

THE SIGNS OF JONAH THE PROPHET

A complete understanding of what God has said on any subject in the Holy Scripture cannot be totally understood by an untrained mind. This complex combination of words provides profound information on creation and the reasons for our existence - what happened in the past and foretells what is to come in the future. Yet it can only be clearly understood by those whose minds have been opened by the Lord to receive the revelation of the truth at the appointed time. As a matter of fact, the word of God is spirit and can only be discerned by those who have the Spirit of Truth.

The revelation of the truth comes from God to every generation. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, He opened up the truth to all His servants. However, it is up to His servants to search the Scriptures diligently to understand and unveil what has been concealed in the word of truth, as it is stated in this proverb:

Proverbs 25:2 New King James Version (NKJV)

²It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

What forms the foundation of becoming a servant of the Lord is faith and obedience to His instructions. The Lord has prescribed two processes which empower His servants to change from the ways of this world, converting them into the kingdom of God. These processes are justification and sanctification. It is during the process of sanctification that the Lord opens the ears of His servants to hear the truth and their eyes to see what He has already spoken. The Lord is not speaking to us today as He did with His servants the prophets in the Old Testament, but He is working with us through His Spirit. The Lord has already spoken; He has given us all we need to know in the Holy Scriptures.

The book of Jonah is one of those books in the Holy Scriptures which has been in the past, and still is, taken for an enjoyable story for children by many scholars. So too is the book of Ruth. But concealed in these books are profound truths which open our understanding to the plan of God. The Lord Jesus Christ validated the book of the prophet Jonah by giving the events of what happened to the prophet Jonah as a sign to a generation of people.

At this stage a few questions loom which require our attention and answers:

- Was spending three full days and three full nights in the belly of the great fish the only sign in the book of Jonah?

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- Was the Lord addressing only the generation of people before Him when He walked the Earth, or was He in reality addressing the current generation of people?
- What was the catalyst that compelled the people of Nineveh to repent?

A diligent investigation reveals that the majority of what the Lord Jesus Christ said was directed more to our generation of people than to any other generation before us. We are the last generation of this present age; we will therefore see the consummation of all things. When the Lord was asked for a sign by the Scribes and the Pharisees, He said:

Matthew 12:38-42 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

What sign were the Scribes and Pharisees looking for? The Lord performed many miracles during His time on Earth and these people saw and heard all that He did. So was this question about a sign really for them or for our benefit? Has there ever been a generation of people more evil and adulterous than our generation? There is a reason why we have to seriously consider this question. Noah's generation was evil and violent and the flood came and took them all away almost instantly. Something worse has been prophesied for our generation. So, was the Lord in reality addressing our generation?

We have to be crystal clear on this point - Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three full days and three full nights. The Lord prophesied that He will be in the heart of the Earth (the grave) for three full days and three full nights, which adds up to seventy-two hours. Therefore, anything that attests that this period of time was shorter than seventy-two hours is not in alignment with the truth. This implies that all those who believe in a Good Friday

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and Easter Sunday resurrection have no understanding of the truth. They are being deceived because Friday afternoon to Sunday morning does not add up to seventy-two hours.

Please do the sums yourself and reconsider your position. Your salvation depends on who you trust. The Lord Jesus Christ is not in those houses which do not preach the truth. If these ministers do not hold the truth in something which is so clear for all to see, what about other truths which are more complicated to understanding?

The word of God is truth; what God has said and commands – we must do. It is not about what the majority of people on Earth believe is the truth. Most live according to the precepts and commandments of men in honour of the god of this present age: Satan the devil and his many wiles. The devil and his ministers have created many schemes geared to deceive their followers. It is your responsibility to find out the truth for yourself. You will be the one standing before the judgement seat of the Lord on the appointed day and the transposition of blame will not be an option.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE JONAH?

There must have been many other prophets available to God during that period of time, but God chose the prophet Jonah. God knew that Jonah would not do His will at the first time of asking. What are the reasons behind God's choice of Jonah? We know God knows all things and can tell the end from the beginning:

Isaiah 46:9-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

If God's counsel stands and He does as He pleases, then there must be very good reasons why He chose Jonah for this particular assignment and not any of the other prophets

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available to Him at the time. According to Scripture, when the word of the Lord came to Jonah, he decided to flee to Tarshish:

Jonah 1:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” ³But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

From this passage of Scripture, we realise that Jonah was a typical Israelite who was against all ungodliness and wanted to see that those who did not obey God be punished. He also knew God was merciful, slow to anger, abundant in loving-kindness and ready to forgive all those who repent. It was for that reason that he fled to Tarshish:

Jonah 4:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ²So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”

Jonah had seen that the Lord had relented from the harm that He had said He would bring on the people of Nineveh because the people of Nineveh had repented from their evil ways:

Jonah 3:10 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁰Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

God knew what Jonah would do before He chose him. We must realise - God directs the course of life for His purpose. He sees the end from the beginning. One of the reasons why God chose Jonah was because if any other prophet would have gone to Nineveh immediately and preached repentance - then the people of Nineveh would not have repented. Jonah's detour to Nineveh on the way to Tarshish, and the events that happened on the way, led to the people of Nineveh repenting.

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A deeper examination of the events that occurred in the book of Jonah reveals the fact that the prophet Jonah foreshadowed what was to happen to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jonah was given as a sign to the people of Nineveh, which led them to repent. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ has been given as a sign to the world to lead those who believe to repent. We have been given both Jonah and the Lord Jesus Christ as a sign.

THE PARALLELS OF JONAH AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

God has promised that He will do nothing if He has not first revealed His secret to His servants the prophets:

Amos 3:3-7 New King James Version (NKJV)

³ Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? ⁴ Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? ⁵ Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? ⁶ If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?

⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

It is of paramount importance to notice one of the great principles of life in this passage of Scripture. Two people cannot walk together unless they agree. We cannot walk alongside God if we do not agree with what God has said. God made us; His word is final regardless of what we might think. There is also this important question from the above passage of Scripture: if there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it? The Lord knows everything. If He allows something to happen on Earth, it must be for a good reason which may not be known to us. There are a few parallels between the events in the book of Jonah, that led the people of Nineveh to repent, and what happened during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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GOD WAS IN CONTROL; THE FAITH OF JONAH AND THE LORD

There are many signs that led the people of Nineveh to repent - all of which were directed by God. As it was with Joseph in the book of Genesis, who his brothers sold as a slave to the Ishmaelite traders who carried him into Egypt:

Genesis 37:25-28 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. ²⁶ So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?" ²⁷ Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

When his brothers came to sojourn with him in Egypt, he declared to them that it was God who directed his path to Egypt to save many lives.

Genesis 50:19-21 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?" ²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. ²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

When Jonah decided to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, he actually triggered the Lord's plan into action. This led the people of Nineveh to believe what God had said He will do to them if they did not turn from their evil ways. The Lord knew the situation and His plan was progressing as intended. It started when the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea:

Jonah 1:4-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

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⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

Jonah knew the power of God and trusted in the fact that nothing would happen to him without the knowledge of God. So he went into the lower parts of the ship and slept while the mariners were afraid and crying to their gods who could not save them. The Lord Jesus Christ was in a similar situation with His disciples in a storm:

Luke 8:22-25 New King James Version (NKJV)

²² Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. ²³ But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. ²⁴ And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ But He said to them, "Where is your faith?"

And they were afraid, and marvelled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

The Lord was in control of the situation and was asleep during the storm. As we know - the Lord has unwavering faith and He trusted in God the Father. Jonah trusted in his God and his faith was unmoved by the storm that befell them out at sea.

It was God who prepared the great fish to be Jonah's grave for three days and it was God who commanded the fish to vomit out Jonah on the dry land:

Jonah 1:17 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁷ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

God had prepared the heart of Joseph of Arimathea to do His will. He was chosen to prepare a burial place for the Lord and was given the boldness to go to Pilate and ask for the body of the Lord:

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Luke 23:50-55 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵⁰ Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. ⁵¹ He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. ⁵⁴ That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. ⁵⁵ And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.

All this was done to fulfill Scripture.

Above are two examples of the fact that God was in control of these events and nothing could have happened beyond the limits of His plan. Both the Lord and Jonah's trust was in God. They believed that God is who He is and that with God all things are possible.

THE MESSAGE

A message is always carried by a messenger. Jonah was a messenger from God to the people of Nineveh, likewise was the Lord to the children of Israel and the Gentiles. Just as the people of Nineveh did not see the events on the way to Tarshish but believed, the Lord has said blessed are those who have not seen but believe:

John 20:27-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This information from God, which Jonah took to Nineveh, had two phases. The first phase of the message was for the people of Nineveh to repent from their violent and evil ways in a given period of time. Jonah must have preached this message to the mariners when He told them why he was running away from the presence of the Lord:

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Jonah 3:5-9 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

The second phase was a stern warning of the consequences of not obeying God's instructions:

Jonah 3:4 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The Lord came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying:

Mark 1:14-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

As we know, where there is a belief, action must always follow that belief. In other words, if we do not act on what we profess to believe, then it means nothing to us. The Lord added:

Luke 13:1-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they

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were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

The Lord gave the timeframe when He proclaimed:

Luke 4:18-19 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

The acceptable year of the Lord is the timeframe in which all men everywhere have been called to repent. This timeframe is about to end. The next phase of God’s salvation plan is redemption for those who have repented and obeyed His commandments and punishment for those who choose not to obey the commandments of the Lord. Remember, there is a difference between punishment and judgement:

Matthew 7:21-23 New King James Version (NKJV)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

The warning has gone forth to all those who practise lawlessness. On that day the Lord will send those away from His presence who did not repent from their sins.

THE DISCIPLES

The Holy Scripture stipulates that the Lord called His disciples at the beginning of His ministry and performed many miracles so that they would believe. This started when He turned water into wine in Cana of Galilee:

John 2:1-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³And when they ran

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out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

⁶ Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.

⁹ When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰ And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" ¹¹ This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

As for Jonah, God had already prepared disciples for him. The mariners were his disciples. They heard his word and believed what Jonah had told them when he gave them the reasons why the sea was tempestuous to them:

Jonah 1:6-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁶ So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

⁹ So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

It was God who had put it in the hearts of these mariners to cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. This made the mariners even more afraid:

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Proverbs 16:33 New King James Version (NKJV)

³³ The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

These mariners now knew they were dealing with the only true God - who brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea and onto dry land. These men became Jonah's disciples because of the events that befell them.

SALVATION IN THE LORD AND JONAH

The salvation of the world hinged on the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world as the Lamb of God who was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. John the Baptist came to bear witness to the Lord. He was the one to make the Lamb of God known to Israel:

John 1:29-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ³¹ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

The reason why the Lord Jesus Christ had to be offered for our sins is because of the love God has for us and the awesome purpose He has for our lives. There are many in our generation of people who attach no value to their lives and the lives of others. Some will even place more value on the lives of animals and birds than that of men - what ignorance. Consider this passage of Scripture:

John 3:16-18 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The Lord gave the reason why many are going to be condemned:

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John 3:19-20 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Salvation is not just for those who were witness to the Lord and then believed. Salvation is also for those who believe the words of those who witnessed what happened to the Lord.

The salvation of the mariners was through the prophet Jonah. If they did not follow his instructions, they would have perished in the storm. They actually tried to save themselves but they could not:

Jonah 1:11-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹¹ Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous. ¹² And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

¹³ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

Only after they had thrown Jonah into the sea did the sea cease from its raging. It was as the Lord had said:

John 3:14-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

The sins of the world would not have been taken away if the Lord was not crucified. Similarly, only after Jonah was thrown into the sea did salvation come to the mariners and to those who believed their words.

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THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The Lord had prophesied to His disciples that He will be killed and on the third day He will rise from the dead. But they did not understand because it was hidden from them until after His resurrection.

Mark 9:31-32 New King James Version (NKJV)

³¹ For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." ³² But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

When the Lord was on the cross, and after he had fulfilled all the scriptures that were about Him, He said it was finished and gave up His spirit:

John 19:30 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

It was at this point that Lord tasted death for all of us. In death, Satan had nothing on Him because He had not transgressed the commandments of God. Therefore, He could not be kept in the grave and after three days He was set free.

Luke 24:6-9 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' " ⁸ And they remembered His words. ⁹ Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

His resurrection is our hope; because He lives - we live. Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, which was his grave, for three days and three nights:

Jonah 1:17 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁷ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

On the third day, the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land. Jonah repented when He was in the belly of the fish and His prayers were heard by the Lord:

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Jonah 2:8-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁸“Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. ⁹But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”¹⁰ So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Jonah died and was resurrected on the third day. This was the sign the Lord spoke about when He was asked by the Scribes and Pharisees for a sign.

WHY DID THE PEOPLE OF NINEVAH REPENT

Something must have been the trigger that compelled the people of Nineveh to repent from their violent and evil ways. It was not just the arrival of Jonah into the city or what he said. The prophet Jonah was well known in Nineveh before he set foot in the city. The question we have to ask is: how could that have happened?

The fear of God fell on the people of Nineveh when they heard the recounting of the event out at sea and what they had to do with Jonah in order to save their lives. After three days the prophet who they threw into the sea turned up alive. These mariners made vows to the Lord because they saw that the sea stopped raging immediately when Jonah was thrown out of the ship into the sea,.

Jonah 1:14-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.”¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

These men saw the power of God and feared Him. They saw that God cannot be mocked and that He will do as He pleases. When they got back to land they proclaimed what God had done to His prophet, who was fleeing away from His presence because he did not want to go to Nineveh to preach the message of repentance. Some of these men must have been compelled to go to Nineveh before the Lord sent Jonah the second time to tell them what God had proposed for them.

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When Jonah entered the city of Nineveh and began to preach the message God had given him - they set eyes on the prophet who was thrown in the sea and the reality of the situation must have hit home hard. Jonah had died but had been resurrected by God to complete the work He had asked him to do. They now knew that God was serious about what He had said and what He will do if they did not repent.

CONCLUSION

We have the complete and living word of God and the signs from all the prophets of God, including His Son who was crucified for our sins. The message that runs through the length of the Holy Scriptures is one of repentance and obedience to the laws and commandments of God, along with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for our sins. This message has been signposted for us by Jonah, the Lord Jesus Christ and their disciples.

God has compelled some of His servants to perform strange acts, to serve as a demonstration to our generation of people - to show His power and might, and the gravity of the situation we find ourselves in. The prophet Isaiah had to walk around naked for three years, which serves as a sign to the western nations and Africans of what will befall them if they do not repent from their evil ways:

Isaiah 20:1-4 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹*In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it, ²at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.*

³*Then the LORD said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia, ⁴so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.*

The names of places in the Holy Scripture are interchangeable and can be conflicting by design, but the meaning of the context is constant throughout. Understanding what the

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Lord has said brings with it an understanding of who the Lord is addressing in any given passage of Scripture.

The prophet Ezekiel lost His wife and was commanded to not mourn her death. This is a sign of things to come, when the body of Christ will flee into the mountains and those who remain will mourn their failings with one another during the great tribulation.

Ezekiel 24:15-24 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁵ Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁶ "Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow."

¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹ And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?"

²⁰ Then I answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²¹ 'Speak to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²² And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow. ²³ Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. ²⁴ Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.'"

We have been given the prophecy of what is to come. The Lord has promised to send a messenger before the end of the age. Will that messenger come with great power, performing great miracles, or will he come with a message from God telling us to repent?

The majority of professing believers are waiting for a prophet like Moses or Elijah - who performed great wonders in their days to turn people from their sinful ways to believe in the Lord, the God who created them. Consider this passage of Scripture:

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John 10:40-42 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴⁰ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. ⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." ⁴² And many believed in Him there.

John the Baptist came in the Spirit of Elijah but did not perform miracles and the Lord called him the greatest. We are in a situation greater than those during that period of time. We have the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We have been given understanding of the truth and all the signs are there for us to behold. Should we not be able to recognise someone who has been sent from God if we hear the truth at the appointed time? Consider this parable:

Luke 16:27-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

This parable is for our generation. If someone should come from the dead - he will not be able to persuade the majority of people alive today that they have to repent from their evil ways. The messenger from God will come speaking about the laws and commandments of God, which are the foundations of the path towards the kingdom of God. Obedience to the laws and commandments of God are the essential components to see any of us through the end of the age and beyond. Take heed that no one deceives you.