



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 11:27-32

To understand the significance of the “sign of Jonah.”

Long Haired Freaky People Need Not Apply

In 1970 *Good-byes and Butterflies* was released by the Canadian rock band Five Man Electrical Band with the song “Hello Melinda Goodbye” as the single. Initially it was not met with critical success as their single only crested #55 of the Canadian Billboards. The following year, 1971, the album was re-released with different cover art and a different single - “Signs” - which reached #4 on the Canadian Billboards and #3 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. It was an instant classic. The chorus is recognizable to most people: “Sign, sign, everywhere a sign, blockin’ out the scenery, breakin’ my mind. Do this, don’t do that, can’t you read the sign?” The song chronicles the complaints of the band’s frontman, Les Emmerson, who describes four instances of encountering signs that angered him because of what he perceived to be unfair.

Our passage this morning is all about signs, but a different kind of sign. Jesus confront His “evil generation” who “seeks for a sign.” His words to His contemporaries then apply to us as much today; people are still demanding signs from God regularly. Jesus’s words to them and us are simple: “No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” This week, we will discover what that means.

True Blessing

Verses 27 begins with: “As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him.” The “these things” refers to Jesus’ teaching regarding demons in the passage that immediately precedes this one (Lk. 11:14-26). While Jesus was teaching, this woman cried out to him: “Blessed is the womb that bore you,

and the breasts at which you nursed” (Lk. 11:27b). This would presumably refer to Mary, and it is certainly not untrue. In Luke 1, Elizabeth’s baby in her womb (John the Baptist) “leaped in her womb” when he heard Mary’s greeting, and “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” and then “exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’” (Lk. 1:41-42). Mary is unquestionably blessed as the mother of the Son of God. However, Jesus uses this opportunity for more teaching and responds: “Blessed, rather, are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk. 11:28). For Jesus, the kind of blessing to be emphasized was not one of familial connection to Jesus, but a connection by hearing and believing by faith. This is similar to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 8:19-21 when Mary and His brothers come to speak with Him: “But he answered them, ‘My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it’” (Lk. 8:21). Hearing and believing is the preferred blessing for all people.

The Sign of Jonah

In verses 29 through 32, Jesus tells the evil generation He spoke to that the only sign they would receive is the sign of Jonah. There are at least three illustrations that help us understand what the sign of Jonah means. Below is a breakdown of each of them.

JONAH

Since Jesus mentions the “sign of Jonah,” it would be helpful first to consider some of the aspects of Jonah as they pertain to Jesus and His ministry. Certainly there are many aspects of Jonah’s life that do not connect to Jesus at all, namely that Jonah constantly ran from the will of God whereas Jesus did God’s will perfectly (Jn. 8:29; Heb. 7:26). However, there are some aspects of Jonah that allude to the Messiah’s life and ministry. For one, Jonah was a prophet (Jonah 1:1-2). Beyond that, Jonah is swallowed up into the belly of the fish for three days (Jonah 1:17) whereas Jesus is swallowed by the earth and death for three days. Further, Jonah cried out to God in distress, and God heard him and responded (Jonah 2:1-10). There are some pictures of death, burial, and resurrection in Jonah’s story that typologically foretell the Messiah’s life, death, and resurrection. Typology suggests *that there are persons and events in the Old Testament that serve as patterns or types of something more definite in the New Testament*. You could say it this way: the Old Testament person or event is the shadow and the New Testament person or event is the substance. Typology is often called the, “near view/far view” phenomenon, because in it we see both the immediate fulfillment of a prophecy, and also a much later, greater fulfillment of the same prophecy. Jonah serves as a *typological foreshadowing* of Christ.

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

Jesus also mentions “the Queen of the South” (Lk. 11:31), a reference to the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10:1-13. The Queen heard “reports” of how wise Solomon was, “but did not believe the reports” until she came to see for herself (1 Kg. 10:6-7). She “came to Solomon” and “told him all that was on her mind,” and “Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her” (1 Kg. 10:2-3). Jesus’ point is clear: “she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, *something greater than Solomon is here*” (Lk. 11:31). In other words, on the day of judgment in the resurrection, both the Queen of Sheba and this perverse generation will stand before God, and the Queen of Sheba will condemn them because she was able to recognize the lesser wisdom of Solomon while they were unable to recognize the greater wisdom in Jesus.

NINEVEH

Nineveh is also mentioned as another group that will condemn the evil generation Jesus was speaking to. Nineveh was a non-Jewish nation that was about to experience the judgment of God. God sent the prophet

Jonah to go and call them to repentance and they actually listened (Jonah 3:6-9). Jesus makes the point that Nineveh will also be in the final judgment and they will condemn this generation because they listened to the prophet Jonah and repented, and yet “something greater than Jonah is here” (Lk. 11:32).

A Quick Note on Typology

It was mentioned above that Jonah serves as a typological foreshadowing of Christ. If you are not fully aware of what typology entails, below are three helpful rules to follow when trying to determine if an Old Testament figure foreshadows something in the New Testament. These rules are important, because they prevent us from making connections that were never intended to be made.

THE RULE OF DEFINITION

Rule number one states that the New Testament must actually dictate that typology is at play. In other words, we cannot look at the life of someone like Joseph and decide that he is a “type of Jesus.” Why? Because although it may sound good, and while there might be similarities between Joseph’s life and Jesus’ life, the New Testament never specifically makes this connection. No one in the New Testament ever says anything that explicitly or implicitly connects the two. This is called *The Rule of Definition*. Jesus, however, makes this connection between Himself and Jonah both here in Luke 11:27-32 and also Matthew 12:39-41 and 16:4. Rule number one, therefore, has been fulfilled.

THE RULE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Rule number two states that the Old Testament type must prefigure the New Testament fulfillment and have strong corresponding similarities. There must be events, actions, or words spoken in the Old Testament that are similar or identical to the New Testament. This is called *The Rule of Correspondence*. Jonah and Jesus have corresponding details in their stories (3 days in the bellow of the fish/3 days in the belly of the earth, both cry out to God in distress through prayer), therefore, rule number two has been fulfilled.

THE RULE OF ESCALATION

Rule number three states that there must be an increase in intensity from type to fulfillment. In other words, the corresponding parts in the Old Testament should be less significant than the corresponding parts in the New Testament. This is called *The Rule of Escalation*. In this case, Jonah is swallowed up by a fish, whereas Jesus’ is swallowed by a greater foe in death. Jonah is a prophet of God, but Jesus is not only a prophet, but the Son of God and the Messiah. Beyond that, Jesus even says explicitly with reference to Himself, “Something greater than Jonah is here” (Lk. 11:32). Jesus’ fulfillment is escalated and therefore rule number three has been fulfilled as well.

What About Now?

Everyone wants a sign from God, and this passage presents to us the reality that the only sign we really need is that of resurrection. Christ is the final sign of God’s power and a sufficient one at that. We need look no further than Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection for eternal hope and forgiveness of sin. This is why Paul said, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Nothing is more important than the crucified Savior who offers salvation to those who believe in Him by faith alone.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 11:27. What does the “these things” refer to?

2. Read Luke 11:27. Who approached Jesus, and what did she ask?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 11:28. What was Jesus’ response? What does this mean? What is He teaching?

2. Read Luke 11:29. What did Jesus call “this generation?” What made them evil? What will be given to them?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 11:30. How was Jonah a sign to Nineveh? How will Jesus be a sign to His generation in the same manner? (Hint: See above notes)

2. Read Luke 11:31. Who is the Queen of Sheba? When will she be together with Jesus’ generation?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 11:31-32. Why will the Queen of Sheba and Nineveh be able to condemn Jesus’ evil generation? What did they do that this generation did not do?

2. What are the three rules of Typology?

Week 44 Discussion: Blessed

In Luke 11:27-28, Jesus tells the woman who cries out to Him: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” Obedience is fundamental to following Jesus. Talk as a group about the role obedience plays in your day to day life as a Christian, and what you can do to be more obedient.

1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself an obedient Christian?
2. What precepts of Christianity do you struggle the least to obey?
3. What precepts of Christianity do you struggle the most to obey?
4. What role does grace play in day-to-day obedience?
5. How does obedience bring blessing into your life? Give practical examples.
6. What kind of accountability do you need to be more obedient?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus says those who hear and obey God’s word are more blessed than even Mary.
2. Jesus talks about the sign of Jonah that is given to His wicked generation, and what it means.