

## American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org  
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart April 2025

### The Sign of Jonah by Steve Huston



When Jesus spoke of the “Sign of Jonah,” we should be grateful that our Lord was referring to the amount of time He would spend in the tomb (Matt. 12:40) instead of the pervasive nature of Jonah – Prophet of Justice Demanded.

When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people of the impending doom from His Divine Hand, the prophet had no desire to go in obedience; he simply wanted justice. After Jonah was spit out of the great fish onto dry land, he went obediently, although begrudgingly. We read Jonah’s response to God’s mercy after all of Nineveh repented:

“*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil,*

*that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.”* (Jonah 3:10 – 4:1)

The Jonah in the verses above seems unsympathetic, cold, and even harsh, but let’s recognize that he is the same Jonah of chapter 1:12, which called for justice in the midst of a “mighty tempest,” even though he would be the recipient of that judgment: “*And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*”

It’s with great interest that we read how these heathen sailors desired to show mercy to this runaway prophet, for fear of God. And then, God showed mercy to His undeserving and disobedient prophet by sending a great fish, the same that would become a symbol of prophecy: pointing to the death of Christ Who

procured our salvation through His atoning death upon the cross; those three days and nights He would spend in the “belly” of the earth, and, finally, His expulsion from the tomb. The resurrection of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, celebrated by Christians all over the world this month, shows God’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. He died in our place for our sins, that we might be justified IN HIM Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Romans 4:24-25 assures us: “*But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*”

Justice and mercy met in Christ on that wooden cross on Golgotha’s hill. Hallelujah!

Our sin is pardoned, we are made right with God, and, by God’s continuing

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and holiness, or justification, and at least a measure of sanctification, are constant and inseparable companions.”

Dear Reader, the same God who showed mercy to Jonah showed mercy to the Ninevites, and He is the same God who showed mercy to us. We deserved death, He could have demanded justice, BUT GOD, in His mercy, offers us life.

What of us? After partaking in God’s grace and mercy, do we approach sinners in an uncharitable manner or do we present this great offer of the Gospel? Do we take to heart that twofold warning found in James 2:13? “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

In at least some sense, to withhold the Gospel from someone is to take on the demeanor of Jonah – “Give them justice.” But wait, justice must be tempered with mercy. God mercifully moved upon the hearts of the adult Ninevites, accepted their repentance, and thereby spared multitudes of chil-

dren and even cattle. What of the unseen innocents? No one is too far from God’s hand of grace and mercy; our loving Heavenly Father often reaches out to those innocents through our sharing the Gospel to those whom we sometimes think are unreachable.

Mercy is not simply ignoring evil. Had the Ninevites refused to repent, there would be no mercy. Had Jonah not warned, there would be no opportunity. Might we be moved by the mercy of the resurrection to share such mercy with others.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*” (Rom. 10:14-15)



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grace we are free from the power of sin. Joseph Benson well-explains: “By the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright, even the mercy and truth of God, which meet together, and kiss each other, in Jesus Christ the Mediator; by mercy in promising, and truth in performing, is the guilt of sin taken away from us, when we are truly penitent, and cast our sinful souls by faith on that mercy and truth. Hereby also a principle of mercy and truth is implanted in us, by which the power of sin is broken, and our corrupt inclinations are mortified and destroyed. In this way...is iniquity purged, and the sinner both pardoned and renewed. And by the fear of the Lord — By a filial reverence toward God, and by a holy fear of offending him; men depart from evil — They are kept from abusing pardoning mercy, and from returning to folly or wickedness. So he shows that forgiveness

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