

How Jonah Is Like Jesus

Matt. 12:38-41

Introduction: When the Islamic prophet Mohammed was challenged by Jews for his authority, they demanded he perform a miracle to show that God was with him. In fact, Mohammed's opponents frequently complained that he was not able to perform a miracle to authenticate his words. Qur'an 29:50-51, "Yet they say, 'Why are not signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The signs are indeed with Allah and I am indeed a clear warner.' And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them?" The book Mohammed mentions is the Qur'an. He claimed the only miracle/sign given was the Qur'an itself. He claimed that the angel Gabriel gave him the Qur'an, but no one else ever saw Gabriel or heard him speak to Mohammed. There was no healing of the sick, no feeding of the hungry, or raising of the dead. In the case of Islam, we are required to take one man's word that he is telling the truth. After Mohammed died, later generations invented claims that he performed miracles. We suspect these inventions were to compete with Jews & Christians who argued that Moses & Jesus performed miracles to establish their respective claims.

Did Jesus perform miracles? John 20:30-31 *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."* If Jesus performed miracles, then these prove the identity of Who He is & the truthfulness of what He said.

Matthew 12 tells how Jesus showed compassion & power when He healed a gentleman who was deaf, mute, & blind because of demon possession. Jesus threw out the demon. The impact of what Jesus did was not lost on the crowd. 12: 23 *"And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"* The Pharisees did not deny that Jesus had performed a miracle; they did deny that He had God's power. He then explained what He meant by the sign of Jonah in 12:40-41: *"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the sea-monster's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."* How is Jonah like Jesus? What is the significance of the sign of the prophet Jonah?

1. Jonah sent to enemies. He gave himself up to save the lives of the sailors but Jesus gave himself up to save the whole world.
2. Jonah was in the stomach 3 days & nights just as Jesus was in the earth 3 days & nights. Jonah 1:17 *"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."* Some try to keep Jesus in the tomb for three full twenty-four hour days. Notice how Jesus spoke of the chronology: "...after three days..." (Mark 8:31) and "...on the third day..." (Mark 9:31) and all refer to the same time period in question. We use the word month to refer to a 28 day, 30 day, & 31 day time period. The Hebrew phrase 3 days & nights is the same kind of usage. Jonah was in the Fish's stomach for his own disobedience but Jesus was in the heart of the earth for our disobedience. The vomiting of Jonah out by the fish was a type of resurrection.
3. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites just as Jesus is a sign to us. Miraculous evidence is to confirm word that is preached. When Jesus tried to reason with them, they demanded He perform a miracle to prove His authority. They asked for a sign from heaven (Luke 11:16). Instead He gave them a sign from Scripture. Matt. 12:38-39 *"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas..."* By this demand, they denied by implication that all the miracles He did were real signs & they demanded a different kind of miracle. Jesus knew at this point that it was useless to perform another miracle. Had He done so, they would have said it was Satan's power or some kind of trick. But He did give them a sign; that of the prophet Jonah.
4. Jonah preached a message of repentance & judgment but Jesus preached a message of repentance & salvation. *"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown"* (Jonah 3:4). Overthrown is **הפך** haphak, meaning to destroy. It is the same word used in Genesis 19:25 & Deut. 29:23 for the destruction of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, & Zeboiim, of all its citizens & all vegetation-destroyed with brimstone (melted sulfur, 856 F.) & salt. The brimstone destroyed the cities & its wicked people & the salt poisoned the soil forever. How was God threatening Nineveh? He could have caused a natural disaster or God could have sent an invading army from another nation to destroy them. God could have used natural means or supernatural ones. God hates sin & promises to confront it.

Conclusion: 1) forgiveness (Romans 4:25); 2) power to live, suffer, & be victorious (2 Cor. 13:4), & 3) evangelize (Acts 4:33; 6:10).