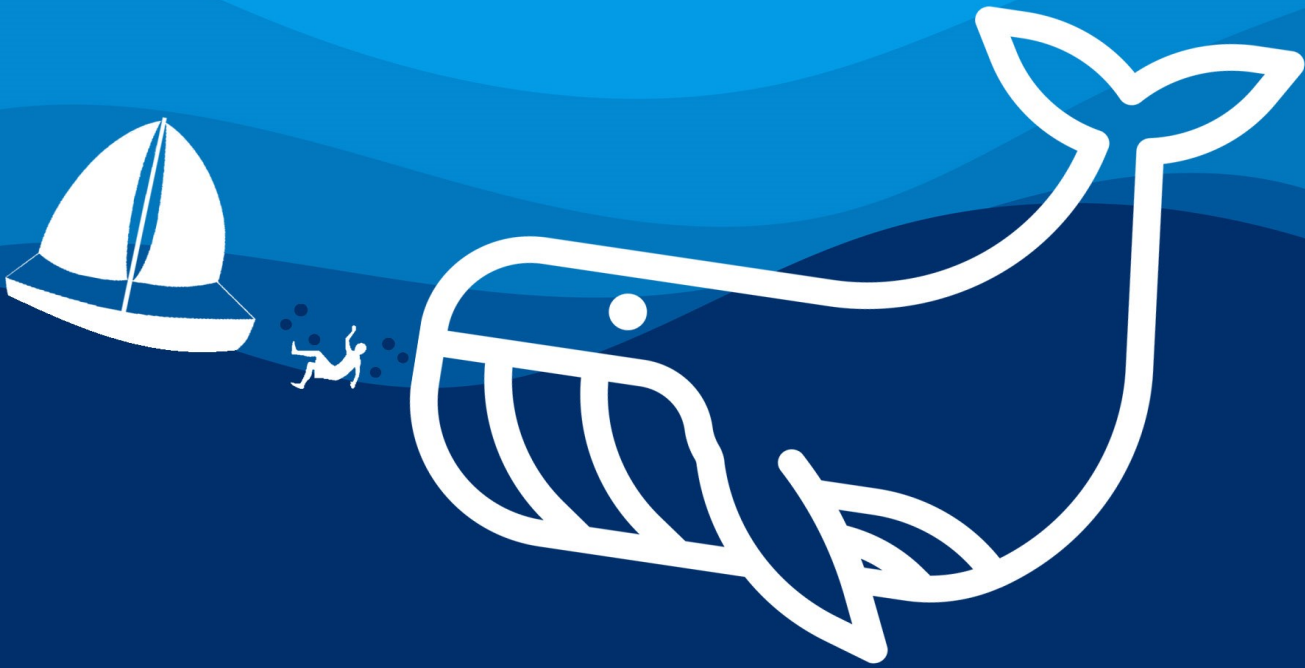


**VBS  
2024**

# JONAH



**Day 5: The Sign of Jonah**  
**1st-5th Grade**

# The Sign of Jonah

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

Each day, the students will learn a memory verse. Students who learn all 5 memory verses this week will receive a prize.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** This lesson will show that Christ is the greater Jonah, present the Gospel, and give the kids an opportunity to respond.

## Key Verses

Matthew 12:38-41; 28:1-10—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 27:57-61

(For the whole story of Christ's arrest, trials, and crucifixion, see Matthew 26:47-27:56)

Matthew 4:17

Romans 10:9-10

**Memory Verse** - Romans 10:9

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

## Hook

Review Lamentations 3:23.

Present a few different people or things in pairs to the kids and ask them who or what is better (e.g. chocolate or vanilla, Coke or Pepsi, soccer or basketball, etc.). Have the kids to explain their answers. Then ask, "Who is greater: Jonah, or Jesus?" Again have the kids explain their answer.

This week, we've been learning about Jonah, but today, we are going to see that God sent Jesus as a much greater prophet than Jonah.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

While the story of Jonah ends in chapter 4, his legacy continued to the days of Jesus. In Matthew 12:38-41, some of the religious leaders asked Jesus to do a miracle to prove that He was sent from God. At this point, Jesus had already done plenty of miracles, so He said He would give them only one more sign: the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the fish, so Jesus would spend three days and nights in the earth (meaning the grave) before rising again. To further rebuke their unbelief, Jesus said that the people of Nineveh would rise up and judge that generation. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, who we have seen was not a very obedient prophet, and yet these people were rejecting someone much greater: Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Later on, we see Jesus fulfilling the promised “sign of Jonah.” The same religious leaders who demanded a sign from Jesus would eventually put Him to death. Jesus was buried in a tomb (Matthew 27:57-61), where He stayed for three days. A large stone covered the entrance, and Roman soldiers stood guard outside. But on the third day, when some women came to the tomb to anoint His body, the stone was rolled away and the guards passed out. Inside the tomb, instead of Christ’s body, there was an angel who told the women that Christ was no longer there. He had risen from the dead! Just as Jonah emerged from the belly of the fish after three days, Jesus had risen out of the grave! The women ran to tell Jesus’ disciples. Later Jesus appeared to several of His followers, and they all worshipped the risen Savior together.

# LOOK

As we’ve studied the book of Jonah this week, we’ve looked at one of the most successful prophets in the whole Bible. Wherever he went, people turned to the Lord, whether it was the sailors in Jonah 1, or the entire city of Nineveh in chapter 3. What makes this all surprising is that, as you probably noticed, Jonah wasn’t a very godly prophet. In fact, these people seem to have turned to the Lord despite, not because of, Jonah’s work. It’s clear that God, not Jonah, was responsible for this success.

Fast forward almost 800 years, and the Lord sent another Prophet into the world far greater than Jonah: Jesus Christ. His message was one of repentance, telling people to turn away from their sins and turn to God (Matthew 4:17), but He was no ordinary Prophet. He was the Son of God. His message was accompanied by miracles, works that only God could do. However, there were many people, like the men we read about in Matthew 12, who didn’t believe the things Jesus said. They thought He was a false prophet, so they put Him to death on a cross. But rather than defeating Jesus by putting Him to death, they gave Him His greatest

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK (Continued)

opportunity to prove that He was who He said He was by rising from the dead. In His resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the “sign of Jonah” He had told them about.

There’s another big difference between Jonah and Jesus. After Jonah preached to Nineveh, he sat outside the city, waiting for its destruction. He didn’t want the Ninevites to repent and be spared judgment. But Jesus had mercy on the people who rejected Him. In fact, that was the whole purpose of His death and resurrection: to offer forgiveness of sins, even to the very people who put Him on the cross.

All of us have sinned, and because of our sin, we stand guilty before God. It doesn’t matter if you’ve sinned lots of times, like the people of Nineveh, or if like Jonah, you think you are a “good person.” We all are in need of God’s mercy. And yet mercy is exactly what God showed us in sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us to pay for our sins. On the cross, He took the punishment that we deserve for our sins, and now He offers us forgiveness if we put our faith in Him.

If you want to receive God’s mercy and ask Jesus to forgive your sins, all you have to do is admit that you are a sinner who has broken God’s laws, believe that Jesus died and rose again for you, and ask Him to forgive your sins and be your Lord (King) and Savior. When you do that, He will forgive your sins, you will be part of the family of God, and you will spend eternity with Jesus in heaven forever.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# TOOK

As a class, memorize Romans 10:9. Anyone who can recite all 5 verses today will receive a prize and certificate.

Give the students an opportunity to respond to the Gospel. Be sure to let the parents/guardians know and if their child accepts Jesus as their Savior, and have them fill out the yellow “Welcome to God’s Family” cards.

**Pray:** Thank the Lord for sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. Ask Him to help us all to live for Him.

**Family Question:** What is “the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 12:39-40)?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Matthew 12:38-41 by David Guzik

### 1. ([Matthew 12:38-40](#)) Jesus responds to the request from the scribes and Pharisees.

**Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see 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.”**

a. **Teacher, we want to see a sign from You:** Their desire to see a sign really expressed another way in which they hoped to reject Him. If Jesus *did* provide a sign, they would find some way to speak against it, thus proving to themselves that Jesus was who they already thought He was — an emissary of Satan ([Matthew 12:24](#)).

i. “The apparent respect and earnestness of the request are feigned: ‘teacher, we desire from *you* (emphatic position) to see a sign’. It reminds one of the mock homage of the soldiers at the Passion ([Matthew 27:27-31](#)).” (Bruce)

ii. “Had not Christ shown them signs enough? What were all the miracles he had wrought in their sight? They either speak this out of a further idle curiosity...or else they speak it in direct opposition.” (Poole)

b. **An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign:** Jesus condemned their seeking after a sign, especially when countless signs had already happened before their eyes. It is easy to overestimate the power of miraculous signs to change the heart of doubters and skeptics.

c. **The sign of the prophet Jonah:** Jesus assured them of a sign, but the great sign He would show was the sign of a resurrected Jesus. **Jonah** was a **prophet** in the sense beyond his preaching to Nineveh; also his life was a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

d. **As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish:** Jonah was indeed a picture of the work of Jesus. Jonah gave his life to appease the wrath of God coming upon others. But death did not hold him; after three days and nights of imprisonment, he was alive and free. This is a glorious picture of Jesus in an unexpected place.

i. Because Jesus here refers to **three days and three nights**, some think that Jesus had to spend at least 72 hours in the grave. This upsets most chronologies of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and is unnecessary — because it doesn’t take into account the use of ancient figures of speech. Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah (around the year AD 100; cited in Clarke and other sources) explained this way of speaking when he wrote: “A day and a night make a whole day, and a portion of a whole day is reckoned as a whole day.” This demonstrates how in Jesus’ day, the phrase **three days and three nights** did not necessarily mean a full 72-hour period, but a period including at least the portions of three days and three nights. There may be other good reasons for challenging the traditional chronology of Jesus’ death and resurrection, but it is not necessary in order to fulfill the words of Jesus here.

ii. If Jesus rose from the dead on the first day or on the fifth day, we could say “Jesus was a liar and a false prophet. He said He would rise again on the third day, but He got it wrong.” But Jesus didn’t get it wrong. He never does.

iii. Yet we should not miss the central point here. “You are asking for a sign — *I am God’s sign*. You have failed

to recognize me. The Ninevites recognized God's warning in Jonah; the Queen of Sheba recognized God's wisdom in Solomon." (Barclay)

2. ([Matthew 12:41-42](#)) Jesus announces the condemnation of the religious leaders at the hands of the Ninevites and the queen of the South.

**"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."**

a. **The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it:** Simply put, greater light requires greater judgment. Both **Nineveh** and **the queen of the South** repented even though they had a lesser light shining in their midst. The rejection of the greater light by the religious leaders was indefensible.

i. Adam Clarke described several ways that the witness of Jesus was **greater than Jonah**.

- "Christ, who preached to the Jews, was infinitely greater than Jonah, in his nature, person, and mission."

- "Jonah preached repentance in Nineveh only *forty* days, and Christ preached among the Jews for several years."

- "Jonah wrought no miracles to authorize his preaching; but Christ wrought miracles every day, in every place where he went, and of every kind."

"Notwithstanding all this, the people of Judea did not repent, though the people of Nineveh did."



# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Matthew 28:1-10 by David Guzik

### A RISEN LORD JESUS AND HIS COMMISSION

#### A. The risen Jesus.

##### 1. ([Matthew 28:1-3](#)) Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany find an angel at the tomb.

**Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.**

a. **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb:** They came to finish the preparation of Jesus' body, which was cut short by the Sabbath ([Luke 24:1-3](#)). So **after the Sabbath** on Sunday (**the first day of the week**), they came to the tomb — fully expecting to find the dead body of Jesus.

b. **There was a great earthquake:** Matthew alone notes this earthquake. The earthquake did not cause the stone to be rolled away; if anything, the angelic rolling of the stone prompted the earthquake.

i. "The earth shook both at Christ's passion and at his resurrection; then, to show that it could not bear his suffering; now, to show that it could not hinder his rising." (Trapp)

ii. Some think this was not a normal earthquake, but refers to the disturbance of the guards at the tomb ([Matthew 28:4](#)). "Seismov, a *shaking* or *commotion* of any kind: probably the word means no more than the *confusion* caused among the guards by the angel's appearance. All this had taken place before the women reached the sepulcher." (Clarke)

c. **An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it:** When the women came to the tomb, they saw the stone rolled away and an angel sitting on the stone. The door to the tomb was wide open.

i. "Indeed there needed not any angel at all to remove the stone, if this had been all he had come down for; He that was quickened by the Spirit, could by the same power have rolled away the stone; but as it was fit that the angels, who had been witnesses of his passion, should also be witnesses of his resurrection." (Poole)

ii. The stone that enclosed the body of Jesus in the tomb had been like the gate of a prison cell, trapping the body of Jesus in the grave. Now it became a place of rest, as the angel **sat on it**.

##### 2. ([Matthew 28:4-6](#)) The angel's message.

**And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."**

a. **And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men:** The Roman soldiers responsible for guarding the tomb were terrified. The angelic presence made these professional soldiers tremble and faint.

i. "He does not appear to have drawn a flaming sword, nor even to have spoken to *the keepers*; but the presence of perfect purity overawed these rough legionaries." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The resurrection of Christ is a subject of *terror* to the servants of sin, and a subject of consolation to the

sons of God; because it is a proof of the resurrection of both, the one to shame and everlasting contempt—the other to eternal glory and joy.” (Clarke)

b. **He is not here, for He is risen:** For the first time, the followers of Jesus — these faithful women — heard what they did not expect to hear. They heard that Jesus was not in the tomb, but **risen** to resurrection life.

i. There are several examples in the Bible of people being *resuscitated* before this, such as the widow’s son in the days of Elijah ([1 Kings 17:17-24](#)) and Lazarus ([John 11:38-44](#)). Each of these was resuscitated from death, but none of them were *resurrected*. Each of them was raised in the same body they died in, and raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn’t just living again; it is living again in a new body, based on our old body, perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one *resurrected*.

ii. We should also say that Jesus *still is risen*. He ascended into heaven and continues to reign as resurrected man, still fully man and fully God.

iii. In Israel, one may see many graves and tombs — there is an ocean of tombs on the Mount of Olives, and vast sea of graves outside the eastern wall of the temple mount. You can see the tomb of Rebekka, the tomb of David, the tomb of Absalom — but you won’t find the tomb of Jesus anywhere. **He is not here.**

iv. **As He said** reminded these women — and all the disciples — that they *should have* expected this. It was just what He promised.

c. **Come, see the place where the Lord lay:** The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. [John 20:19](#) tells us that Jesus, in His resurrection body, could pass through material barriers. It was rolled away so that others could see in and be persuaded that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

i. “The invitation to *see the place where he lay* is appropriately addressed to the same people who had watched the body being deposited — so there is no possibility of a mistake.” (France)

ii. “Come and see the niche in which he was laid—it is now empty; nor was there any other body in the place, for the tomb was a *new* one, in which no man had ever been laid, [John 19:41](#); so there could be no deception in the case.” (Clarke)

iii. The *fact* of the resurrection is clear enough. We must also grapple with the *meaning* of the resurrection. Simply, Jesus’ resurrection proved that His death was an actual propitiation for sin and that the Father had accepted it as such. The cross was the payment, the resurrection the receipt, proving that the payment was fully accepted.

iv. Those women were later grateful that the angel told them to **see the place where they laid Him**. It would have — it should have — been enough to merely hear the testimony of the angel. Nevertheless, when they *saw* it, it gave them ground to stand on even more solid than the testimony of an angel. “One eye-witness is better than twenty ear-witnesses; men will believe what you have seen if they do not believe what you have heard.” (Spurgeon)

- When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that the Father did not forsake Jesus.
- When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that death is conquered.
- When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that we have a living friend in Jesus.

3. ([Matthew 28:7-8](#)) The angel’s instructions to Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany.

**“And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.**

a. **Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead:** The angel commanded them to be the first messengers of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. Since these women were some of the few people cou-



rageous enough to publicly identify themselves with Jesus, it was an appropriate honor.

i. “Not first to them who were the heads of the Church, as it were, but first of all to lowly women, did the Lord appear; and the apostles themselves had to go to school to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to learn that great truth, “The Lord is risen indeed.” (Spurgeon)

b. **He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him:** This assured the women *they would see the resurrected Jesus*. He wasn’t simply raised from the dead; He was raised to continue His relationship with them.

i. Conceivably, the angel might have said: “He is risen, and has ascended to heaven!” That would have been better than knowing He was dead; but the truth was far better. He was risen, and risen to have and continue a real relationship with His disciples.

c. **Ran to bring His disciples word:** The women — filled with **fear and great joy** — did exactly what the angel told them to do. He told them to **go quickly** and they did.

i. “Saints running in the way of obedience are likely to be *met by Jesus*. Some Christians travel to heaven so slowly that they are overtaken by follies or by faults, by slumber or by Satan; but he who is Christ’s running footman shall meet his Master while he is speeding on his way.” (Spurgeon)

#### 4. ([Matthew 28:9-10](#)) Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany meet a risen Jesus.

**And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”**

a. **As they went to tell His disciples:** The women met Jesus as they obeyed the command to tell the news of the resurrection.

b. **Jesus met them, saying “Rejoice!”** What else could Jesus say to these women? What else could they do other than **rejoice**?

i. The old King James Version translates **“Rejoice!”** with *All hail!* France observes, *“Hail!”* represents the normal Greek greeting, an almost homely ‘Hello!’ in contrast with the fearsome appearance of the angel.”

c. **So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him:** When the women met Jesus, they felt compelled to worship Him. An hour before, they thought everything was lost because they thought Jesus was dead. Now they knew everything was gained because Jesus was alive.

i. Notably, Jesus *received the worship* of these ladies. If Jesus were not God, it would have been terribly sinful for Him to receive this worship. But being God, it was good and appropriate for Him to receive it.

d. **Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me:** Jesus told the women to do the same thing that the angel told them to do.

i. **My brethren:** “This is the *first* time our Lord called his disciples by this endearing name: they no doubt thought that their Lord would reproach them with their past cowardice and infidelity; but, in speaking thus, he gives them a full assurance, in the most tender terms, that all that was passed was buried for ever.” (Clarke)