

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 11- Luke 11:29-32

220- The Sign of Jonah- Part 1

September 22, 2013

Luke 11:29-32

29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

31 The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Now the demand to repent is as basic as it gets in Jesus' message. It is equally basic to, and almost synonymous with, the command, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). One of my concerns is to show that repentance in Jesus' message is not behavior but the inner change that gives rise to new God-centered, Christ-exalting behavior. Here are some thoughts to help make the meaning of repentance more plain.

- ✓ *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)*
- ✓ *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32)*
- ✓ *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:41)*
- ✓ *Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3, 5)*

The very first demand of Jesus' public Ministry was, "*Repent.*" He spoke this Command indiscriminately to all who would listen. It was a Call for radical inward change toward God and Man.

Now there are two things that show us that repentance is an internal change of mind and heart rather than simply mere sorrow for sin or temporary improvement of behavior. Now there is no doubt that sorrow will be a part of genuine repentance- but simply because somebody is sorrowful- even *very* sorrowful- does not mean he has truly repented.

First, the meaning of the Greek word behind the English "repent" (*metanoeo*) points us in this direction. This word has two parts:

1. *Meta*
2. *Noeo.*

The second part- *noeo*- refers to the mind and its thoughts and perceptions and dispositions and purposes. The first part- *meta*- is a prefix that regularly means: movement or change.¹ So the literal meaning of "repent" is:

To experience a change of the mind's perceptions and dispositions and purposes.

The other factor that points to this meaning of repent is the way Dr. Luke quoted John Baptist in **Luke 3:8** as he described the relationship between repentance and new behavior. John said:

"Bear fruits *in keeping with* repentance."

... and then he went on to give the people who were listening to him that day- three concrete and very specific examples of what that fruit looked like:

- ✓ **The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise. (Luke 3:11b)**

¹ For example *meta* is used as a prefix in the word *metabaino* (transfer or change from one place to another), *metaballo* (change one's way of thinking), *metago* (lead or move from one place to another), *metatithemi* (convey from one place to another, put in another place, transfer), *metamorphoo* (change in a manner visible to others, be transfigured), *metastrepho* (cause a change in state or condition, change, alter), *metaschematizo* (change the form of something, transform, change), etc.

- ✓ **Collect no more [taxes] than what you have been ordered to. (Luke 3:13b)**
- ✓ **Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages. (Luke 3:14b)**

So the people who literally heard John Baptist say these words were required by God to do those very specific things in order to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. In other words- without doing those things- their repentance would have been false and not genuine.

And that means for us today that although the specific details will be different for us- there will be very concrete, very specific, very measurable things that you will start doing or that you will stop doing- or both- that will be fruit that you bear that is in keeping with repentance- or in other words- fruit that proves that your repentance is genuine.

So true Biblical repentance is what happens inside of us that always and in all cases leads to the fruits of new, godly behavior. Repentance is not the new deeds themselves- but the inward change that causes the fruit of the new deeds. And Jesus is demanding that we experience this inward change.

Why? His answer is that we are sinners.

Luke 5:32

I have not come to call the righteous but *sinner*s to repentance

So what was Jesus' view of sin? In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus describes the son's sin like this:

Luke 15:13&30

“He squandered his estate with loose living”... [and] “devoured your wealth with prostitutes”

But when the prodigal repents he says,

Luke 15:21b

... Father, I have sinned *against heaven* and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

Therefore, throwing your life away on reckless living and

prostitutes is not just humanly hurtful- according to the Bible- it is an offense against Heaven- that is, against God Himself. That's the essential nature of sin.

Sin is a vicious assault against God

We saw this in the way Jesus taught His disciples to pray. He said that they should pray,

Luke 11:4

Forgive us our *sins*, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is *indebted* to us

In other words, sins that God forgives are compared to the ones people commit against us, and those are called *debts*. Therefore, Jesus' view of sin is two-fold:

- A. Sin is that which dishonors God
- B. Sin is that which put us in *debt* to restore the Divine Honor we have defamed by our God-belittling behavior or attitudes.

And that debt is paid by only by Jesus Himself.

Mark 10:45

The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many

... but for us to enjoy that gift- Jesus says we must repent. So repenting means: experiencing a change of mind that now sees God as true and beautiful and worthy of all our praise and all our obedience. This change of mind also embraces Jesus in the same way. We know this because Jesus said,

John 8:42

If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God.

... so seeing God with a new mind includes seeing Jesus with a new mind. And so no one is excluded from Jesus' Demand to repent. He made this clear when a group of people came to Him with news of two

calamities. Innocent people had been killed by Pilate's massacre and by the fall of the tower of Siloam (Luke 13:1-4). Jesus took the occasion to warn even the bearers of the news:

Luke 13:5

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”

In other words, don't think calamities mean that *some* people are sinners in need of repentance and *others* aren't. *All* are sinners and so all need repentance. Just as all need to be born anew because **“that which is born of the flesh is [merely] flesh” (John 3:6)**, so all must repent because all are sinners.

When Jesus said, **“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32)**, he did not mean that *some* persons are good enough *not* to need repentance. He meant some *think* they are (Luke 18:9), and others have already repented and have been set right with God. For example, the rich young ruler desired **“to justify himself” (Luke 10:29)** while **“the tax collector . . . beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ [and] went down to his house justified [by God!].” (Luke 18:13-14).**

Therefore, no one is excluded in the Divine Demand to repent. All need repentance. And the need is urgent. Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise *perish*.” But what did He mean by *perish*? He meant that the final Judgment of God would fall on those who don't repent. And that is why Jesus made the statement that Brother Andy just read to you in **Luke 11:32:**

The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Jesus, the Son of God, is warning people of the Judgment to come, and offering escape if we will repent. But if we will not repent- Jesus has but a statement for us,

Luke 11:29

This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

This is why Jesus Demand for repentance is part of His central Message that the kingdom of God is at hand. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The gospel—the good news—is that the rule of God has arrived in Jesus to save sinners before it arrives at his second coming in judgment. So the demand to repent is based on the gracious *offer* that is present to forgive, and on the gracious *warning* that someday those who refuse the offer will perish in God's judgment.

After he had risen from the dead Jesus made sure that his apostles would continue the call for repentance throughout the world. He said, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that *repentance* and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). So the demand of Jesus to repent goes to all the nations. It comes to us, whoever we are and wherever we are, and lays claim on us. This is the demand of Jesus to every soul: Repent. Be changed deep within. Replace all God-dishonoring, Christ-belittling perceptions and dispositions and purposes with God-treasuring, Christ-exalting ones.

Now this event in **Luke 11** occurred just months before Jesus hung screaming in agony on a Cross to purchase the souls of all of God's elect. And even though I anticipate that it will take us several years to get through all these Chapters because of how profound Jesus' Teaching is here- the chronology is really only a few months.

Now at this point- the nation of Israel as a whole- led by the Pharisees- has completely rejected Jesus and the majority of the Jewish people have followed the lead of these apostate religious leaders. And as we have discovered over the last several weeks- the people- for the most part- have bought into the official line concerning Jesus- that He is not from God but is empowered by satan.

And so we will see that from now on in His ministry- until He is Crucified- the Words of Jesus will be *primarily* Judgmental. His Words to the spiritual leadership are *totally* Judgmental. Look again at the assessment that Jesus makes about them in the middle of verse 29:

Luke 11:29b

... This generation is a wicked generation...

From here to His Resurrection- Jesus will only *occasionally* speak of Grace and Salvation- and that will be primarily to the outcasts- the tax collectors and the prostitutes and the riff raff and the criminal element who understood that they were lost and were not deceived by the elevation of human morality and the heresy of Legalism.

And also Jesus will concentrate on teaching and instructing and giving the Apostles and the disciples their final refinement for what is ahead of them in His Death and His Resurrection and their subsequent Ministry.

But there is a final statement that Jesus makes to Israel. And that is:

... This generation is a wicked generation...

... and it is a very similar statement that He made in Galilee when He called them

An evil and adulterous generation

And this adulterous characteristic is primarily spiritual. The Jews who were chosen to have God as their husband, who were chosen to receive the Revelation of God that is contained in the Old Covenant, the Jews- who were chosen to be the ones to whom God sent His Prophets and from whom would come the Messiah- these people- for the most part- have committed spiritual adultery by whoring after false gods and false religions and worshipping idols. Turn with me to Jeremiah 31- to look at how God Himself characterizes the Jews and Himself in respect of the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

God says here that the Jew broke the first Covenant- even though God Himself was a husband unto them. And so when God says here in verse 32:

... not like the covenant which I made with their fathers...

... He was saying that everything would change with the infinitely superior New Covenant. You see the first or the Old Covenant was set up like this:

You do this... and then I will bless you.

The Jew commanded to obey and keep God's law and Commandments and if they did that- after they did that- then and only then God would bless them. But of course that also meant:

If you do not do this- then I will curse you.

And here in verse 32- God say that the Jew did not keep the Covenant- but broke it and therefore not only are they not blessed- but they are cursed. Now to see how infinitely superior the New Covenant is- look again at verse 33:

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

So in the New Covenant- it is set up like this:

I will choose you and I will draw you and I will change you and I will save you and I will empower you to love and serve Me and I will direct and lead you and the result is that you will be my people and I will be your God.

So the 1st Covenant was all about our performance and the New Covenant is all about God's Own Sovereign Performance through Jesus Christ in both His Person and finished Work. Now look at the kicker in verse 34:

They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Now when God says here:

They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them...

... he is referring to the amazing distinction between the natural nation of Israel- that was comprised of both saved and unsaved Jews- and the true genuine invisible Church of Jesus- which contains only true believers.

You see the Church is both visible and invisible. It is both temporal and eternal. It is both local and universal. It is both early and heavenly.

So, for example- you have The Covenant of Peace Church- which is a local, temporal, earthly, visible Church that contains less than 100 souls- some of whom are truly saved and some of whom are not. And we make up part of the universal, worldwide, eternal invisible, heavenly Church of the Lord Jesus.

But while The Covenant of Peace Church may physically contain some members who are not truly regenerate- the universal invisible, heavenly Church does not. So you may fool the leadership of this church and we may think you are saved and you may join this church and fool us into thinking you are a child of God and become a member of this local body- but if you are not truly born again- you are not and never have been a member of the true church of Jesus- because Jesus knows those who are His. That is what God means when He said in **Jeremiah 31:34a:**

They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother,

saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them...

And that is true because of the last part of verse 34 that says:

... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

So unlike the Jews who lived in Israel and were all citizens of that nation- whether they were saved or not- under the 1st or the Old Covenant- you are not part of the true Church of Jesus unless and until God has forgiven you and rescued you from the Wrath of God and changed your nature by virtue of the sovereign, supernatural miracle of Regeneration of the New Birth.

So under the Old Covenant- God had two people:

1. The unsaved Jew
2. The saved Jew

... and both the saved Jew and the unsaved Jew were important to God and both were used by God until the Messiah could be born. Under the Old Covenant- God spoke to and through the Jew and to the Jew and for the Jew exclusively and God moved for the Jew and by the Jew exclusively. And God gave the Jew their freedom and their nation and their culture and their language and their Government and their Law God sent them His Word and His Commandments and His Revelation and His Truth and His Prophets. And God blessed them and prospered them and defended them and kept them and sustained them and provided for them.

And here is the offensive part- God did all that exclusively and solely *to* and *for* and in the Jew and *in* the Jewish nation- to the *exclusion* of all other peoples and nations- so that through the Jew would come the Messiah- Jesus Christ. Please hear the Word of the Lord in **Deuteronomy 10:14&15** where God said

14 “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

15 “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this

day.

But now that Jesus has come and under the glorious New Covenant- that dynamic has changed and today God has only one people:

The Church

... and so under the New Covenant- it matters not to God who you are or where you were born or who your parents were or what language you speak or what color your skin is or what culture you hail from or what your nationality you are or how tall you are or how much money you make or what your political connections are or whether you are male or female or Jew or Gentile or free or bond or rich or poor- all that matters now is that if you have been sovereignly regenerated and God has laid His hand upon you to set His Love on you to forgive you and to save you to the uttermost- you are now part of the true, eternal, heavenly, invisible Church of the First Born and you are members- in particular of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now- under the New Covenant- to the exclusion of every other group- God no longer deals with a particular Jewish nation- He deals with His Church- which is made up of peoples and languages and tongues from every nation on earth- both Jew and Gentile. Please turn with me to read two very important Passages that deals with this issue:

Romans 2:28&29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

So the only Jew that matters in the New Covenant is the real Jew, the true Jew, the spiritual Jew- who is the individual who has been saved by Grace through Faith in the finished Work of Jesus Christ- which makes him a spiritual descendant of Abraham and an heir according to the promise that God made to Abraham.

Now I realize that this Truth will mess up some of your Eschatology- and what many of you have been taught your whole life about the Jew and Israel- but this is exactly what the New Testament teaches. So Jesus is now making this change and He is characterizing the unsaved Jews in this fashion. So here in Luke 11:29 the hammer drops and the gavel hits the desk- the verdict is in. The final Statement by God Himself toward the unsaved Jew is in:

"This generation is a wicked generation."

And they are wicked in the most formidable sense of the Greek word, *poneros* which is used to describe satan himself- who is the wicked one. So this is the final Divine Indictment.

And Jesus wasn't talking about a minority of the Jews either- He was talking about a majority. He said "this generation" – the Greek word here is *genea*, which involves a greater group of people or the most dominant group of people in a time or place.

And we could say that today about our own country. The majority of people in the United State today are wicked. And they are wicked without being troubled by it- without being convicted about it. Certainly this is the most wicked generation any of us have known- and it seems to be- at least on the outside- to be far more wicked than in the past- and getting more wicked all the time.

And not only wicked- but actually flaunting its wretchedness- being prideful about being wicked. So ours is a very wicked generation because sin and corruption and filth and perversion and deception abound. They are propagated, promoted, publicized, and paraded in public and shoved into our faces. Our nation is increasingly immoral, blatantly and flagrantly ungodly.

So we could say this about our own generation. But it is actually shocking that Jesus said it about His- because by any normal human standard- the generation that Jesus is damning here was the most moral, the most religious, the most God-conscious of any society in history. So unlike our culture- this is not a godless culture that Jesus was living in. The Pharisees were not a group of people who flaunted their wickedness.

So Jesus is not talking about pagans who are blatantly evil. He is not talking about idol worshipers. He's not talking about Gentiles. He's not talking about law breakers. He is speaking of the most religious, the most moral and the most God-sensitive people of all- the Jews, who in most cases were fanatically concerned about keeping the Law of God and who were intensely religious so that the whole of their lives was under the control of their religious duties and obligations and ceremonies.

And it is to be noted that repeatedly Jesus affirmed that- on the outside- these people were clean. They were outwardly moral. But on the inside- these same religious hypocrites were spiritually and internally wicked in the most dangerous fashion as we studied last week. So from that perspective- these religious Jews were in a far more dangerous place than the common pagans- who were openly immoral.

So you see- when it comes to responding to the Gospel- a person is infinitely better off being immoral than humanly moral. When it comes to responding to the Gospel a person is much better off being completely pagan than religious because human morality and adhering to man-made religious ceremonies and rituals deceive people into thinking they have gained a measure of Favor with God and the result is that they always, always, always become fanatically self-righteous and self-satisfied.

And that is why the very essence of the Biblical Gospel addresses this single issue and the single most insulting and offensive and humiliating concept of all- that all of humanity combined are nothing but wicked sinners and utterly wretched- who deserve nothing from God but eternal damnation and that there is nothing in anyone that is good and all our morality, all our good deeds, all our religious adherence counts for absolutely nothing with God and we are doomed as sinners and we possess no power or desire to alter that and therefore we have no option, no choice, no other avenue but to confess that reality and to

beg God in utter desperation to rescue us from the deserved Wrath of God.

And the Jew of that day despised Jesus for that indictment. They hated Jesus for that diagnosis. They wanted Jesus to die for giving them the Truth about their true spiritual condition. And they will hate you too. So the next time you are reproached for the sake of the Gospel- just remember that before the people hated you- they hated Jesus – for the very same reason.

Over and over and over again- Our Lord condemned these people. He told them in the Sermon on the Mount, "Your alms are hypocritical," in the Sermon on the Mount. Your prayers are hypocritical. Your fasting is hypocritical. Your lives are hypocritical. You don't literally murder anyone- but you hate- which is the same thing. You don't literally commit adultery- but you lust- which is the same thing. You clean up the outside but on the inside you're filthy. So while the Jews fought against the Righteousness of God- they were experts in this outward humanly moral righteousness.

So while it is true that this outward manifestation of human morality is a form of righteousness- it cannot save anyone- which is why in the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:20**, Jesus said,

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

... and this is why the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 10:1-3**

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Dear friends- God doesn't accept superficial self-righteousness. And if your adherence to the Law of God is strictly on the outside- and not the natural product of already being saved by faith in Christ- then you have not only cut yourself off from true Salvation- but you've put yourself in a position where genuine Salvation won't even appeal to you

at all and you will eventually fight against Grace and fight against Justification by faith alone.

So Jesus first tells them they are wicked and then He tells them why in the next five words of **Luke 11:29**:

... it seeks for a sign...

Now if we were to say that this current generation in America was a "wicked generation" we probably wouldn't say that the reason they were wicked is because they seek after a sign. We would just list all the wicked and sinful and pagan things that they do.

But here, Jesus says that the reason these Jews are a wicked generation is precisely because they seek after a sign. Now why did He say that?

Here's why. These religious hypocrites were asking Jesus for a sign to prove to them that He was not the servant of satan. In other words- they were saying to Jesus,

Prove it, Jesus. We want a sign. If you are not operating by the power of Beelzebul- the prince of demons- then prove it with a sign.

In other words, they were saying their unbelief and their rejection of Jesus Christ and their conclusion that He was satanic rather than divine was *His fault*, not theirs. That their righteous assessment of the data, that their insight into what He had said and what He had done led them to this conclusion alone, that He did what He did by the power of Satan and they concluded that because they were wise and they were insightful and they were spiritually sensitive and they had great discernment. And if they didn't believe that He was from God, it was His fault.

So this is blasphemy pure and simple. These Jews were blaming Jesus for their evil conclusion about Him. They were saying Jesus left them no other option other than to conclude that He was satanic. This is a blasphemy that is inconceivable. They were a wicked generation because they were blasphemers and their blasphemy went all the way to the extreme of rejecting everything He said and everything He did and concluding that it only proved He served satan.

So that is why they wanted a sign. And this is why Jesus said this over in **John 15:24**:

If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

Now this is strong and offensive language here. Jesus says:

... they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

So the diagnosis from the Mouth of the Lamb of God is that these Jews were not just sinful- they were God-haters. Now you might think that these words should be said to the pagan Romans- who worshipped a plurality of man-made gods and who persecuted the Jews brutally. But Jesus doesn't ever call them God haters. No, that Divine Diagnosis was reserved solely for the Jews.

So we must understand that anyone who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ is a God-hater. You cannot love God and hate Christ. You cannot honor God without honoring the Son. If you truly love God- then it is a requirement that you love Jesus. And so if you reject Jesus- it is only because you do not really love God either. And if you do not love God- then Jesus said you are a God hater.

Dear friends- it is the most dangerous place in the world to hide under a cloak of morality or a cloak of religion and then reject the diagnosis of your own lostness, your own sinfulness, your own unworthiness, your own inability to save yourself and therefore reject the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. This is what the entire Book of Jude is all about- people who are self-righteous and who fight against the Truth and are therefore eternally damned by their false righteousness.

And so Jesus' final statement that they are a wicked generation proves to be true. Because just a few months from this moment- these very same people will put Jesus on a Cross and scream for His Blood. And even after a brief euphoric Palm Sunday- when they call Jesus their Messiah- they will forget all about that and turn on Him and scream for His Blood.

So the final statement is made, "This is a wicked generation. And, dear friends, all of you who stand with that generation against Jesus

Christ are classified in the same way.

But even in this- there is Grace- look at the rest of **Luke 11:29:**

... This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

So following immediately after Jesus' diagnosis of their hearts- He gives Grace. Jesus doesn't say that He will give them no sign- but the sign of Jonah. And the word "but" here opens the window of Grace. But the sign that Jesus is going to give will not be a sign that they demand. It's not going to be on their terms or in their timing.

And even though these Jews are asking for a sign as nothing but a mockery and as a way to scorn and vilify Jesus to His Face- God has determined that there will be one more sign- one more final sign- a sign pointing to the Deity and the Messiahship of Jesus as both Lord and Savior.

And keep in mind that Jesus is not responding to their demand for a sign here. No, Jesus gives them a sign for no other reason that it is His Will to do so- primarily not to save them- but to further damn them. And what does Jesus say this sign will be?

The Sign of Jonah

Well, what is that? What is the sign of Jonah? Please turn with me to the sister Passage of this very same account that the Apostle Levi recorded for us in **Matthew 12:38-41:**

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

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Now look closely at verse 40 again:

for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

... that is the sign of Jonah. **just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

Now even though this is really not a big deal- there is a lot of controversy about the time frame of Jesus after he died and rose from the dead and those who make this controversy always use this verse right here to justify their position that Jesus had to be in the ground for three 24 hour periods before He was raised from the dead and since we all know Jesus was raised on Sunday- then Jesus must have died on either Thursday or even Wednesday.

And this is a common mistake that people make when they try to impose 21st Century Western American concepts onto 1st Century Eastern events. Suffice it to say that Jews in the 1st Century and those Jews whom God used to write the Bible- both in the Old and New Testaments- did not count time like we do today.

For example- we begin our day with the morning- usually at dawn but as we have learned in Brother Vern's class on Genesis- Moses did not begin his day with the morning- but with the evening. And the time frame called, "evening" began at sundown and that time continued on until the next sunup- when it was called "morning". And morning continued until the next sundown where it was then called "evening".

The Jews didn't have a period of time called, "afternoon" or "midday" or mid- morning" as we do. So when Moses wrote Genesis- he wrote with time beginning with the sundown division called, "Evening".

The same thing is true with the Hebrew word, "Yah" which is what we translate into English as "day". Our day is usually 24 hours long- but Jews always said that any part of that 24 hours was called, a day. So if you went three hours into something- you could call that a day.

Now you are free to argue with me about this and you are certainly entitled to have your own opinion about this. But you are not

entitled to your own set of facts. What I just said to you is a fact of Jewish grammar and literature and history and you can look it up for yourself. So what I just said is not my opinion.

And I say that to say that when Jesus says here that the Prophet Jonah was three days, and three nights in the belly of the Sea Monster- that refers to any part of a 24-hour period in their 1st Century Jewish vernacular. And that means that the Lord is going to be, as it were, in the belly of the earth for three days- which could mean any part of a day.

Now let me be clear about this. If you want to believe that Jesus died on Thursday and not Friday- knock yourself out. That isn't an essential part of Biblical Doctrine. What is essential is that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday. But if you believe that He died on Thursday- then you need something else to go by besides this verse- because this verse doesn't prove that. Now it may well be that when we get to Heaven- we will find out that Jesus did die on Thursday- but again- it is just as possible that He died on Friday and was still in the ground three days because Jews considered any part of a day to be a whole day.

But however that works out- the point here is that just as Jonah came out of that virtual death alive- Jesus will come out of actual death alive. That is the sign of Jonah- and Jesus said that it was the only sign that he was going to give them.

Amen. Let's pray