

CCR Sermon Series – The Book of Jonah
Palm Sunday: From a Fish to a Cross
29/03/2026

Matthew 12:38-42

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

39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 For just 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 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.

42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

SUMMARY:

1. The Seeking- Of Signs Rather Than Truth (v38)

We miss the point when we chase signs instead of the Saviour they reveal.

2. The Sign- From Fish to Cross (v39-40)

The sign of Jonah ultimately points to Jesus' death and resurrection as God's final and sufficient sign.

3. The Saviour- Our Substitute & Sacrifice (v41)

Jesus saves us by willingly taking our place and bearing what we deserve.

Jesus willingly become our substitute and sacrifice!
The biblical gospel of atonement is
of God satisfying himself by substituting himself for us.
The concept of substitution may be said, then,
to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation.
For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God,
while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.
Man asserts himself against God
and puts himself where only God deserves to be;
God sacrifices himself for man
and puts himself where only man deserves to be.
Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone;
God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.

Concept	Manifestation in Matthew 12	The Root Problem
Self-Centredness (The Demand for Proof)	Demanding a sign on their own terms.	God is treated as a servant to our curiosity.
Self-Sufficiency (The "Empty House" Syndrome)	The "swept and in order" but empty house.	Relying on personal reform instead of God's presence.
Self-Salvation (Religion Without Repentance)	Rejecting the need for repentance.	Trying to earn righteousness instead of receiving the Saviour.

DISCUSS

1. The Seeking- Of Signs Rather Than Truth

Jesus calls them an "evil and adulterous generation" for seeking a sign despite the truth standing right in front of them (Matthew 12:39).

In what ways do we sometimes act like the scribes and Pharisees by demanding "proof" or specific circumstances before we fully trust God? How can we shift our focus from seeking signs to seeking the Truth already revealed in Christ?

2. The Sign – From Fish to Cross

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish, the Son of Man was destined for the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40).

Jesus compares Jonah's three days in the fish's belly to His own coming death and resurrection. How does the "Sign of Jonah" change your perspective on suffering or "dark seasons" in your own life—seeing them not as the end, but as a precursor to God's power?

3. The Saviour -Our Substitute & Sacrifice

Jesus highlights that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, yet someone far greater than Jonah—the Saviour Himself—was now present (Matthew 12:41).

Jesus notes that the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South responded to much "lesser" messages than the one He brought. Knowing that "something greater than Jonah is here," how does the reality of Jesus as your substitute and sacrifice change how you respond to His call today?

