

September 14th, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 15”

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Luke 11:29-30

As the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say to them: **“This generation is a wicked one! It seeks for signs, but no miraculous signs will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah himself became a sign to the residents of Nineveh, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.**”

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, we discussed the sin of pride. The discussion was precipitated by the reaction of some in the crowd, probably the Jewish leaders, to Jesus’ healing the dumb man’s tongue. **Luke 11:14-15** tells us:

Then Jesus cast a demon out of a man made dumb, enabling him to speak after the demon left. This filled the multitude with awe. But some charged, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons.” Others challenged Him to show a sign from heaven.

I made the argument that the charge that Jesus cast out demons by the power of the devil was illogical, and was motivated by jealousy and pride. Those in charge of the temple didn’t like the fact that Jesus received the praise for His display of power with God that they were used to getting because of their relationship with the Temple.

Biblical history and prophecy are key considerations for the Jewish leaders that are examining the claims of Jesus Christ, who are in their positions of leadership because of their historical lineage. The record of the religious priesthood in Israel begins with the story of Moses, in **Exodus 2:1-10**:

1 And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi.

2 So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.

3 But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river’s bank.

5 Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it.

6 And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

9 Then Pharaoh’s daughter said to [the child’s mother], “Take this child away and nurse

him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, “Because I drew him out of the water.”

God called Moses, a member of the tribe of Levi, to be the leader of the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. On the way to the Promised Land, God told Moses, in **Exodus 28:1-2, 40:13-15:**

1 “Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

13 You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

14 And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics.

15 You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

God made Aaron His priest. The rest of the tribe of Levi was appointed custodians of the Tabernacle, which was a temporary, mobile sanctuary in which the Israelites worshipped God. **Numbers 1:47-51** records:

47 But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers’ tribe;

48 for the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying:

49 “Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel;

50 but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle.

51 And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death.

In Israel, by the time that Jesus was born, Biblical tradition was that the tribe of Levi was considered the holy tribe, having the responsibility for the things of God. Jesus is not of the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Judah. **Matthew 1:2** gives us this part of Jesus’ genealogy:

2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers.

King David, the pivotal king of Israel, was of the tribe of Judah. Jeremiah’s prophecy of the Messiah indicates that the Messiah will be a King, which implies a military leader and ruler like David. **Jeremiah 23:5** records:

5 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

As well as being from the tribe of Judah, the prophesy indicates that the Messiah will be born in the town of Bethlehem, as **Micah 5:2** records:

2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,

Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

Jesus’ parents were from Nazareth in Galilee and Jesus grew up there. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but He was there for less than two years as an infant and young child and only because of the Roman census. Jesus had no relatives in Bethlehem and no ties to the city, so it was not generally known by His contemporaries that He was born in Bethlehem. Jesus was known as Jesus of Nazareth, a town with a poor reputation for producing holiness. Nathanael told Phillip about Jesus, in **John 1:45-46**:

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

46 And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

The reaction of Jewish Biblical scholars to the knowledge that Jesus’ home town is Nazareth was generally not good, because Galilee, of which Nazareth is a part, is only peripherally mentioned in the Old Testament as part of the story of redemption. Even after watching Jesus perform great miracles, the discussion of Jesus’ home town was an issue for many. **John 7:40-43** records:

40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this [Jesus] is the Prophet.”

41 Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”

43 So there was a division among the people because of [Jesus].

Even after walking with Jesus and the miraculous works that He did, some even among the disciples still wanted to see a more miraculous sign from Him, as **John 14:6-11** records:

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Jesus makes the point that the proof of His Messianic Kingship and His Deity is not in His lineage or in the geography of His birth, but in His works. However, Jesus’ works, although powerful, are, to the Jews, somewhat confusing. Jesus majors in religious teaching and displaying the power to heal rather than having the military prowess of King David. The Jews are looking for the Messiah to be the son of David, from the tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem, and with the power to restore the political kingdom to Israel through warfare as did David. In

their minds, Jesus could not be the Messiah because He had the wrong lineage, He came from the wrong geographical location, and He was majoring in the wrong subject.

So when they asked Jesus for a sign of His Messiahship, they were not looking for a healing, but for leadership in nation building, including a military victory over their enemies. But when God sent Jesus as the Messiah, He was not sending a political king in the traditional sense. Jesus explained His Kingdom and the parameters of His reign to Pilate, in **John 18:35-37:**

35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

So Jesus is a King, engaged in battle against the enemies of the Jews with the mission to defeat them, but Jesus did not come to do battle militarily with the Romans. **1John 3:8** tells us: **8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**

Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us:

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, [Jesus] Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

So Jesus comes, not to win a military victory over the Jews' temporary Roman enemy, but to overthrow the actual, permanent enemy, not just of the Jews, but of mankind. Jesus came to overthrow sin, death, hell, the grave and all of the works of the devil. Jesus tells the Jews, in **Luke 11:20-22:**

20 But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

22 But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

The strong man, to whom Jesus refers, is the devil. Jesus wins His Kingdom by defeating the devil, taking away his armor and dividing his spoils. The spoils of the devil are the spirits of men, and Jesus is liberating the spirits of men by casting out demons just as David liberated Israel by defeating Goliath and the Philistines. Jesus is the King, but on a different level. Jesus' Kingdom transcends the political kingdoms of this world.

But when you are in Jesus' Kingdom, liberated from the devil's kingdom of sin, you must prepare to live liberated from sin. You can reject Jesus and stay in the sinful kingdom of the devil, as Jesus warns in **Luke 11:23-26:**

23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

24 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

25 And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.

26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

The demonic spirits that Jesus is casting out of people are out there looking for more people to influence and inhabit. Ultimately, if the person liberated from the devil does not decide to move from Satan’s Kingdom to Jesus’ Kingdom, the devil will be coming back to his old house to dwell there once again. Jesus calls all that have been liberated from the grip of the devil to change their ways and move from the devil’s domain to the Kingdom of God. **Mark 1:14-15** records:

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

Jesus’ Kingdom is here, but it is one that we must enter voluntarily. Jesus’ preaching is not really about Himself, but about God and our entry into God’s Kingdom. Jesus deflects personal compliments to stay on message, in **Luke 11:27-28**:

27 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!”

28 But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Jesus’ lineage is not the important thing, although it does fulfill prophecy. As Jesus told the woman in the crowd, His mother’s act in bringing Jesus into the world was not a significant factor in the further extension of the great work of Kingdom building. Jesus says that our function is not just to believe in His existence, but to believe in the correctness of that which God is telling us, so that we might be able to live in God’s Kingdom and avoid sin. As I said a couple of weeks ago, sin is the act of ignoring God because of our evaluation that God’s principles do not apply to us.

Jesus’ battle is all about the Word of God, as **Ephesians 6:10-13** explains to us:

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The armor of God is the realization that the Word of God is the truth and the laws of God lead to our personal righteousness. The popularity of that which God calls sin is part of the plan of the devil to lead us away from respecting the truth of the Word of God.

Our generation is rampant with familial discord, because Satan has focused his attention on the destruction of the intact families, which safeguard children against the works of the devil. Satan sets up discord between husbands and wives, in order to change God’s plan for the raising

of children in the nuclear family into a hodgepodge of shacking up, divorce, remarriage that leaves children in a situation without hope for their familial future.

Satan's plan condemns masculinity and disdains femininity, considering both some kind of disorder while striving for the destructive lie of unisexuality. This sort of thinking takes the obvious concept of equality in the eyes of the law and the Lord, and morphs it into a false concept of sameness. A belief in gender "sameness" generates a sense of lack of respect for and a denial of your need for the qualities of the other gender.

God designed men and women to be as different as bananas and peaches. Banana and peaches are both fruits, but they are different in texture, consistency, flavor, color, response to heat and cold, and nutritional content. Their uniqueness is to be appreciated, not criticized or dismissed in some bizarre notion that it hurts the banana if the peach is pink. Satan has deceived us into a lack of understanding, not only of what is needed by a man in a woman but also what is needed by a woman in a man. The very acceptance of the polarity of masculine and feminine is what makes a tight, loving, long-lasting bond—not the more mundane issues like equal effort in housekeeping. Respect for and admiration of the qualities of the opposite gender will feed you in ways you've ignored or never imagined.

Satan has induced us to reject masculinity, femininity, and the value of human life. In our society, abortion is easily available, the creation and wanton destruction of human life reduced to whim. It is a world where instead of marriage, we have shacking up—where two become...two. Instead of marital procreation and meaningful sexual intimacy, we have "hooking up," where sex is for recreation; instead of mothers raising their children we have institutionalized day care; and instead of intact families we have women who are unwed mothers by choice or irresponsibility, intentionally denying a father's love and guidance to children, and casual multiple divorces and remarriages, with minor children cruising between homes and parental affairs— children with no actual homes of their own. Issues of love, commitment, security, self-respect, values, vows, obligations, and responsibility have fallen to the satanic lie that children don't really need two parent families, but any mix and match combination of adults can "watch" the children until they become old enough to fend for themselves, and now children have to navigate the treacherous waters of having unrelated males living in their own homes taking advantage of intimate access to them, leading to molestation and rape.

The stability of the family unit is the key to the stability of the society. Satan is leading the charge to flush family stability down the toilet, and we are cooperating, as we did in the garden, taking the long road to that leads our families to destruction because of a short term promise of immediate gratification.

But the Lord tells us, in **Hebrews 13:4**

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says:

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 instructs us:

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The wickedness of our generation under the influences of Satan is no surprise to God. He has given us instructions through His Son Jesus Christ as to how we should live, but He also knows that our sinful nature as influenced by the lies of Satan has the potential to lead us astray. But He sends us help to stay on course, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as **Galatians 5:22-25** tells us:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Jesus comes destroying the works of the devil. He offers those in Israel the opportunity to evaluate His message and understand that He has come to lead the nation of Israel into the Kingdom of God. But His message is too deep for the leaders. They are not nearly as interested in the reformation of the nation of Israel into the kingdom of God as they are in their own power and authority. So, rather than focusing on the message, they choose to focus on the messenger. In our text, **Luke 11:29-30**:

As the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say to them: "This generation is a wicked one! It seeks for signs, but no miraculous signs will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah himself became a sign to the residents of Nineveh, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.

The story of Jonah records that Nineveh was a sinful city that God planned to overthrow, so God sent Jonah to warn them of His impending wrath. Jonah, not wanting God to have mercy on Nineveh, boarded a ship headed in the opposite direction to keep Nineveh from receiving the Word of God. God sent a storm to buffet the ship that Jonah was on until it was about to sink, and the crew of the ship cast lots to determine if someone on board was the cause of the storm. The lot fell on Jonah, who confessed that he was running away from God, and told the crew that their only hope was to throw him overboard. They did so, and the Bible records, in **Jonah 1:17-2:1, 9-10, 3:1-10**:

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.

9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

10 So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

The sign of the prophet Jonah was preaching leading to repentance. Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God as even as Jonah came proclaiming the overthrow of Nineveh. Jesus told the people, in **Matthew 12:40-41**:

40 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.

41 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.

There is only one solution to our familial problems and our societal problems, and that is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of His sacrifice, of His death, His burial, His three days in the grave, His resurrection and His admonition to us to obey the Word of God. The avant-garde ideas of the psychologists and sociologists of our times will not cure the problem of our society, because new and wonderful ideas are not needed. What is needed is repentance and the application of the Word of God.

We must understand that God’s prime directive for us has not changed. **Genesis 1:27-28** still tells us:

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God intended sex for marriage, not for extramarital recreation, and for procreation, as we are admonished by God to be fruitful and multiply. We have developed the birth control and abortion technologies that allow us to disobey God, because the devil has convinced us that children are a burden only to be borne in small numbers, and that the acquisition of things is more important than fulfilling God’s prime directive. But the sacrifice involved in raising

children, rather than the acquisition of possessions, stabilizes our lives in this world and prepares us for greater works in the next life, which is why God gives us the admonition to perform this task. **Psalm 127:3-5** records:

3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.

5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

But we are not to create children by sprinkling our seed over the land, but we are admonished to marry, to remain faithful to our marital vows, and to train up our children within a stable family structure, in the way that they should go, so that when they are old, they will not depart from it. Family stability and marital faithfulness is the foundation upon which the preaching of the Gospel must rest; those who are outside of the stability of the nuclear family structure are much more susceptible to the snares and wiles of the devil. Let us heed the sign of Jonah and repent at the preaching of the Christ.

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