

A Greater Than Solomon (1909)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that the Queen of the South's earnest pursuit of Solomon's wisdom stands as a rebuke to those who neglect or reject the greater wisdom and salvation offered in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 12:42

Topics: "Christ's Supremacy", "Salvation"

Description

In 'A Greater Than Solomon,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the story of the Queen of the South who traveled great distances to hear Solomon's wisdom, using her example to challenge his listeners to seek the greater wisdom found in Jesus Christ. Spurgeon exhorts believers and skeptics alike to cultivate genuine interest, candidly weigh evidence, and personally investigate the claims of the Gospel. This sermon serves as a powerful call to active faith and thoughtful engagement with the message of salvation.

Transcript

"The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Matthew 12:42.

WE cannot tell exactly who the Queen of the South was, nor exactly where Sheba lay. The expression used is Yemen, the south. Yemen is the name of a part of Arabia Felix and it would appear from the spices which the Queen brought with her that she came from that region. At the same time, the Abyssinians claim her as having been their queen. They say that she was converted through her conversations with Solomon, that afterwards the faith of God was preserved in the country, and hence that that famous Ethiopian, who was a eunuch of great authority under Candace in later times, was a proselyte to the Jewish faith on account of that faith existing in Abyssinia. We do not know. It may have been so and it is possible that the supposition of her having come from Arabia—and the supposition of her having come from Abyssinia may both be true—for it appears that the two countries were at one time under the same government, both shores of the Red Sea making up in far distant ages one empire. And she may have been the queen of both.

Very extraordinary are the stories which tradition has handed down with regard to her—some of them not to be repeated—others of them, when repeated, not at all ministering to the profit of the hearer. They tell us of many things with which she tried Solomon. Among the rest there is a tale of her bringing some flowers, artificial flowers most beautifully made, so that no one could detect them and, putting before

Solomon the real and the manufactured, she asked him which were the true flowers. The wise king simply ordered that the windows should be opened and he observed to which flowers the bees flew—and at once knew which were the true flowers of the gardens. Many other things are reported concerning attempts she made to test him, but the king in every case, of course, came off triumphant. Scripture has omitted these because they would be of no spiritual use to us—and the Book was not written to minister to curiosity, but to be helpful to the salvation of our souls.

This evening all that we shall have to say about her will hang upon this fact—that she came from the very ends of the earth, from a far off and remote country—to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And that in this she rebukes persons who lived in the age of Christ and, I also think we had better come to make it practical, and say that she rebukes many of us.

The points in which she rebukes us, or some of us, will be six. I will mention them one by one.

I. The first is this. Her interest in Solomon was readily awakened. She heard different reports concerning him and she took an interest in them. She heard that he was the wisest of kings. Then she thought within herself, "I would like to know wherein he is wise, and be a partaker of his wisdom." She was told that he was the richest of monarchs. Then she thought, "I would like to see something of his glory—the vast magnificence with which he surrounds himself." Some talked about that wonderful house which he had built for his God—the Temple, a building so glorious that none had ever rivaled it, and she said, "I should like to see it." They spoke of the mighty stones which he had moved from afar, and squared and fashioned and dropped into their places without the use of hammer or engraving tools and she wondered how this was done. His wisdom, his wealth and his various building works, no doubt, were told to her again and again. And she sought out persons who could tell her yet more, gathered up all the information possible and took an interest in it. I do not see so very much that is commendable in that except that it shows that she was a woman of mind—a woman of intelligence—that while many of her day would have passed the matter over with, "Well, it may be so, but it is noth-

ing to me," or would have made it a nine days wonder. She, on the other hand, had her whole mind stirred by it, thought it over, and laid it to heart.

Here is the point, however, at which the Savior aimed when He said that she would rise up in judgment against many, "For," He said, "she took an interest in Solomon, but you take no interest in Christ." A greater than Solomon was in the streets of Jerusalem, but the mass of the people cared not who He was! He went up and down the sacred land proclaiming the Gospel—the bulk of the people took some interest in the bread and the fish with which He fed them, but not in the Doctrine which He taught! And while He claimed to be Divine, and asserted Himself to be the Son of David and the King of the Jews—and also to be the Son of God, God over All, blessed forever—great crowds turned away from Him as though it was nothing at all to them and utterly despised Him. Here was a woman, a stranger, a foreigner—not of Jewish race—and yet her enquiring mind rendered her inquisitive about the great king whose scepter of peace was swayed over so wide a territory! And here were those who were of the same race as Jesus, who saw Him at their doors and heard Him in their streets—and yet they passed Him by as though it were a mere trifle with which they had no concern!

Now, in the present day, Jesus Christ is not here. He is risen and gone back to His Father But His Gospel is with us, and every day it is proclaimed. What multitudes gather together on the Sabbath, but out of the great city of London how comparatively few are those multitudes, for the mass of our fellow citizens do not

attend the means of Grace at all. It seems to be no matter of curiosity to them to know who the Savior is, or how they can be saved by Him. It is enough to make the heart bleed to think that next door to places where the Gospel is proclaimed with the greatest power there will be found persons who actually never enter within the place where it is preached—and who have no care to enter, and who, if pressed to go and hear the Word, would say that they did not care to do so! Nor is it merely those that stay away. The worst of it is that many who do come yet come carelessly. Perhaps many of you are well acquainted with the letter of the Gospel, but you have never enquired into the spirit of it. You know that Christ is a Savior, but yet you do not know what it is to be saved! You hear that faith is the great instrument of salvation but you have no faith and do not practically know what faith is. You have never bestirred yourselves to make enquiry! You have not set yourselves down doggedly to search into Scripture and see what is the Truth of God. You have not turned over page after page to find what there is for you, or promise after promise to see what promise you might lay hold of and claim as your own. You have not stirred, though God is at your doors, though Christ is close to you, though the Kingdom of God has come near unto you! You are content to sit and listen to the Gospel which is more precious than diamonds, and yet treat it as though it were a common thing!

What would the dying give if they could have their Sabbaths back again? What would the damned in Hell give if they could hear the Gospel once more? What would we, any of us, give in the Day of Judgment if we could once more stand where Mercy could deal with us and where the silver scepter could be extended to us with the blessed invitation, "Believe and live"? Ah, it seems to you, perhaps, child's play to preach and to listen to sermons, but a day will come when this will be the most solemn work of all! The greatest events of history are not the battles of the conquerors, not the changes of dynasties, but the preaching or the non-preaching of the Gospel—the putting of the candle into the candlestick, or the taking of the candlestick out of its place! The most important points in English history are the points where shone the light of Christ's Cross, or the eras wherein that light was dimmed by superstition! And to every unconverted person here the most important thing is, if he did but know it, that he is still within Mercy's reach—he is still where he may look to Jesus and be saved—he is still where he is wooed and entreated to turn from the error of his ways that he may live!

But, alas, it does not seem so to the most of men. They are all agog about a racehorse or about a famous trial at law! They are all concerned to talk about the rise and fall of markets and even such silly things as the petty gossips of a street, or the little jangles of a family circle. All these are thought worthy of immortal souls—but that the eternal God bowed the heavens and came down to save men, that the Infinite became an Infant, that the Ever-Blessed stooped to be spit upon and to be despised and rejected of men, and that on the Cross He offered up a propitiatory Sacrifice for human guilt— ah, this seems to be a mere trifle, a thing for poor religious people to think over, but not for your great wits and your smart intellects, not a subject worthy of the young man who is in the prime of his abilities, or worthy of the thoughtful man who is accustomed to revolve great themes in his mind! O Queen of Sheba, you do condemn this listless generation! We can scarcely get a hearing for Christ, the most of us who are Christ's servants, and those of us who do win a hearing

have to strain our brain and tax our powers. Whereas if men were in their senses, they would be glad to hear Jesus preached in the humblest tone, and by the most illiterate of His ambassadors! Now we must seek for illustrations and parables and proverbs and goodly words, or else men's ears are like the adder's ears that are deaf and stopped. Oh, if they were but wise—they would be glad to learn about Jesus Christ even if the Gospel were put in the most dull form! And they would be pleased to find Him to be their Savior

whoever might conduct them to Him!

Thus you see, then, first of all, the Queen of Sheba condemns many for lack of interest in the Gospel.

II. Secondly, she equally condemns many for their lack of candor in judging about the Savior. She was a candid woman. There was a rumor about Solomon. Well, it is probable that she did not believe all the rumor as it came to her. In fact, she told Solomon she did not believe it. It seemed too good to be true, too great for her to receive it all. She knew, as we do, that things that travel generally, like snowballs, grow bigger as they roll, and that many a thing which is a Niagara ten thousand miles away would dribble into a very small lake if it were anywhere nearer home. Travelers proverbially take considerable license and we are obliged, and we usually do, perhaps, too much diminish their reports in order to get at the truth. Now, this woman was so candid that she desired to hear more, and whenever a Phoenician boat touched on her shore, she would enquire of those great navigators what they knew concerning the prince who was in alliance with Hiram, their king. Whenever a caravan came from the east, having crossed Solomon's territory to go south, she would get hold of the most intelligent persons of the caravan to learn a little more. And she weighed and judged and estimated. She was not prejudiced. While she would not swallow everything she was told, neither would she reject all, and say, "I won't believe a word of it."

Oh, that men were candid toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But the mass of men are prejudiced—prejudiced against the Savior and against their own salvation. Men sit and make up their minds what the Gospel ought to be, and then they do not come to hear what it is but to judge what is preached by their own preconceived notions. Many are prejudiced by their education. The errors of their father they endorse and the mistakes of their mother seems to be a heritage entailed upon them. They are not manly enough to think. Oh, a great change would come over religious opinion in England if people were not led by that absurd idea that they ought to be just what their parents were! If we once could grow a race of men and women that would read the Scriptures for themselves, and judge of Doctrines for themselves, we would have grand times again! The most of men do not think. They want somebody to do their thinking for them and they go to the place of worship simply to suck in the thoughts of other people—not to judge for themselves! Oh, a sorry matter it is to have a set of followers of that sort! A far greater thing it is to be surrounded by independent spirits who have bowed themselves personally before the shrine of the Truth of God—sought for themselves to know what the Truth of God is—asked for themselves the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so have shaken themselves clear of prejudice and come into the clear Light of God!

I am certain that if many who are now skeptics could but, by God's good help, consider the questions which now they think they have decided, they would alter their decision. I would like some men to think a little about the fact that there are hundreds and even thousands of men in this world of good repute—honest, sober men, the very best witnesses that a lawyer would desire to put into the box, whom everybody would believe—who all bear testimony that Jesus Christ has been most precious to them! Without any discrepancy in their statements, they declare that He gave peace to them when their conscience was disturbed, that He has cured in them the love of sin and incited them to seek after holiness. Now, it would be strange if all these people were mistaken! There must be something in their testimony—and every candid man ought to accept it as such and then go on to try for himself whether it is so or not! The Queen of Sheba had not many witnesses. Perhaps some of them were not very reliable. But about Christ we have all the Prophets, the Apostles, all the saints that followed after them and we have the witness and testimony of hundreds at the present day who are all rejoicing in Christ and who find Him to be precious to their souls! I do pray you, dear Hearers, if you do not know the Gospel, never rest

until you do! And in your search after the Gospel, lay aside everything which would give a twist to your judgment. WEIGH AND PROVE AND TEST. "To the Law and to the Testimony." If what you hear preached is not according to that Word, it is because there is no Light of God in it. Be as judicious and as candid in weighing the evidences as was this Queen of Sheba!

III. But now again, thirdly, the queen is to be commended and she judges us because after having her curiosity aroused, and having candidly weighed evidence, she proceeded to make personal investigation. She did not send an ambassador to see if it were true. That might have helped her, but it would not have satisfied her. Neither did she want to pick up further evidence from others. But, as long as the distance was, she set off to see for herself! There is nothing like that. If a man wants to know, he had better sift the evidence himself! "Seeing," she said, "is believing. I will try this matter and if I find it so, all very well—my assurance will be doubly sure."

Now, in the matter of the things of Jesus Christ, it is hard to bring men to test Him themselves, and yet there is no other way of knowing Him. As I have already said, the Queen of Sheba might have known something about Solomon by sending an ambassador, but we cannot know Christ to any purpose by sending the best possible proxy. We must go to Him ourselves. Now every man shall be commended, as well as the Queen of Sheba, who shall say in himself, "I hear that faith in Jesus Christ quiets the conscience. My conscience is disturbed, so I will go and see what reason there is to trust in Christ. I will see who He is and what He has done. If I spend night after night in searching it out, I will find out what this plan of salvation is which, it is said, affords this peace. And I will try it for myself."

O, Beloved, I am not afraid of what the result would be! It has never been my misfortune, yet, to meet with one who said, "I sought the Savior and I have not found Him," or, "finding Him I did not find peace to my spirit," No, and it shall not be so. No one that trusts in Him shall be condemned. There is the matter of faith in prayer, too. You are told repeatedly that there is a prayer-hearing God, that answers to prayer are received. Now, the best way about that is not to read an article against prayer, or to study a book on it, or to weigh theoretically the likelihood or the unlikelihood of the case, but to try it—try it for yourselves! And those who have resorted to God's Mercy Seat in prayer have unanimously been compelled to bear witness that there is a power in prayer. "Whether or not God can renew my soul if I go and confess my sin to Him is a question, but it is a question I mean to have solved." Every wise man will say that. "Whether or not there is power in the Gospel of Christ to lift me up from the ruins of the Fall and make me a new man, may be a question—but it is a question that I will try for myself. I will not leave it to the opinion of this or that. The sneer of the skeptic shall not make me doubt it and the assurance of the confident professor shall not make me certain of it. I will go and try for myself and see."

I wish you would even come and try Christ with your hard questions, as this Queen of Sheba did Solomon. Come and see whether He can forgive great sins. Come and see whether He can help you in great trials. Come and bring to Him your great doubts and your grievous distresses. Come and tell Him of your despair and your horrible thoughts, and the blasphemous questions that creep through your mind. Come and see whether He is a Savior able to save you. It will be a new thing if He shall have to say, "You are beyond My power. You have sinned beyond the reach of My love." Come and try Him, I say, with your hardest question and most difficult case—and you shall only prove the Truth of His Word—"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." The Queen of Sheba went for herself, and that is the point. Come see for yourselves. May the Spirit of God help you to do so.

IV. The fourth point in which she deserves our imitation is this—that in coming to Solomon she was not to be deterred by great difficulties. She was a queen. Must she leave her government? How can that be done? Suppose while she was away there should be a rebellion and a riot? Great lords and counselors might object to the absence of the supreme power, and there might come serious damage to the State through the absence of the royal authority. Never mind! She would waive that, and she considered that she could afford to run that risk if she might but know something of the wisdom of Solomon. Then it was a very long journey. Our Lord called it the ends of the earth, and journeys in those days were far longer than now—when they had to travel across deserts—places where there were no roads, scarcely a goat path. This great woman had to gather together a whole train of servants, for she could not travel as an ordinary person might. She must take with her, in fact, a very great army of attendants—and it might be that the tribes through whose territory she passed would rise in arms against her! She might be waylaid by robbers, or if not by ordinary robbers because her train was too strong, then the very strength of her train would provoke the hostility of the various kings through whose territory she passed.

She must have been a bold woman to undertake such a journey. It must have been extremely expensive and wondrous-ly hazardous. And yet, whatever it might cost her, she was so enamored of wisdom, so fond of that which instructs the mind that she must go to hear for herself the wisdom of Solomon! But now-a-days, oh, how little a thing keeps men from seeking the wisdom of Christ who is far greater than Solomon! To go up to the house of God to hear about Him is sometimes wonderfully difficult. Persons go out on Monday to business who cannot go out on Sunday. It is raining on Sunday

and it is very curious how rain on Sunday will keep some people in—their health is so weak—though the same rain on Monday does not affect them at all in that particular way! Have you never observed how some persons appear to be periodically ill on Sundays? That seems to be a favorite day for being ill! And then they will say they cannot walk so far and they would object to ride, the objection probably being to going at all! And then you will hear persons say, "Well, I found that I must stay at home with this child," or, "I had something that must be done in the family." You do not make those excuses if there is going to be a party to which you are invited, or if there is some festival to be held. Then they make up their mind to go. To go and hear some attractive man, or to hear the voice of some sweet singer—that may be managed! But to go and hear of Jesus Christ, well, they cannot—they cannot manage it. It is too difficult. There is a lion in the way—they cannot do it.

And then, after they have heard of Christ, when it comes to following Him, you will hear them say, "Do you know, if I were really to believe the Gospel and follow Christ, why, my friends would altogether forsake me! I could not do it. I should sink in society. I should not be admitted into the circles where I am now received with admiration!" One man says, "I do not see how I could carry on my trade." Another says, "My mother would persecute me." Another observes, "I am sure my father and my brothers would ridicule me out of it. It could not be." They cannot make any journey to go to Jesus. They cannot bear any risks for Jesus, though the Queen of Sheba could risk everything to hear the wisdom of Solomon! Oh, in those old days when Christ was preached on the sly, down in the dark catacombs of Rome, servants at the peril of their lives stole away from their masters' houses at the dead of night to hear the Gospel preached! And in later times of persecution, every man that went to sermon went knowing that if he were caught—imprisonment, the rack and perhaps death would be the result—yet they chose to go! They hungered and thirsted after the Bread of Life! Then they followed the preacher—secret signals being given—and listened to him wherever the congregation was summoned.

Do not those people put us to the blush? But now, when we have next to nothing to suffer—for really, persecution has become almost a myth compared with what it used to be when Smithfield's stakes became fiery chariots for God's Elijahs—now we find soft beings that do not dare to think! Oh, I would scorn to be what some people are—the slaves of their neighbors and their friends! They are always asking, "What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will fashion think about it? What will the neighbors think of it?" Why, to a brave spirit it might almost tempt us to do—I was going to say to do wrong, to escape from the shackles of always being bound by custom! But certainly in the doing right, he is not worthy of the name of man—and never shall be called a Christian—who is always putting such difficulties as these before himself and fearing the face of his fellow man! God grant us Grace to be willing to lose everything if we may find Christ—and to sacrifice all esteem and friendship if we may but be honest and faithful servants of our great Lord and Master!

V. Now, there is another point in which the Queen of Sheba is to be greatly admired. I will be brief upon it and it was this—that when she came to Solomon and had seen his wisdom, she was quick to acknowledge what she had learned. She said to Solomon that there was no spirit left in her at the sight of what she had seen and that the half had not been told her.

Now here I shall speak rather to Christians who know Christ than to others. My dear Friends, there is among you who know the Lord a great deal too much reticence—quietness about what you know. I do not like a man who is so expressive that he says a great deal more than he knows. There are some such. On the other hand, it is an injurious thing to know much of the things of God, but to be anxious to conceal rather than to publish! If our religion had any lies in it, it might be well to hide it away. If our religion tended to sin, we might well be so ashamed of it as never to mention it. But since the telling of the Gospel can never do anybody any hurt—it must always do good since there is nothing in our religion we need to blush at, since there is everything in it of which we may glory and in which we may boast—we cannot too often publish abroad what we know concerning our dear Lord and Master. And I ask my dear Brothers and Sisters here. I ask them very gently, and pray that their conscience may give the answer—do you not think, dear Friends, that sometimes you have been too quiet about the things of God? In your own family circle, for instance, have you not said a great deal less than you ought to have said about the Master? "I have been afraid of being obtrusive," says one. A very proper fear, too, for some people—but that fear may be run too hard until we might be afraid of another thing, namely, "I was afraid of being cowardly." Do you not think that oftentimes when we say to ourselves, "I didn't want to intrude," the English of it is that we had not the courage to speak, or we thought it the easiest thing to hold our tongue? And may not it really be that we have not zeal enough? And if we had more love to Christ we would often speak where now we are very quiet? When you have weighed the things concerning Christ and, above all, have tasted them and tested them for yourself, is it not due to the Lord Jesus that you should bear your testimony?.

There has been a great trial going on about the Savior, Jesus Christ, for many a day. Some say, "He is a good Man." "No," say others, "but He deceives the people." Some say, "He is the Son of God." Others say, "No, He is not." Now, if you know, and know by the best possible means, namely, by personal knowledge—by experience, by testing and trying—do not stand back, but go into court! Take your place as a witness and bear your evidence, for when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the Glory of His Father, with all His holy angels with Him, I for one shall feel it a very sweet thing to be able to say, "There He is! There He is! They mocked Him, they despised Him, they called Him impostor. They said that He was not Divine—they would not have Him for their Savior. But I was accustomed to stand up and say I knew Him to be the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." I think when I rise from my grave it will be

no small consolation to feel, "I was on His side. I was always on His side. I stood up for Him. It was with a poor feeble testimony that was marred in a thousand ways, but still I was on His side." I should like—oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I would have all of you to be so bearing your witness for Jesus—so lovingly, so wisely, so continually, so honestly, so completely that when the Lord came, you, too, may be able to say, "I did not deny Him before men. I was not ashamed of Him. I did confess Him"—for then, remember, His promise is He will confess you before His Father and before the holy angels! When you shall come up ashamed, as it were, and trembling, and the question will be asked, "Who is this man? Does anybody know him?" and you feel in your soul, as it were, as if you expected to be unknown and to be driven into banishment, Christ will say, "O My Father, I knew him. I knew him. Angels, listen! I knew him. This poor man confessed me in Baptism." "This poor woman used to confess Me before her neighbors in the court." This merchant lost some of his trade because he followed Me so closely." "This little child acknowledged Me, though her father mocked Me." This young woman was accustomed to follow My rules and Laws, and to live near to Me though all around her were Godless and Christless." O, Beloved, do imitate, then, the Queen of Sheba—what you know, tell out! Admit it and glorify the greater than Solomon about it!

VI. The last point about her was this—that after Solomon had told her all that she asked, she gave to Solomon so great a treasure that, rich as he was, it is said he had never had such a treasure before, or even afterwards—she brought to him such costly precious things and she gave them freely. He gave her abundance in return. In the exchange, I do not suppose she was a loser, but still her heart was so full of thankfulness for what she had learned that she could not but make an offering unto the king who had been her instructor. I wish all Christians would imitate her in this. If we have salvation from Christ, let us never count the giving of our substance to Him to be any hardship. Let us not need to be pressed to give, or begged to give, or incited to give by the example of other people—let us do it conscientiously, out of love to Him, doing it as unto Him.

I heard of a gentleman some time ago who gave a sum of money to a Chapel and said to his minister that he might put that down as the widow's mite, but his minister said, "No, Sir, I don't think I would like to take so much as that from you." "How is that, Sir?" "Why," said the minister, "if you had given me only half the widow's mite, that would satisfy me." "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "if you would give me £50,000 that would satisfy me well. That is half the widow's mite." "How so, Sir?" "Why," he said, "to my knowledge you are worth a hundred thousand pounds. The widow's mite was all that she had. I won't take as much as that from you. I shall be quite satisfied if you will give half the widow's mite." I thought the man who called his offering by that sacred name, "the widow's mite," deserved the rebuke that he received! Though we have not to give all we have as she did, we should give till we feel it—and I think that we do not give much until we begin to feel the pinch—until we feel it! We have not done much for a friend if we have only given him our superfluities. True love proves itself when it comes to something like self-denial, but how few of God's servants ever reach to self-denial for Jesus? They could not remember, if they sat down, that they ever denied themselves a penny's worth of anything to eat or drink, or denied themselves a pound's worth of finery, or a comfort in their homes, or anything else for the sake of Christ! We should do better if we could get to feel that we love Christ so much that we could not give too much to Him.

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, I invite you all—and I ask that I may be able myself—to give to our Lord, who is greater than Solomon, our whole being, every power of thought and expression, every faculty of affection or of judgment—all that we are and all that we have, for if we gave Christ our gold and nothing more, He would not accept it! He

wants us to live from morning's light to evening's shade for Him—to eat and drink and sleep to His Glory—to do all to His honor. This is the obligation of the Christian and this his truest privilege. May the Spirit of God help us rise to this, so that when we came to see King Solomon and learn His wisdom, and behold the splendor of His palace, we may feel that He has got our hearts to be entirely His own, His portion and His treasure, forever and forever! God bless you, dear Friends, this night, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 12:38-42.

Verses 38, 39. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from You. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas. The Pharisees change their manner, but they are in pursuit of the same object. How hopeless had the religionists of that age become! Nothing would convince them. They manifested their hate of the Lord Jesus by ignoring all the wonders He had worked. What further signs could they seek than those He had already given? Pretty enquirers these! They treat all the miracles of our Lord as if they had never occurred! Well might the Lord call them, "evil and adulterous," since they were so given to personal lasciviousness and were spiritually so untrue to God. We have those among us now who are so brazen as to treat all the achievements of Evangelical Doctrines as if they were nothing, and talk to us as if no result had followed the preaching of the Gospel. There is need of great patience to deal wisely with such.

40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The great sign of our Lord's mission is His Resurrection and His preparing a Gospel of salvation for the heathen. His life is well symbolized by that of Jonah. They cast our Lord overboard, even as the sailors did the man of God. The sacrifice of Jonah calmed the sea for the mariners—our Lord's death made peace for us. Our Lord was a while in the heart of the earth as Jonah was in the depth of the sea but He rose again, and His ministry was full of the power of His Resurrection. As Jonah's ministry was certified by his restoration from the sea, so is our Lord's ministry attested by His rising from the dead. The man who had come back from death and burial in the sea commanded the attention of all Nineveh, and so does the risen Savior demand and deserve the obedient faith of all to whom His message comes!

41. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The heathen of Nineveh were convinced by the sign of a Prophet restored from burial in the sea. And moved by that event, they repented at his preaching. Without quibble or delay they put the whole city in mourning and pleaded with God to turn from His anger. Jesus came with a clearer command of repentance, and a brighter promise of deliverance—but He spoke to stubborn hearts. Our Lord reminds the Pharisees of this and, as they were the most Jewish of Jews, they were touched to the quick by the fact that heathens perceived what Israel did not understand, and that Ninevites repented while Jews were hardened!

All men will rise at the judgment— "The men of Nineveh shall rise." The lives of penitents will condemn those who did not repent! The Ninevites will condemn the Jews "because they repented at the preaching of Jonas." And the Jews did not. Those who heard Jonah and repented will be swift witnesses against those who heard Jesus and refused His testimony.

The standing witness to our Lord is His Resurrection from the dead. God grant that everyone of us, believing that unquestionable fact, may be so assured of His mission, that we may repent and believe the Gospel.

RESURRECTION is one proof. In fact, it is THE SIGN, although, as we shall see, it is supplemented by another. The two will convince us or condemn us.

42. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The second sign of our Lord's mission is HIS KINGLY WISDOM. As the fame of Solomon brought the Queen of the South from the uttermost parts of the earth, so does the Doctrine of our Lord command attention from the utmost isles of the sea. If Israel perceives not His glorious wisdom, Ethiopia and Seba shall hear of it and come bowing before Him. The Queen of Sheba will rise again, and will "rise up" as a witness against unbelieving Jews, for she journeyed far to hear Solomon, while they would not hear the Son of God, Himself, who came into their midst. The superlative excellence of His wisdom stands for our Lord as a sign which can never be effectually disputed. What other teaching meets all the needs of men? Who else has revealed such Grace and Truth? He is infinitely greater than Solomon, who from a moral point of view exhibited a sorrowful littleness. Who but the Son of God could have made known the Father as He has done?

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