



The Lord Jesus Christ
the Teacher

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For 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. The men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.'"

(Matthew 12:38-41)

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ choose not to perform a miracle for the Pharisees and the scribes? In their request for a spectacular sign from the Lord they display their wickedness. After having witnessed so many miracles why do they now need a sign? The Lord Jesus Christ did not respond to their hardheartedness. There are other reasons as well that the Lord chooses not to respond and perform a sign

1) Miracles and signs from God cannot be the foundation of our faith. It is the other way around. Faith is required for the occurrence of the first miracle to happen.

2) Miracles cannot enrich our faith; only the Word of God can do this.

3) Miracles cannot help the evil within people; they need a Savior to set them free.

Let us examine two very different responses of the Lord Jesus Christ

A) What were the actions of the people of the City of Nineveh as compared to that of the Jews? The answer to this question lies in the analogy between the Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Ministry of Jonah. The prophet Jonah did not teach the people of Nineveh anything. Jonah simply gave them one single message. He told them that their city would be ultimately destroyed in forty days.

The Lord Jesus Christ on the other hand, was proactive. The Lord taught the people how to repent and how to worship. They heard it directly from His Holy Teachings and they did not believe Him.

B) What did the foolish rich man do? And what did St. Anthony the Great do? Two rich men heard the exact same message, yet what was the response? One

(who heard it directly from the Lord) went back sad and the other (who heard it from a deacon) went and sold everything he possessed and followed the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us examine closely seven things the people of Nineveh did that made God respond and accept their repentance

The first thing was that they believed in God. The second thing, they proclaimed a fast. The people of Nineveh abstained from food and ate infrequent small quantities. There is constant war between the spirit and the flesh and the strongest will win. The purpose of the fasting is to strengthen our spirits and weaken our flesh (not to make it sick).

The third thing the people of Nineveh did was to put on sack clothes as a sign of humility. Through humbleness we also discipline our flesh and put it under leadership of the spirit. Fourth, they all participated in the fast. All should fast, as we are all members of the Same Body-the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we pray together it is more powerful. When we fast and pray together it is extremely powerful. We need to keep and maintain the "Oneness of the Body" of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifth, they cried mightily to God. Fasting does not work alone. Full benefit of fasting comes when it is

accompanied with prayers. We should pray at least morning and evening and lengthen the time of prayers during fasting. The sixth thing is they repented and returned from their evil ways. There is absolutely no fellowship between God and evil ways.

Lastly, the seventh strong point is the people of Nineveh hoped in God's forgiveness. There is no sin without forgiveness except the sin without repentance.

The people of Nineveh received a response from God. The people of Nineveh started with FAITH in God and ended with HOPE in His Holy Forgiveness.

May we pray that we, as did the people of Nineveh, focus entirely on God and not the requests made of Him, as did the Pharisees and scribes.

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