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Sign

Of

Jonah

By **KELSEY E. HINSHAW**

THE SIGN OF JONAH

By Kelsey E. Hinshaw.

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Introduction

We have available today the immediate revelation and leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is this leadership rather than conscience that we as Friends are obligated to follow. Conscience may be a poor standard as it operates in accord with our own subjective beliefs and may be wrong. Our problem is to "try the spirits" to be sure the spirit we are following is truly the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is of God and cannot be wrong. The Bible is our ultimate test because the leadership of the Holy Spirit must be in accord with God's Written Word. The Bible, as originally inspired and written, is absolute in its veracity and authority.

K. E. H.

THEN certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered (and) said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and no sign shall be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of :man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matt. 12:38- 40 (Ivan Panin)*

Importance of the Sign

We recognize that all of the Bible is inspired by God and that every part is profitable to us as indicated in II Timothy 3:16. But if we may say that certain passages have a value above others, then these words from Matt. 12: 38-40 must be considered as some of the most important in the Bible. In order to understand why they are so important we must recognize what the scribes and Pharisees were seeking and also what Jesus put into His answer.

The scribes and Pharisees in asking their question were in fact asking Jesus to do something or present something that would prove His authority to speak as He did. Since His authority did, in

* Ivan Panin indicates that the and in parenthesis is not in the Greek text. He uses the colon immediately preceding a word to indicate that in the Greek text there is a definite article used to indicate a special emphasis, as :man. There is no provision in the English for this particular emphasis.

fact, rest upon His Divinity, this was equivalent to asking Jesus to prove that He was the Messiah. Although there may have been exceptions, they as a group did not believe He was the Christ. They were disturbed because He was gaining a following. They were trying to get Him to commit Himself in such a way that they could break up any movement that might be forming and could in this way keep the crowds from listening to Him. If the people did not listen they would not be led astray by such unorthodox teachings. If Jesus could be led to deny He was the Christ they knew they could soon put an end to what He was doing. If he should refuse to offer some sign they could use this refusal to turn many of His followers from Him. On the other hand, if Jesus should offer proof He was the Messiah, they believed they would be able to claim this as a basis for charging Him with blasphemy and could destroy Him by stoning.

Jesus, of course, understood what they were trying to do and let them know this by including them as part of an "evil and adulterous generation." Jesus was very clever in the way He avoided their trap. He certainly would not say He was not the Messiah. Nor did He refuse to present a sign. But the sign Jesus gave was one they could not immediately use against Him as a charge of blasphemy because it would not become effective until after His death. In other words, Jesus said in effect, I will give you one sign, one only, and it is this--The Messiah will be three days and three nights in the tomb just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale.

Jesus had given the sign whereby the Son of Man would be positively identified but He did not say He would fulfill it. If He fulfilled it He was the Christ.

If He failed they would know He was an imposter. If the sign is a legitimate one--that is, if Jesus had authority to give it--and someone else came along and fulfilled it, that one would be proven to be the Christ. Thus we see how effectively Jesus met them at every point and completely foiled them in their attempt to trap Him.

We should be impressed with the importance of this sign. Jesus certainly would not have told the scribes and Pharisees what He did just to escape the harm they might do Him or His work. We cannot imagine Him thinking, "Wasn't that a neat trick I pulled on those fellows," and then closing the incident. This sign must stand and be fulfilled or Jesus was not the Christ and our hope is in vain!

What Was Said And Why

Now let us examine more closely what is included and what is excluded in this answer which Jesus gave. Notice first that all other possible signs are excluded. This sign and it alone is the one given to prove His Messiahship. Many other times in the life of Jesus we will find signs, wonders and miracles. Those who have been converted and have Christ dwelling within as Lord and Savior have many proofs available, but this is the only sign ever given by Jesus and specified for this purpose of proving that He was truly the Messiah foretold in the Scripture.

Jesus makes no reference here to either His death, burial or resurrection. They must all take place of course as in no other way could the sign be fulfilled. It is important to keep in mind, however, that a specified length of time and that alone is presented by Jesus as the sign that was asked for. He went on and identified this specified time so they could not mistake it.

This sign of Jonah is also mentioned in Luke and again in Matthew. In each of the Gospels Jesus makes numerous references to the time involved in this sign. The verses quoted at the beginning of this article stand out in importance because it is here that Jesus specifically spells out exactly what the sign is and what must be looked for in its fulfillment.

Jesus could not have intended other than what He said--a specified length of time--as the sign He was talking about. In the first place we cannot imagine Him giving only one sign that would prove He was the Messiah and then failing to indicate clearly what that sign was to be. If we consider our text carefully we can scarcely fail to notice that Jesus did in fact speak very clearly. If the issue has become clouded it is because we have inserted our own ideas as to what He was intending to say.

Many have been crucified or hung on a tree. Countless numbers have died and been placed in a tomb--in the heart of the earth. Lazarus and others have been raised from the dead. None of these events have proved any of those involved to have been the Christ. Since these things happened to others the fact that they happened to Jesus could not possibly prove Him to be the Messiah. Thus we see there is but the one unduplicated feature that could possibly stand as an identifying proof --the specific time, three days and three nights.

It is unreasonable to believe that Jesus would have staked so much on a specific amount of time and then have used language that could mean anything from 36 to 72 hours, as so many would have us think.

Time of Resurrection Foretold

Jesus said He would rise after three days. There are a number of Greek words that are at times translated after. The one used here is meta. We have no single word in the English language which exactly expresses its meaning. If Jesus was saying His resurrection would coincide with the close of the third day or would follow immediately thereafter, He could have used no better Greek word than meta.

After three days, whether with meta in the Greek or after in the English, could not be truthfully used to indicate a time in the middle of the third day or any time in the third day except its very closing moments. In English it might refer to a time well along in the fourth day. This is not true in the Greek for, according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, it indicates a close relationship or proximity to. In other words, this statement of Jesus can refer only to the close of the third day or shortly thereafter. This shows that Jesus set the earliest time at which the resurrection would take place as the very end of the third day following the burial.

Jesus made many references to the length of time He would be in the tomb. In addition to the sign of Jonah, He used the figure of "rebuilding the temple" and in talking to His disciples specifically mentions the time He would be in the tomb. In doing this He uses not only after three days but also the third day, in three days, within three days, and some translators have on the third day. In three days and within three days were used in referring to the "rebuilding of the temple." In three days indicates that not more than three full days would be required to complete the work. Within

three days has much the same meaning to us although it might limit it to three specific days. On the third day, or the third day, could refer to any time during the third day following burial but could not indicate a time over in the fourth day. Here Jesus sets the latest time at which the resurrection would take place as the very end of the third day following burial.

Thus we see that, if Jesus knew what He was talking about and was truthful in His statements, the time for the resurrection was limited to one point--the close of the third day. Since the days Jesus was talking about closed at sundown, this is the one and only time that could verify the truthfulness of all of His statements. If rather than considering the days mentioned as from sundown to sundown, we consider them as 24-hour periods from the point of burial, we will still arrive at the same point, as the Bible indicates the burial was at sundown, as we shall later show.

Events Illustrated

The diagram on page 12 is an attempt to picture the actual time sequence of days and events relating to the burial and resurrection of Jesus. These are compared with the same events as they would have had to occur according to the Good Friday tradition set up by the Catholic Church and today apparently accepted by most Protestants as well.

The relationship, time and order of some of these events are generally accepted, so we will do little more than mention them. The crucifixion was at about 9:00 a. m. on a Preparation Day which was also the Passover. There may be some confusion in using the word Passover as it sometimes refers to the one day originally designated

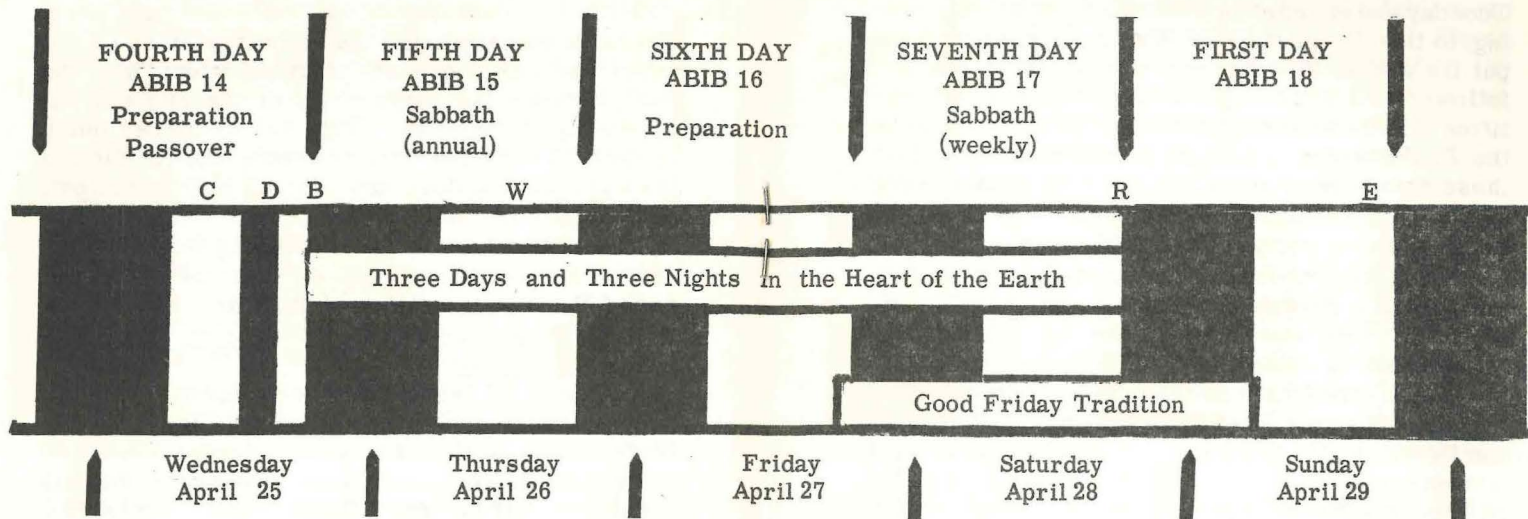
--Abib 14--and sometimes to the entire eight days that were observed.

When the Passover of the Lord was instituted, the lamb was slain and the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts at dusk, which was the time between the going down of the sun and the appearing of the stars. This was at the beginning of Abib 14. By the time of Jesus, the Rabbinical laws and instructions had altered this somewhat, and usually the lambs were not slain until the daylight hours, which in our reckoning would be the next day. Jesus, as was so often the case, rejected the traditionalism of the time, and He and His disciples observed the occasion as instructed in the Pentateuch.

The death of Jesus came soon after 3:00 p. m. on this Passover. The sun had been darkened for three hours, during which time Christ was lifted up between heaven and earth. The watch was set sometime during the following day. After His resurrection, our Lord was seen on a First Day. He appeared on the Emmaus road that afternoon and met with His disciples that evening.

It would take far more space than is available in this article to even mention all of the intricacies involved in matching the Jewish calendar with our own and then checking recorded historical events against Bible prophecy and narration. Suffice it to say that after some study of the problem we are convinced that the year 31 A. D. meets all prophecy requirements and adequately correlates known historical events with the Bible narrative. This year allows us to place the birth of Jesus in 4 B. C., the beginning of His ministry at the age of thirty, and the length of His ministry at about three and a half years. This is all in accord with good and acceptable scholarship.

THE SIGN OF JONAH



The upper part of the diagram marks off the days according to the Hebrew calendar—from sundown to sundown—as God instructed. The days of the week are as they came the year Christ was crucified. At the bottom the same days are marked off according to our present calendar—from midnight to midnight—as they came in the year 31 A. D. The black indicates darkness and the white indicates daylight. The narrow black portion on Fourth Day—Wednesday—indicates the time of darkness just previous to the death of Christ. The inclosed boxes compare the actual time in the grave with that proposed according to the Good Friday tradition.

The letters along the top of the diagram indicate when the following events occurred

- C - - - Crucifixion
- D - - - Death
- B - - - Burial
- W - - - The watch was set sometime during this day
- R - - - Resurrection
- E - - - On the Emmaus road the third day since the day that began at the time of the burial and on which the watch was set. Luke 24:21

In the year 31 A. D. , the Passover came on a Fourth Day. In other words it began at sundown Tuesday and ended at sundown Wednesday, according to the designation of days now in use. This put the annual Holy Convocation or Sabbath which followed on a Fifth Day. John 19:31 clearly identifies this as an annual Sabbath. It is indicated in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus and elsewhere that these annual Holy Convocations and Feasts were Sabbaths and came on certain days of the year rather than on certain days of the week.

By the time of Jesus, the day before a Sabbath was called a Preparation Day or simply the Preparation. This was true whether the Sabbath was an annual or a weekly one. This question of Sabbaths and Preparations may point us to one reason for the error leading to the establishment of the Good Friday tradition. And it might be well to remember that for hundreds of years the day of the crucifixion was considered a dark rather than a good day.

The Good Friday Tradition

We should need little time to refute this commonly held Good Friday tradition. One Greek word is used in a way that should prove to any Bible believing Christian that the tradition is false. Jesus, in Mark 8:31, is recorded as teaching that He would be killed and after three days rise again. In Matthew 27:63 the chief priests and Pharisees add their testimony to the fact that He used the phrase after three days.

The Greek word meta, used here and translated after, as indicated previously, cannot refer to any time in the middle of the third day but only to the end of that day or a time early in the fourth day.

The statement has often been made, though it

is questionable, that the expression "a day and a night" as used in the time of Jesus might mean any portion of the twenty-four hour period. Those who would uphold the Good Friday tradition by this idiom are faced with a real problem in the fact that Jesus was quoting from the Old Testament Hebrew which means just as it says, three days and three nights. It is obvious, however, that this theory must be accepted if the Good Friday tradition is to stand.

We know Jesus was buried near sundown. Suppose we say He was buried an hour before that time and on Friday--Sixth Day. When we come to the end of that one hour at the close of Sixth Day--sundown Friday--suppose we count it as the first "day and night" Jesus was in the tomb. When we get to the end of the Sabbath--sundown Saturday--we would count the second "day and night" in the tomb. Sunrise on First Day--Sunday morning--would be in the middle of the next, or third, "day and night" period. Now according to the theory we have been discussing this little more than 36 hours would constitute the "three days and three nights" that Jesus was to be in the tomb, but look at the impossibilities we face.

When we counted the one hour and also the twelve hours, each as a day and a night, we disregarded the fact that Jesus was quoting from the Hebrew text. Now we face the fact that sunrise Sunday morning is in the middle of the 24-hour "day and night" period that would make up the third day, while Jesus said He would rise after the third day. After could not possibly apply to this day before we get to sundown Sunday evening.

This places the holders of the Good Friday tradition in a dilemma. If the resurrection was on a Sunday, then it must be at sundown Sunday even-

ing in order for these words of Jesus to be true, but the Bible says He had already appeared on the Emmaus road that afternoon and much earlier in the day the angel had said, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." In order to accept the statement of Jesus as true and count three days in the tomb--regardless of the method used--the burial must have been before Friday.

The Sign Fulfilled

The entire land was in darkness from noon until three o'clock the day Jesus was crucified. After it was light, Jesus spoke a few words. The sponge with vinegar was placed to His lips. Later He cried with a loud voice and died. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom and there was an earthquake. These people were superstitious. They believed an eclipse of the sun indicated that, as a nation, judgment was to come upon them, and this darkness had extended far beyond what would be expected of an eclipse. Added to this was the earthquake and the rent veil. We would expect it to take some time for them to get organized and go to work.

The Pharisees went to Pilate to ask that the bones of those who had been crucified might be broken and their lives taken so they could be removed and not left hanging over the Sabbath. The bones of the legs were broken with a club, not to bring death, but to increase suffering in order to compensate for the fact that their suffering was to be shortened by the spear thrust.

Authorization for this was granted; the order was taken to the soldiers and they went about their gruesome task. When they came to Jesus they found Him already dead. Because of this He received the spear thrust, which otherwise would

have been postponed until the latest time possible that would still make sure of the removal of the bodies before the Sabbath began.

After this the thought may have come to Joseph of Arimathea, "I wonder, now that Jesus is dead sooner than we expected, if I couldn't get the body and place it in my new tomb here so He will not receive further desecration at the hands of the soldiers." He must have noticed Nicodemus nearby and conferred with him. No matter whether we have imagined this correctly or not, we know he went from Calvary to get an audience with Pilate and asked for the body. Pilate questioned the death of Jesus this soon and waited for confirmation before he gave his answer. Joseph and Nicodemus then secured linen, myrrh and aloes for the burial, which they scarcely would have done before they realized there was this possibility and they could have the body. They had to get this material out to the tomb, which would be no little task, take the body down, wrap it in the linen and place it in the tomb.

We must remember that all of this took time, some of it a considerable amount of time. It would have been physically impossible for all of this to have been completed more than a few minutes before sundown. They probably heard the bugle heralding the new day just as they finished rolling the stone into place. In any case, the Bible narrative indicates that the new day was in fact close at hand. There is no way we can count the minutes here. We do know there could not have been enough of the Preparation Day left for it to be reckoned by the Jews as a part of a day. In the same way, enough of the new day could not have passed for them to have considered it as a part of a day. God set the day to begin and to

end at sundown. The burial of Jesus undoubtedly meets this qualification--it was at sundown.

Now let us see if Jesus was in the tomb the full three days and three nights, as He said. A careful study will show us that there were actually two Preparations and two Sabbaths involved in the events relating to the burial and resurrection of Jesus. We have shown that He was buried at the end of a Preparation Day. In the Greek, Matthew 28:1 reads, "In the end of--or after--the Sabbaths." This plural indicates that there was more than one Sabbath involved.

Another proof that there were two Sabbaths involved with one day in between is the fact that the women bought and prepared their spices after a Sabbath was past, as indicated in Mark 16:1. Then after this, as indicated in Luke 23:56, they rested on another Sabbath before going to the tomb. Both of these statements could not be true unless there were the two Sabbaths with the one day in between on which they bought and prepared their spices.

The fact that the watch was set on the Sabbath following the Preparation on which Jesus died, though perhaps not a proof is certainly an indication that this Sabbath was not the weekly Sabbath. At the time of Jesus there were a few things allowed on an annual Sabbath that would not be permitted on the weekly Sabbath.

We have now shown that Jesus was buried at sundown on a Preparation Day and was in the tomb the Sabbath which followed. On the following day--another Preparation Day--the women bought and prepared their spices, then rested on the second Sabbath which followed. This makes two Sabbaths and one Preparation, or three days, in the tomb.

Now let us see if the resurrection was at the close of the third day or could it have been earlier the third day or even over in the fourth day. First we should notice the fact that there is no evidence, sacred or secular, to prove that it was at some other time of day. In other words there is no evidence of a Sunday morning resurrection. The one Bible verse that would seem to indicate this will be considered later.

We have the testimony of the angel that Jesus had risen as He said. Since Jesus had said He would be three days and three nights in the tomb and that He would rise at the very close of the third day and since the burial was at sundown, the angel is testifying to the fact that He was three days in the tomb and that the resurrection was at sundown.

The Pharisees and the Sign

Did the scribes and Pharisees believe that Jesus fulfilled the sign of Jonah? They as a group did not accept Jesus as their Messiah but they must have recognized the fulfillment of the sign. Jesus had indicated that they would not believe even though the Old Testament saints might be resurrected and testify to them. The Pharisees and the others knew when the burial took place and when the time for the fulfillment of the sign would be completed. Soldiers were placed to guard the sealed tomb. To allow any man to break the seal unofficially was an offense punishable by death.

The guards experienced the earthquake, saw the angel roll the stone away and were stricken as though dead because of fear. Later, after recovery, they reported these things to the high priests. It is evident that their story was not doubted because they were bribed to tell a differ-

ent and false story--one that would lay them liable to the death penalty. That these soldiers were willing to do this is proof that the matter was carefully considered and they knew the story that would be told to the Roman rulers would completely clear them. The only thing that could do this was the truth--that the soldiers were in fact true and faithful to their trust--but the report published was simply for effect and was under the direction and authority of the high priests.

The scribes, high priests and Pharisees were in a position to know it if Jesus failed to fulfill the promised sign. It would have been very much to their advantage to present any proof they might have that Jesus failed. The fact that neither secular nor sacred history indicates that anything more than this bribed story was ever used plus the fact that there is no record that any of the disciples, or the guards, were ever charged with the crime of breaking the seal, stands as mute evidence that the scribes and Pharisees did recognize the fulfillment of the sign of Jonah. They knew that Jesus had been in the heart of the earth three days and three nights and that He had come from the tomb at the very end of the third day--sundown--just as He had said.

When we examine the evidence we see how wonderfully it fits together. We see one portion of the Scripture explaining and clarifying others. And out of it all we get the picture showing that every statement Jesus made with regard to the end events of His earthly life was verified as true. The one and only sign upon which He rested full proof of identity was exactly and absolutely fulfilled. Praise His Holy Name!

Mark 16: 9

This verse might well lead to some confusion. As often translated it does indicate a Sunday morning resurrection. When we go to the Greek we find the exact transliteration as follows: "Having risen and early first of week he appeared first to Mary the Magdalene, from whom he had cast seven demons." Good Greek scholars recognize that the phrase, early first of week, could modify either having risen or appeared. Notice there is no comma in the Greek to indicate which it is to modify. In a case like this the final decision as to its meaning is made by considering the context and translating the verse so it will agree with what it is believed other passages teach. Since those who gave us the King James version believed in a Sunday morning resurrection it was natural that they should translate it as they did.

This verse may be just as accurately interpreted as saying that He appeared to Mary Magdalene early the first day of the week after having risen at some time previous to that. This interpretation is the one which is in line with the teaching of other passages. Certainly no Greek student could consistently argue that this verse proves a Sunday resurrection. There is, in fact, no such indication to be found in the Bible.

Conclusions

Some questions come to mind as we realize that Jesus was in the tomb a full three days and three nights and came from the tomb at sundown, just as He said He would. One question should have at least a brief consideration.

Should we observe Good Friday? It is somewhat ironic that this question need be asked Quakers of all people. It has been only within the last fifteen years or so that some of us have so much as heard Good Friday or Lent seriously mentioned in a Friends Meeting. Supposedly, Friends have not been wedded to forms and ceremonies. But even aside from this we are faced with a greater problem regarding Good Friday. We know the crucifixion was not on a Sixth Day--Friday--but on a Fourth Day--Wednesday. Actually the day on which Jesus died is related to the annual calendar and not to the numbering of the days of the week.

If we observe Good Friday what testimony are we giving to the world? Is it not either that Jesus failed to keep His word or that what the Bible says is not as important as going with the crowd and following tradition? As we have read these questions we have no doubt answered them in our own minds. Are our answers those we will be pleased to give this same Jesus--the one who decried tradition--when He is our judge?

Sometimes we wonder if Satan isn't thoroughly enjoying himself while he is still able to do so. How he must chuckle as he considers his accomplishments. Multitudes have been turned from the truth of God to the fables and self-sufficiency of men. Uncounted numbers have been led away from God's truth of the "sign of Jonah." First, since the sign rests on the story of Jonah and the whale, Satan has tried to discredit that story and on this basis many have been led astray. In the second place, multitudes who accept the story of Jonah have been lured from the truth of the ful-

fillment of this sign by getting them to accept in place of the truth a fable of man that comes close enough to the truth to deceive men but in fact denies Christ. Millions have in this way denied our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ without realizing what they were doing.

This should bring us to our knees before God. We should earnestly seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit and in doing this we should not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are of God as we are instructed in I John 4:1. We should diligently study the Bible that we may be approved of God for rightly dividing the Word of Truth. One may well wonder to what extent he may be excused for acting in ignorance in this day and age, but, be that as it may, it is without question a very serious matter to reject truth that has been called to our attention.

When Christ returns for His own, will He find faith on the earth? We are confident that there will be some men of faith on earth at that time although their number may be few. We are just as sure that those who make up the true Church at that time will not be entangled with any Good Friday tradition.



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