

## LUKE 11:29-32—WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT JESUS?

**INTRO:** Today, at least among most of the people I know, the basic attitude when it comes to religion, or practically any fundamental system of beliefs or values, is something like the difference btw. people who like coffee vs. the people who like tea—namely: “I’ll believe what I want; you believe what you want; Don’t try to force your beliefs on me; and I won’t force mine on you. We may disagree, but that’s OK.”

- Now there is actually a fair amount of wisdom in that approach to things: It contributes to civility in inter-personal relationships and permits people who have radically different ideas about things to get along, and even to be friends: For example, I’m a Republican; many of my close friends are Democrats. I’m a Christian; some of my friends are atheists or at least agnostics. Yet we are still able to be good friends.

But there is one huge problem with that approach to things: That approach of “I’m OK, you’re OK” assumes that there are no lasting—let alone eternal—consequences to what we believe. That approach assumes that when we die, that ends everything.

- That is a reasonable approach—IF it’s underlying premise that there are no eternal consequences to what we believe—is correct. BUT, if its underlying premise is WRONG, then we have to seriously reconsider how we view both our own beliefs and how we deal with others and their beliefs.

That is the very point at issue in today’s passage: **Luke 11:29-32 [READ]**

*What is going on here?* Jesus is confronting people. He is telling them—and us—what we believe DOES matter, and has eternal consequences. Specifically, he is confronting us with the question: “What will you do about ME?” B/c in the end, whether you are a Republican or a Democrat or drink coffee or tea does NOT have eternal consequences. But Jesus is saying, “I am not like that. Whether you are, or are not, in right relationship with ME is the most important, central, foundational issue of your, and of everybody’s, life.”

**PROP:** This passage is telling us that what we do about Jesus is a matter of life and death—and not just life and death on this earth—but of eternal, everlasting life or death.

How can He get away with saying something like that?

**O/S:** Well, we will see how as we: (1) Look at what Jesus says about Himself; and (2) look at what Jesus says about “this generation.”

**I. So what is Jesus saying about Himself?** In this passage, Jesus is comparing and contrasting Himself with two people who were well-known in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel: the prophet Jonah and King Solomon. Let me begin with the Solomon, because that comparison is shorter.

**A. King Solomon.** Solomon had reigned as king of Israel after his father David, from about 970-930BC, so almost 1000 years before Jesus. Under Solomon’s reign Israel achieved its height in terms of wealth and power.

1. *But Solomon was best known for his wisdom—and THAT is the point of the comparison that Jesus is making.* You may recall how Solomon got his wisdom. After King David died, God appeared to Solomon and said, “Ask what you wish me to give you.” [READ 1 Kgs 3:9-13] In 1 Kgs 4:30 it says [READ]

2. *So back in Luke 11:31 when Jesus says “the Queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but something greater than Solomon is here,”* what Jesus is saying is: “I, Jesus, know more, and am wiser than, the wisest man who has ever lived or who will ever live.”

3. *Now that is an incredible statement.* If you were to say that, or I were to say that, or even if the person whom we would regard as the greatest genius we know of would say that, we would think, “There is something wrong with him.” He may be smart but no one can say that because he’s just a person: (1) he doesn’t know everyone else in the world, and (2) he doesn’t know the future.

4. *But what Jesus is saying is:* “You would be correct if your underlying premise were true—but your underlying premise is false, because I DO know everyone in the world and I DO know the future, b/c, you see, I AM GOD who has come to earth as a man. *What are you going to do about it?*”

**B. That leads us to Jesus’ comparison with the prophet Jonah.** Jonah was a prophet who lived around 780-750BC. We all have heard of the story of Jonah in the whale, but here Jesus is emphasizing that when Jonah preached in Nineveh, the people repented. Now, in **Luke 11:29-30** Jesus says “no sign will be given to this generation except the sign of Jonah, for just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the sign of the Son of Man be to this generation.” When He says SOM He is referring to Himself. So what is the

comparison Jesus is making btw. Himself and Jonah? There are actually several things that are probably going on here:

1. *On a very basic level:* Jesus' was brought up in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. In **John 7:52** the chief priests and Pharisees specifically attacked the idea that Jesus was the Messiah, telling Nicodemus, who had stood up for Jesus: **"You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."** The Pharisees were wrong. Jonah was from the town of Gath-hepher (**2 Kgs 14:25**). Gath-hepher is a small village "about three miles northeast of Nazareth" in Galilee. Also, the name "Jonah" means "dove." When Jesus was baptized God identified him as the Messiah by the Holy Spirit's coming to rest on Him in the form of a dove.

But there's more going on when Jesus talked about the "sign of the prophet Jonah."

2. *First, in v. 30 Jesus says that "Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites."* The way the Greek is phrased suggests that Jonah himself WAS the sign. How was he the sign? Jonah is the only Hebrew prophet who ever left his home to prophesy *in person* in a foreign nation. In the same way, Jesus left His home in heaven and came to earth. In doing this Jesus shows Himself to be **"greater than Jonah"**: *Jonah didn't so love Nineveh that he gave them God. God so loved Nineveh that he gave them Jonah.* So with Jesus: **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"** (**John 3:16**).

3. *Second, look at the proclamation Jonah made.* On its face, Jonah's proclamation to Nineveh was an unqualified message of judgment. In **Jonah 3:4** all Jonah said was, **"Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."** But when Jesus began His public ministry, He did not just by proclaim judgment like Jonah. Instead, He urged repentance and proclaimed God's grace and salvation: **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"** (**Mark 1:15**). Because Jesus is **"greater than Jonah"**—because He is both fully God and fully man—Jesus alone can offer both grace and new life—or judgment—based on one's acceptance or rejection of Him. The choice is before us. *What are you going to do about Jesus?*

4. *Third, in Matt 12, which is a parallel account to our Luke 11 passage, Jesus, in speaking about the "sign of the prophet Jonah" says: "for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* There, Jesus is clearly referring to His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is God's great sign to the world. No one else has every resurrected from the dead like Jesus. In His resurrection Jesus proves Himself **"greater than Jonah"**: Jesus suffered real, physical death and was truly resurrected to life again, from which He will never die. Jesus is alive right now like He was 2000 years ago.

○ This should speak to us even more than it did to the people Jesus was talking to.

WHY? B/c when Jesus was speaking, He had not yet been killed and resurrected from the dead. So when He spoke those words, what He meant was not as clear to those people as it is to us today.

○ The issue of the resurrection is, in my opinion, the most important factual or historical issue of all, that everybody has to wrestle with. B/c throughout His life, Jesus was basically saying: "I AM GOD, who has b/c a man. I'm not like Muhammad, and I'm not like Buddha, or like any New Age guru. And I will prove it by doing something that they didn't do and can't do: I will rise from the dead."

○ Either He did, or He didn't. If He didn't, He's just like anyone else. Even the Apostle Paul says, in **1 Cor 15:14**, **"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain."** IOW, believe whatever you want; do whatever you want; it won't have any eternal consequences.

○ BUT, if Jesus DID rise from the dead, that validates WHO He is (namely, God who became a man), and validates everything He said. And THAT means that whether or not we believe in Him, are united with Him, and have Him as the person around whom our life revolves, DOES matter. It IS a matter of life and death. You can gamble if you want to—but you're betting your LIFE that He's wrong.

○ But you don't have to do that. If you have questions, there are lots of good books and other resources that talk about the solid, historical evidence that demonstrates that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead, just as He said He would. Let me just list 3 of them: Josh McDowell's book The Resurrection Factor (which concentrates on the resurrection); another book of McDowell's called Evidence That Demands a Verdict; and, at a somewhat more university level, J. P. Moreland's Scaling the Secular City. If you have questions about this, *do something*. There ARE reasonable answers to your questions. B/c of the claims Jesus makes—which no one else has ever made with any credibility—the stakes are too high to do nothing. But remember this: to do nothing IS to do something—to do nothing amounts to rejecting Jesus; it is to choose death, not life.

That's what Jesus says about Himself. Now let us look at what Jesus says about "this generation."

II. By “this generation,” Jesus was talking about the generation of people that was then in existence. Nevertheless, everything Jesus said applies equally to us today and to every other generation, because HE is still the same; WE are still the same; and the ISSUES are still the same. So what does He say:

- In v.29 He says that “it is a wicked generation, b/c it seeks for a sign.” Why is that bad? He indicates that it is bad for 2 reasons:

**A. First, Jesus equates seeking after a sign with hypocrisy and a lack of seriousness.** What do I mean? Jesus was saying that the people’s hearts were hard. Regardless of what He did, they were not willing to change their lives, and submit to Him as Lord and God. They wanted themselves first, not the One who created them and sustains them every moment of their lives.

1. *You want a sign?* In **Luke 10** Jesus did many miracles in the towns of Choroazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Did they repent of their sins? Did they turn from their self-centered ways? NO. So Jesus said, **“Woe to you Chorazin. Woe to you Bethsaida. For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago.”**

2. *You want a sign?* Earlier in **Luke 11**, Jesus had cast a demon out of a man and made a mute man speak. Did people start falling down and worshiping Jesus and saying “This is the Messiah for whom we have been praying for so long?” NO. They said in **Luke 11:15**, **“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.”** So Jesus told them, in the part of **Luke 11** *just before our passage today*, “It’s not possible that I cast out demons by the prince of demons,” and He explained why. So did the people THEN say, “Now we believe!” Not at all.

3. *You want a sign?* Even while He was on the cross, people were saying to Him **“come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:32)**. Jesus didn’t come down from the cross, but He did something even more remarkable—indeed, miraculous. He rose from the dead.

Paul tells us in **1 Cor 15** that Jesus made multiple appearances after He rose from the dead, to all kinds of people, including to >500 people at one time. And Paul says, **“most of those people are still alive.”** IOW, he’s saying, “If you don’t believe me, go ask them—they were there, they’re not stupid, they are eyewitnesses, they know.”

Did everyone then believe? NO. It was just as Jesus had said in **Luke 16**: **“If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.”** IOW, Jesus was saying: “My coming into the world has been prophesied and predicted. You have had it in black & white in the Bible and read about it your entire lives. Now I have come when and where the prophets said. I am fulfilling what the prophets said Messiah would do. And I will validate who I am by rising from the dead. And yet you do not believe.” Isn’t that like many people today? Is it, perhaps, like some of you?

**B. Which leads to the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing Jesus says about this generation: Just as Jesus compared Himself to 2 earlier individuals (Solomon & Jonah) and said that He was greater than they were, so He compares this generation to 2 earlier generations (namely, the Queen of the South in Solomon’s day, and Nineveh in Jonah’s day), but says that this generation is worse than they were. WHY?**

1. *The “Queen of the South” is also known as the “Queen of Sheba” in 1Kgs 10.* What Jesus is saying is that when the Queen of Sheba heard how wise Solomon was, she travelled 100s of miles to find out, “Is it true.” When she discovered that it WAS true, she said [READ **1 KGS 10:6-7, 9**] You see, she blessed, not just Solomon, but THE LORD. What she saw and heard in Solomon pointed her toward the Lord. She acted on what she saw.

2. *The same is true with the Ninevites.* All Jonah said to them was, **“Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”** What did the Ninevites do? Did they say, “He’s crazy,” or, “Show us some sign”? NO, THEY REPENTED. They knew they couldn’t save themselves, so they turned to God. And God spared the city.

3. *What Jesus was saying to the people in Luke 11—and what He is saying to us—Is this:* “All the Queen of Sheba and Nineveh had were flawed human beings before them—yet they saw the truth in what they had and acted on it. Now, God Himself has come to earth. He has performed miracles before you. He has fed you and healed you and taught you with compassion, power, and love that no one else has ever demonstrated. And He validates who He is and everything He says by rising from the dead.”

He calls you to Himself—it is a matter of life and death. *He* offers you life. What do you do? *What do you do about Jesus?* Do you turn from your self-centered ways? Do you turn to Him as the center of your life? If your answer is “No,” like the people in **Luke 11**, then Jesus is saying the fact that you don’t turn to Him but persist in your unbelief shows that, with all you have been given, you have proven yourself to be not even as good as the pagan, cruel, godless Ninevites.” That is the message of this passage.

### III. So what do we do?

**A. Turn to Jesus as the Lord of your life.** If God has been tugging on you, then take the step. You can say to Him right now in your heart: “Lord, I know I have been going my own way for all my life. It’s not working. Please forgive me. From right now, I’m going to live for You. Please come into my life as my Lord. I give you control over all aspects of my life: my money, my time, my actions, my relationships. I have faith in You that, by the blood of Jesus that He shed on the cross, You have changed my heart and will change my life. For it is by Jesus that I pray, and believe, and thank you for giving me new life.”

1. *If you do that, tell someone.* Get connected with this fellowship of believers or some other church where Christ is proclaimed and His Word is taught, b/c **Rom 10:9** tells us: **“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.”**

**B. If you already have Jesus as your Lord, then we need to show it by how we live our lives.** Jesus knows the truth. He knows God exists, because He is God come to earth. He knows there is eternal life—heaven and hell. And He knows that where we will spend our eternity is based on our commitment—or lack of commitment—to Him. But our commitment to Jesus will be revealed in how we live our lives. Jesus is not fooled by lip-service. So He came and showed us how to live. How did Jesus live? Since He knows that God is love, His whole life was not about getting as much as He could for Himself, but was a life of love, compassion, and sacrifice for others. That’s how we are to live.

There may be something right now in your own life that God is speaking to you about. Something you know you need to change b/c it’s demonstrating that Jesus really is NOT your Lord. Make that change. By giving us the HS when we believe, He gives us the ability to change. We prove the reality and sincerity of our faith by how we live.

**C. If you have Jesus as your Lord, then we need to tell others about Him.** Why? *But b/c having Jesus or not having Jesus as the Lord of our life is the dif. btw. life and death.* It’s not like being a Republican or Democrat or drinking coffee or tea. If we love people they need at least to hear, because outside of Jesus, there is no hope at all. Form relationships with people. As they see you living out your life in Christ, you will have the opportunities to tell them about why you have the peace, joy, love, and stability that they lack.

**D. Why is this so vital?** B/c as Jesus said **2X** in this passage there will be a judgment. As the book of **Heb 9:27** says, **“It is appointed for all men to die once and after this comes judgment.”**

1. In today’s passage Jesus says **“the Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment, and will condemn them.”** He also says the men of Nineveh **“will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented”** “*Rise up*” and “*Stand up*” are verbs from which the main Greek words for “resurrection” come. The scene Jesus is painting is this: the Queen of the South, the Ninevites, and the people of Jesus’ own day will all be resurrected together for the judgment, even though they lived hundreds of years and hundreds of miles apart. Since the judgment involves people from hundreds of years and hundreds of miles apart, you can bet it includes us, too. And the redeemed play a part in the judgment of the unredeemed.

2. *So what part will you play?* Will you stand along side the Queen of the South and the Ninevites who repented? Or will you stand with “this generation” that did not repent? Where and how you spend your eternity depends on the answer to that question.

**CONCL:** Whether you are a Republican or a Democrat or drink coffee or tea makes some difference for our lives now. But it doesn’t have ANY eternal consequences. With most of the things people believe we can have different views, and “agree to disagree,” and in the long run it won’t matter at all.

- But what we do about Jesus is different from all those other things. What we do about Him DOES have eternal consequences.
- And in today’s passage, Jesus is confronting us with that very fact. Jesus tells us 2X here that judgment day is coming. And ultimately, that judgment will not be based on how many good vs. bad deeds we have done, but on our relationship—or lack of relationship—with Jesus.
- If you already are united with Jesus, demonstrate the sincerity and seriousness of your faith by how you live. If you are not united with Jesus, turn to Him. If you are not sure, and have questions, check them out—get answers. They are there. And then turn to Him. “What are you going to do about Jesus?” *Jesus’ claims about Himself confront us with stakes that are too high to do nothing about Him.*
- When Jesus is the center of your life, you will never regret it.