

evidence God has provided us today. For, it is through Jesus's resurrection from the dead that God has powerfully declared Jesus as His Son for all time (Acts 2:22-36; Romans 1:3-4)! Today, there is still an empty tomb that every person must account for. If there was no empty tomb, it could have been easily proven in the early days following any claims about a resurrection. Furthermore, the conviction of those who claimed to see the resurrected Christ was so strong that those individuals were willing to give their entire lives sacrificially to teach that message to others (1 Corinthians 15:3-11; 2 Corinthians 11:22-33)!

A warning against rejecting this evidence. Just as the Pharisees and scribes were warned against rejecting the evidence God provides, there will be consequences if any person today rejects this evidence! Not only will the same points about the people of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba apply to us, but I believe we may even have a greater expectation to accept the evidence than those who lived and saw Jesus. For example, we have a more complete picture of God's will today than those in the Old Testament had (1 Peter 1:10-12; Ephesians 3:3-6). Then, we also have a more complete picture of God's will today than those in New Testament times had (John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). Today, we have the perfect and complete revelation of God's will (James 1:25; Jude 1:3)! So, we will have no sufficient excuse for rejecting the evidence on the Judgment Day, when considering how others have responded with less evidence (Luke 12:48)!

Conclusion

Jesus has provided sufficient evidence to know He is who He claimed to be – the Son of God, Messiah, Savior, and King! This is at the heart of the gospel's message (as we can see throughout the book of Acts when the gospel was preached). Never once were people expected to believe blindly. Yet, whether people accepted the evidence was determined by whether a person would honestly examine the evidence or not. However, even if a person is initially skeptical about some of the Bible's claims, the evidence of Jesus's empty tomb (the sign of Jonah) should leave no room for doubt and lead each person to believe, repent, confess Christ, be baptized, and live in obedience to what Christ has commanded to have eternal life!



What kind of evidence do you demand to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of this world? While it is appropriate to demand evidence to reach such a life-altering conclusion, each person must carefully evaluate what he/she has done with the mountain of evidence God has provided. For, some have continued to demand additional evidence, all the while dismissing the convincing proofs God has given – including the empty tomb! Jesus teaches about this in Matthew 12:38-42 (also compare with Luke 11:29-32). How we respond to such great evidence will make a difference as to where we will spend eternity.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn how we should respond to the evidence God has provided that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God, especially concerning His resurrection.

Many Jews Rejected Jesus

Jesus had given many proofs. In Matthew 12:38, the Jews were wanting Jesus to give them a sign that He really was who He claimed to be – the Messiah, the Son of God. Yet, they had already rejected at least two major proofs. First, they were rejecting the proof of fulfilled prophecy (Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 12:15-21). Second, they were rejecting the proof of Jesus's miracles (Matthew 12:9-14, 15, 22; including prophecy that the Messiah would heal, Matthew 8:16-17). Therefore, as we consider the events of Matthew 12:38-42, there had already been many proofs clearly pointing to Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God!

An additional sign was demanded. Now, consider the situation in Matthew 12:38. Just imagine: Demanding a sign in the situation where Jesus had already been performing signs! In fact, a bit more context will shed even more light on the problem Jesus will address. Consider that after Jesus healed this man with the shriveled hand (Matthew 12:9-14), people

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from the same group (the Pharisees) only wanted to accuse Him of violating the law so they could kill Him. Then, consider Matthew 12:22-32. As people were considering whether Jesus could be the Son of David (the Messiah of prophecy), the Pharisees accused Jesus as working with Satan! Therefore, we recognize that the Pharisees (as well as the scribes) had already demonstrated an unwillingness to honestly accept the signs Jesus had given. Instead, they wanted to interpret anything He did in a way to falsely accuse and harm Him.

One more sign would be given. Consider Jesus's response to their demand for a sign to be done at their request in Matthew 12:39-40. Jesus viewed this generation as evil and adulterous in that they were not faithful to God and looking for the Messiah God had sent to them. Rather, they wanted to accuse and kill Him! Although Jesus is not rebuking them for the desire to have evidence, He is rebuking them for the demand to have more evidence when they had rejected the sufficient evidence He had already given them.

If they would not accept the evidence of the prophecy and the miraculous signs He had been giving, there would only be one additional sign that could possibly break through their rebellious hearts. This was referred to as the sign of the prophet Jonah. The book of Jonah records how God prepared a great sea creature to swallow Jonah whenever he had rebelled against God's command to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. At this time, Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the sea creature (Jonah 1:17). But, at the conclusion of this, God commanded the sea creature and it vomited Jonah onto the dry land (Jonah 2:10). Then, Jonah went and preached to the people of Nineveh.

Although Jesus and Jonah were very different in their lives (as Jonah rebelled against the will of God and was in the sea creature's belly as a consequence), Jesus used this event as an Old Testament reference to His resurrection. For, just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature for three days and nights, Jesus would be in the heart of the earth for three days and nights (it seems this expression could be used for any part of a day/night; not requiring a full 72 hours). Then, just like Jonah emerged from the sea creature's belly, Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day! This would be the last and greatest sign to convince the Jews that Jesus really is the Son of God (Matthew 16:1-4).

Consequences for rejecting Jesus. To demonstrate just how evil and adulterous this generation Jesus was speaking to was, He contrasted how they responded to Him with a couple Old Testament examples in Matthew 12:41-42. After Jonah spent the three days and nights in the belly

of the sea creature, the people of Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching (Jonah 3:4-9). Jesus's point is that if the people of Nineveh responded in this way to Jonah's preaching, God will expect even more from the people who would see Jesus perform the sign of Jonah and raise from the dead (since He was greater than Jonah)! Certainly, the people of Nineveh would serve as evidence against the people of that generation who would not repent and accept the Lord Jesus! Then, Jesus demonstrates how the queen of Sheba would provide the same kind of evidence against those who rejected Jesus because of the efforts she made to come learn from Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-13). Yet, that generation of Jews had rejected the opportunity to learn greater wisdom from Him than even Solomon had! Consider a similar exchange in Matthew 11:16-24. Therefore, God will consider how others did more with less than these Jews did with Jesus Christ!

Examining The Evidence Today

How to consider the evidence. Like with those who were living during His earthly life, Jesus does not expect people to accept Him as the Messiah, Savior, and King without evidence. Rather, He wants us to be fully convinced of these truths by considering the evidence He has given (Luke 1:1-4). However, we can learn from the Pharisees and scribes how *not* to respond to the evidence that has been given. Namely, if we respond in a dishonest way, we will never think we have enough evidence to be convinced He is who He claims to be. Like the Pharisees and scribes, if we want to hold on to how we presently believe and live more than accepting the evidence Jesus provides, we will not be honest to accept the evidence. Rather, we must look at the evidence He has provided with complete honesty and no preconceived conclusions. For, Jesus believes that the evidence He has left is sufficient for those who will be honest with it.

A survey of the evidence for Jesus as the Messiah. The evidence God has provided for you concerning Jesus is much the same as the evidence Jesus had provided to the people who were living while He was on earth (prophecy and miracles). One key difference is that you have the complete Scriptures. In fact, God makes it clear that He considers the evidence He has given you through the inspired writings of Scripture to be more than sufficient in bringing you to the point of faith in Jesus (John 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-3)!

The sign of Jesus's resurrection. As Jesus demonstrated how the sign of Jonah would be given to that generation concerning His resurrection from the dead, this continues to be the greatest piece of