus had already expressed deep criticism of the people’s responses: dismissing the miracle by illogically saying His power source was the Devil, asking for another sign, and even misdirecting their praise to Jesus’s mother!
- C. He immediately diagnoses their problem in verse 29. He said, “This is an evil generation.” That is the simple truth. They are not a faithful generation, a seeking generation, or a loving generation. Our own generation is an evil generation. I should not need to prove that to you.

II. No Sign Except Signs of Judgment, v. 29b-32

- A. Some of the people were asking for a sign from heaven. What was the sign supposed to signify? They wanted proof that Jesus was Messiah, or perhaps they just wanted to see something entertaining. But Jesus turns the sign around and says that they will get nothing but the sign of Jonah, and it will not be entertainment, and it will not be a sign for good.

These people were unbelieving and asked for a sign. Consequently, God would give them a sign appropriate for their unbelief: a sign of judgment.
- B. The sign does not only have to do with Jonah’s experience in the great fish but focuses on what he did following his ejection from the fish. He preached judgment to the Ninevites, and they believed him. The fact that he survived the fish, and probably showed visible signs of being worse for

the wear, convinced them of the reality of God’s message through him. That message was “40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed!” Jonah was a sign of judgment to the generation of Ninevites. His return from the gates of Sheol paralleled the Lord’s return from the grave, showing that He is from God, and this sealed the doom of those who reject Him.

- C. In the same manner, Jesus was going to be a sign to “this” generation—the evil generation. For those with eyes to see and believe, His days and nights in the heart of the earth would be like Jonah’s days and nights in the great fish. His victory over death will ensure that those who are part of the wicked generation will face judgment.
- D. The Lord next uses the Queen of the South as an illustration. She appears in the Old Testament narrative in 1 Kings 10:1-13 as the queen of Sheba, perhaps somewhere in south Arabia. Jesus mentions it with approval: He believed that she was a real person, just like He believed the account of Jonah was real as well. She came from a great distance because she heard of Solomon. She brought gifts, and she received answers to her questions. She came because she wanted to hear Solomon’s wisdom.

But no one in the present wicked generation wanted to hear Jesus’s wisdom. All they wanted to do was to test Him. They were guilty in the extreme because they were rejecting *Jesus*—one far greater Solomon.
- E. Because of what Jesus says next, it appears that the queen turned out well, so to speak, and was “saved.” Jesus speaks highly of this queen of the South and places her in the scene of future judgment as one who will condemn the present generation. She looked for wisdom in her day, but the people of this generation refused wisdom. She would be a witness against them in their judgment. The effect of her testimony would be condemnation because they heard the wisdom of one far greater than Solomon, yet they would not listen.
- F. Similarly, the men of Nineveh will condemn the generation of Israel. They heard preaching about coming judgment and they repented. But the people of the then present generation did not repent at Jesus’s preaching, and Jesus is far greater than Jonah.

This is remarkable when you consider just how wicked the Ninevites were. They were brutal savages, at least on the military side. They were pagan idolaters. They were not nice people.

- G. Clearly, this “evil generation” should have listened to the wisdom and message of Jesus. Some more pagan and evil people listened to God’s messengers. The nation of Israel—God’s people—should listen too.

H. I suppose you can imagine how this applies to you. You read in God's word the wisdom of one greater than Solomon; the judgments of one greater than Jonah; the teaching of one greater than Moses; the godliness of one greater than Daniel, and Abraham, and all the Jewish patriarchs. Will you listen to Him? This is personal, dear ones, because it involves the person of Jesus. Will the Ninevites and the Queen of the South rise as witnesses against *you* in the judgment?

III. Good and Bad Lamps, v. 33-36

- A. The Lord Jesus begins with one parable about a lamp, and then switches gears entirely to another figure of speech about a lamp.
- B. In the first case, v. 33, the Lord reiterates what he said in Luke 8:16. A lamp is obviously meant to be placed in an elevated location so that the light is evident to all who are in the vicinity. The Word of God is a lamp like this and must be proclaimed openly, publicly. It is not meant to be put under a basket. The Queen of Sheba came to hear Solomon's unparalleled wisdom. We might say that she came to "see the light." The men of Nineveh heard the message of God via Jonah, an initially recalcitrant "lampstand" sent by God. Solomon and Jonah were light bearers for God. They did not, at these times in their lives, put their lamp under a basket or in a closet. They put it up on a lampstand so all could see. Solomon still had his wise wits about him before he moved away from God for a while. Jonah preached to the entire city of Nineveh and raised their awareness of the coming calamity, albeit after initially fleeing God's light-bearing charge.

Jesus did not give them a sign, but by so doing He was not hiding the lamp. He was simply refusing to cater to their unreasonable demands. He was already producing all the light they needed.

Application: Sometimes our lamp is dim or hidden, unclear, muddied by sin in our lives, etc. And that is a problem.

- C. Another big problem is when the person who is a potential recipient of light does not receive it. That is addressed in verses 34-36 as the Lord gives a contrast between a good and bad lamp in a human, which is the eye. Jesus changes the meaning of lamp metaphor from a light source like a torch or lantern or light bulb to a light gateway, like a fiber optic cable, where the eye stands for the human eye, which in turn stands for the human capacity for seeing and perceiving truth, and in particular *spiritual truth*.

- D. Jesus commends good eyes and warns us about bad eyes. If you have good spiritual perception (a clear or healthy eye, a gift from God), then your whole life (body) will be full of the light is shining into it. If you receive and embrace God’s truth, your life will show it by Christian values, stability, growth, strength, conviction, etc. This would be the case for those who, in the presence of Jesus, received His word and kept it (Luke 11:28).
- E. But if your “eye” (spiritual perception, again), is bad, dark, evil, unhealthy, that means that you do not receive the light of God’s lamp, which is His word. Without that light, you live in darkness. If you have that kind of spiritual life, your life will be full of darkness, and hate, and immorality.
- F. In verse 35-36, Jesus says that you need to watch out that what comes into your life does not multiply the darkness therein. What you watch with your eyes, what “truth” you take in, what podcasts you listen to (by unbelievers?), who you believe, what books you read, all of that impacts and influences your life. We must take heed. If your eye-gate is full of light, without any dark stuff coming in, you will have the bright shining of the Son of God flowing through you.
- G. The problem was not in Jesus—it was in the audience! The audience did not need a sign. They needed “glasses” to correct their spiritual perception of what was right in front of them. As it stood, their spiritual eyes processed only darkness. Light came to them in all its radiant brightness, but their eyes could not see it because their deeds were evil, their hearts were wicked, their minds darkened and depraved. The problem was internal.

Conclusion

God has provided for you too—you might feel like you must see a sign before you will believe, but you do not need anything more than what God has provided. Remember these people. God has given you *everything* you need to believe in Him. You really have no excuse.

We *must* take heed like Jesus says. We need to hear the wisdom of Jesus, and His call to repent. Otherwise, our lives will be dark. Our attitude toward Jesus, our disposition toward truth, our stance toward what is right will determine our outcome in the end. Is your soul like a black hole that sucks all the light into darkness? Or are you glad to bask in the light of Jesus’s glory and truth and have it transform you—like when sunshine does its work to produce Vitamin D in your body?