

Sermon Outline Notes

The Sign of Jonah

August 9, 2026

Matthew 12:38-42 16:1-4

Main Truth: Jesus has revealed Himself clearly to humanity

Book of Jonah overview: Jonah is a lone Hebrew who is running away from God in disobedience. The sailors respond to God in obedience. The people of Ninevah respond to God in obedience. The big fish responds to God in obedience. See personal study guide for additional readings this week.

Matthew 12:38 The Pharisees continue to challenge who Jesus is and ask Him to perform a sign.

Matthew 12:28 The Pharisees had witnessed the kingdom of heaven with their own eyes. Jesus had driven out demons, healed the sick, calmed the storm, and taught with authority. Denying all of this, the Pharisees now demanded a sign.

When it comes to proof, God does not need to show us anything to still be God of the universe. A person's lack of belief does not determine who He is. Jesus does not have to answer the Pharisees nor does He have to speak to their mocking attitude. An attitude that existed up to His death on the cross (**Matthew 27:28-30**) and continues in our world today.

Matthew 12:39 Jesus points out a sign that had already been given to them, "the sign of Jonah".

The book of Jonah records the story of Jonah and God's never-ending mercy for sinners.

Matthew 12:40 Jesus points out a specific moment in the narrative of Jonah regarding the sign. It was not just Jesus' humanity, "Son of Man", but the greatest sign "His resurrection after His death".

The religious rulers had asked for a sign and Jesus obliged them - He is that sign. Yet they still rejected Him.

In the story of Jonah, the people living in the evil town of Ninevah responded to the message of God that Jonah delivered. They repented and turned from their evil ways. God showed mercy to the Gentiles, the enemies of Israel, and Jonah did not like it.

The sign of Jonah is about the resurrection of Christ, but we can also see how it connects to God's entire redemptive plan for Jews and Gentiles.

Matthew 12: 41-42 Greater light requires greater judgement. The more someone knows of God and still chooses to not believe results in more responsibility for not believing.

Ninevah had little knowledge about God and yet repented with what they had learned about God from Jonah. The Queen of Sheba traveled a great distance to visit King Solomon and listened to his wisdom. As a result of what she heard, she came to know God and offers praise to Him as recorded in **1 Kings 10:1-13**.

In both of these examples those who knew little about God repented when they heard His word. Jonah preached repentance in Ninevah for forty days and did not perform any miracles.

In contrast, the religious leaders who confronted Jesus had more information than either the people of Ninevah or the Queen of Sheba. They had the scriptures, the written Word of God, and the very Word Himself standing in front of them and yet they did not believe. They continued throughout the time of Jesus to challenge who He was.

Matthew 16:1 Jesus preached among the Jews for several years and performed many miracles. Later Jesus performed the miracle of feeding thousands of people with very little and the Pharisees continued to challenge Him by asking for a sign from heaven.

Jesus is from heaven, and everything he did was to show them a sign from heaven.

Matthew 16:2-4 Jesus speaks once again to their desire for signs.

Jesus had already done so much to prove His deity. The signs of Christ on earth were not enough for the religious leaders who would only believe if He called down fire from heaven to wipe out the Roman army. They were looking for a conquering Messiah who would free them from their Roman captivity and were missing the Messiah that God had promised.

Mathew 15:31 “The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.”

The immediate demand of the Jewish leaders for a sign from heaven contrast sharply with the Gentile crowd’s response to Jesus’ miracles.

Jesus condemns the leader’s hypocrisy and calls them a “wicked and adulterous generation”. They were blind to the signs regarding His Messianic credentials that they were witnessing in person.

Jesus in the sign of Jonah which points them to the cross and to the empty tomb. No sign of God is more powerful than the resurrection of Christ. The sign of Jonah is not about Jonah.

It is all about Jesus Christ the resurrected Messiah!

Small Group Discussion Questions

The Sign of Jonah Matthew 12:38-42 16:1-4

1. Share some miracles that we can see and experience on a daily basis that we take for granted.
2. What do you think motivated the religious leaders to ask Jesus for a sign? What did they hope would happen?
3. Since Jesus could do a sign at any time why did He refuse to give a sign?
4. What do we learn from this about people's motivations and methods?
5. Why did Jesus respond with such strong words "wicked and adulterous generation" rather than just honoring their request?
6. How do we respond to demands for proof in our own faith lives?
7. What is the sign of Jonah? Why is this the key sign that Jesus would give them?
8. Why is the resurrection the only sign Jesus offers?
9. What does it mean to have "eyes to see" spiritual truths without needing constant miraculous validation?
10. Why does Jesus make a comparison with Nineveh and the queen of the South? What do these Gentiles have to do with Jesus' message?
11. How do these passages help you in trusting Jesus' identity based on revealed truth rather than demanded spectacle.

Personal Study Guide

The Story of Jonah

Jonah Chapter 1

Jonah Chapter 2

Jonah Chapter 3

Jonah Chapter 4

Matthew 12:38-42

Matthew 16:1-4

Luke 11:29-32