

CHRIST'S WORD REGARDING HIS RESURRECTION

April 5, 2015

Matthew 12:38-41

“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.” Matthew 12:40

Israel’s religious leaders were doing their best to discredit Jesus Christ, but at every turn He answered them with superior wisdom, decimating their objections. Yet their stubborn unbelief was willfully blind to the power and wisdom displayed by His miracles and answers. Thus, they demanded from Him yet another miracle to prove His claims.

He responded that the only miracle He would do in response to their request was that of Jonah. Jonah, an Old Testament “minor prophet,” was remembered for one mission: preaching judgment to Nineveh. Two events surrounding that preaching made it unforgettable. First, Jonah rebelled against God’s command to go to Nineveh. He fled the opposite direction but was stopped when a sea creature swallowed him alive. Second, surviving that ordeal, he went to Nineveh and preached that judgment was coming. As a result, the entire city repented.

Jesus referred to Jonah’s time in the sea creature’s stomach as the sign that He would be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” This was a reference to Christ’s approaching death and resurrection. Among the truths revealed by Jesus’ reference to this event, consider the following:

1. Jesus accepted the Old Testament record of Jonah as historically accurate.
2. His reference to this event—pagan Gentiles repenting at Jonah’s preaching—exposed the greater hardness of religious leaders to whom He spoke.
3. By offering this sign, Jesus made His resurrection the ultimate confirmation of His legitimacy.
4. As Jonah’s deliverance was an overwhelming triumph over overwhelming odds, so Christ’s triumph over the objections of His enemies would be overwhelming. No one had ever survived crucifixion, reversed the execution enacted by the Roman Empire, nor overpowered the political machinations of Jerusalem’s religious leaders.
5. Nineveh repented when Jonah preached. Only by that repentance was the city spared judgment. One who is greater than Jonah has risen from the dead and proclaimed deliverance from judgment to all who repent. “God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Acts 17:30, 31