

Lesson 15 - Luke 11:29-12:21

The Sign of Jonah, The Light of the Body, Pharisees and Lawyers, Parable of the Rich Fool

In our last lesson, some of those who saw Jesus exorcise a demon still insisted on testing Jesus and asking for a sign from heaven. This lesson begins with Jesus' response. The first pericope is about Jonah, and those enemies of Israel, in Nineveh, who *did* respond to the prophet by repenting.

1. Read Luke 11:29-32 and footnotes. Who is the Queen of the South in 11:31? Who were the Ninevites in 11:29? How do these verses support Luke's theme of "universal salvation"?

Luke 11:29-32 ²⁹While still more people gathered in the crowd, he said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. ³²At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.

2. Read 11:29-32 again and Jonah 3:4-5. Compare the preaching and actions of Jesus in the Gospels to the preaching of Jonah. What point is Jesus trying to make in these verses?

3. Read Matthew 12:40-42. Matthew tells the same story, but with a different focus. Luke's Gospel focused on the prophecy of Jonah. How does *Matthew* compare Jonah and Jesus?

Matthew 12:40-42⁴⁰ Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. ⁴¹At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. ⁴²At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.

4. Read Luke 11:33-36, and *footnotes*. In the first century, according cultural anthropologist Bruce Malina, the "*zone of emotion fused thought*" comes from the eyes, heart, eyelids and pupil. These parts of the body were thought to be the source of thought, intelligence, mind, wisdom, intention, love, joy, etc. when the eye is *good*. With that in mind, what is the message of these verses? What is "the light" here?

Luke 11:33-36³³ "No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it [under a bushel basket], but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light. ³⁴The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is sound, then your whole body is filled with light, but when it is bad, then your body is in darkness. ³⁵Take care, then, that the light in you not become darkness. ³⁶If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is in darkness, then it will be as full of light as a lamp illuminating you with its brightness."

5. **Read Luke 11:37-44 and footnotes. There is a bit of sarcasm in verses 41 and 42. What do these verses mean? Verses 43 and 44 contrast the Pharisees at the seats of honor to unmarked graves. What does this mean? (Footnotes help a lot here.) What happens when a 1st century Jew comes in contact with the dead?**

Luke 11:37-44 ³⁷ After he had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. ³⁸ The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. ³⁹ The Lord said to him, “Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? ⁴¹ But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you. ⁴² Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.”

6. **Read Luke 11:45-54. Here Jesus addresses the lawyers with accusations and insults. What does he say about the lawyers or “scholars of the law”? How do they react?**

7. **Read Luke 12:1-3 and *footnotes*. What warnings does Jesus give the disciples? What is leaven? How is it used to describe the actions of the Pharisees?**

Luke 12:1-3 ¹ Meanwhile, so many people were crowding together that they were trampling one another underfoot. He began to speak, first to his disciples, “Beware of the leaven—that is, the hypocrisy—of the Pharisees.

8. **Read Luke 12:4-9 and footnotes. In these verses, who does Jesus say the disciples *should* fear? What messages here are meant to be comforting for the disciples of Jesus?**

Luke 12:4-9 ⁴ I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body but after that can do no more. ⁵ I shall show you whom to fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be afraid of that one. ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. ⁷ Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. ⁸ I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. ⁹ But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.

9. **Read Luke 12:10-12. How does the Holy Spirit help those who are persecuted for their faith?**

Luke 12:10-12 ¹⁰ “Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹ When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. ¹² For the holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.”

10. **Read Luke 12:16-21? What is the moral message of the *Parable of the Rich Fool*?**