

**Armagh Baptist Church**  
**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2010 – 11:00am**  
**'One Greater than Jonah is here: Jesus!'**  
**Matthew 12:1-8, 38-50**

**Introduction**

It was Mohammed Ali who used to boast "*I am the Greatest!*"

Today he is a pitiful sight, because his mind and body are wrecked by the effects of years of boxing – How the mighty have fallen!

It doesn't matter who we talk about, human greatness is a very temporary thing. But when we come to talk about Jesus – His is True Greatness – because his is lasting greatness. This morning we're going to look at a phrase which occurs three times in Matthew ch.12.

Here it is said that Jesus is Greater than 3 things in the O.T.:

- The Temple, Jonah & Solomon.

Having just finished our series on Jonah last Sunday night, I thought this would be appropriate as a N.T. follow-up this morning.

There were three very important people in Old Testament public life:

The Prophet, The Priest, and The King.

The Prophet brought God's Word to the people.

The Priest offered sacrifices to God for the sins of the people, and

The King was supposed to maintain the rule of God among His People.

However if you know your Old Testament you will know that the prophets, the priests and the kings of Old Testament times were quite a mixed bag: they were good, bad and indifferent. Many failed to live up to their office!

But Jesus came to fulfil the Old Testament Religion, and in this chapter we see that He did that by becoming the Greatest Prophet, the Greatest Priest and the Greatest King that not only Israel, but this world, has ever known.

**1. ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE IS HERE (vs.1-8)**

Verse 6 comes in the middle of a passage all about Sabbath keeping (1-8).

What this verse is really saying is that Jesus is greater than all the O.T.

Priests. This is symbolised by reference to "The Temple" - The O.T. priestly system. The Temple was central to O.T. worship and religion.

**- It dominated Jewish Life and Worship.**

The Jews revered it. It dominated Jerusalem's skyline.

Only the Wailing Wall remains today – and Orthodox Jews still treasure it greatly. Everything revolved around the Temple building. Its ceremonies and rituals were the heart of the Jewish Faith.

They still trusted in it even after they rejected Jesus and had him crucified. Until in A.D.70, the Romans over-ran it, desecrated it, and burned it.

But the reality was, it was no longer needed!

- '**One Greater than the Temple is here**' (v.6) – It was Jesus!

But the problem was the Jews were so taken up with their Building and its weekly rituals that they missed seeing their need of Jesus as their Saviour.

Sadly it can still be the same today. People can be so taken up with attending a building for worship, and going through all its rituals and ceremonies, that they lose sight of what really matters – What matters is meeting and worshipping Jesus as your own personal Lord and Saviour!

**- Jesus fulfils all that the Temple symbolised (Heb.9:22-10:18).**

If the Temple had continued to exist, it would only have perpetuated those sacrifices for sin. But they weren't needed anymore!

Jesus had offered the final, perfect, acceptable sacrifice Himself!

Priests making sacrifices at an altar for the sins of the people are no longer needed! But sadly some churches today still talk about priests, and still claim to offer perpetual sacrifices on altars to

obtain forgiveness for people's sins! They *claim* to trust in Christ's sacrifice for sin on the cross, but they go on repeating it week after week in their churches 2000 years later! Jesus has fulfilled it all!

**- The Temple was the symbol of God's presence among His People.**

But in Jesus, God had come to be present among His People – He was Immanuel – '*God with us*' (Matt.1:23)

And since Jesus has returned to Heaven, God is now present with His People by His Holy Spirit. (John 14:15-20).

And when we finally get to Heaven, it is interesting that there is no Temple there, because then God will dwell among His People forever. (Revelation 21:1-4, v.22).

So in every sense, '**One greater than the Temple is here**' – Jesus is our Great High Priest, who even at this moment is interceding for us in Heaven.

We can now come direct to God, through Jesus, so we have no need of any earthly mediator or priest. (Heb.10:19-25).

**2. ONE GREATER THAN JONAH IS HERE (vs.38-41)**

The Priest was an important figure in O.T. religious life, but the Prophet was just as important. It was his responsibility to be in touch with God, to bring God's message to the people. He could be consulted for God's guidance, so he was often looked to for that reason. Sometimes the only word he had from the Lord was one of judgement – but then he wasn't often listened to!

Jonah was such a prophet. As we have seen on recent Sunday nights, he was the prophet sent by God to Israel's neighbour and enemy – Assyria – whose capital city was Nineveh. He had a message of judgement for them:

*'In forty days time, God was going to destroy them for their wickedness.'*

The amazing thing was that as soon as Jonah had delivered his message, it met with an immediate response!

The King of Nineveh led his people in an act of national repentance; they responded to Jonah's message, and God spared them.

As we saw last Sunday night, that was more than Jonah could bear! He wanted them destroyed. He couldn't cope with the fact that God had spared them and not destroyed them. He went outside the city and sat down in a sulk, like a spoiled child, because God had spared them! By his reaction we see that he was far from a perfect prophet (Jonah ch.4).

But Jesus was. He brought God's Word perfectly to men. He in fact was the Living Word of God (Jn 1:1-3). He was God's final word to men (Heb.1:1-2).

Even Muslims accept that Jesus was a prophet, however they refuse to believe that He was *the last* of the Prophets – they believe that Mohammed, who lived some 600 years later was the last and greatest of the prophets, and so they revere him more than Jesus!

But Jesus wasn't just the last and greatest of the prophets, he was unique because He was also the very Son of God – sent into the world with God's final message for mankind.

#### **Notice vs.38-41:-**

· The Pharisees asked Jesus for a spectacular miracle or sign to prove who he was (v.38).

· But this was actually evidence of their own unbelief, stubbornness and wickedness (See Luke 16:31).

· In response to this request Jesus said that only *"The Sign of Jonah"* would be given to them (v.40). By that he meant that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so Jesus would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

In other words Jesus' last and greatest sign that He was God's Only Son, and the Messiah, would be His Death, Burial and Resurrection!

So here Jesus is drawing attention to his ministry as a prophet –

***"Now one Greater than Jonah is here!"*** (v.41)

**Think about it, Jesus was greater than Jonah:-**

\* **In terms of His Mission-Field** – Jesus came to seek the lost in the whole world, not just in one city. He had come to reach a world of sinners! (John 3:16).

\* **In terms of His Message** – Jonah's message was purely one of judgement. But Jesus' message is one of hope, forgiveness and salvation – through faith in His name and repentance from sin – it's a message of hope!

\* **In terms of His Sign** – Jonah's 3 days and 3 nights in a fish taught him great lessons and brought him to the point of repentance for his own sins. But Jesus death and resurrection brought salvation and repentance to a lost world of sinners, and defeated death itself as well! (John 10:10).

\* **In terms of His Harvest** – Jonah saw a city of 120,000 people repent. Jesus will ultimately see a great multitude that no man can number from every tribe and nation, repent and put their trust in Him! (Revelation 7:9).

Truly a Greater than Jonah is here – Jesus is the Greatest Prophet the world has ever known, because he was also the very Son of God!

### **3. ONE GREATER THAN SOLOMON IS HERE (v.42) (1 Kings 10:1-9)**

Jesus not only fulfilled the O.T. figure of a Priest and of a Prophet, but he also fulfilled the other important O.T. character – The King.

Jesus is the *"King of Kings and Lord of Lords!"*

We're told in v.42 that Jesus is Greater than Solomon.

He was greater as a King in terms of:-

· **The Extent of His Kingdom** – The Kingdom of Israel under Solomon reached to its greatest physical extent ever – From Riblah (N) to Elat (S). But Christ's Kingdom extends to "The Uttermost parts of the earth!" (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8, Revelation 7:9-15 and Philippians 2:9-11).

· **Those who will be in His Kingdom** -

Solomon's Kingdom was essentially a Jewish Kingdom.

The Queen of the South seems to have come to know the Living and True God through Solomon (1 Kings 10:6-10).

She was a Gentile, pagan, woman. She was an exception, but she was also a sign that one day, under King Jesus, God's Kingdom would be open for any individual to enter.

Christ's Kingdom is open to anyone who will trust in him alone as their Saviour – whatever background or former religion they come from.

(e.g. John 3:16 – whosoever!)

· **In terms of the wealth and wisdom of His Kingdom.**

According to 1 Kings 10:7 “The Half had never been told” to the Queen of Sheba of all the splendour of Solomon’s Kingdom. According to v.5 when she arrived “she was overwhelmed!” His wealth and wisdom was beyond her imagination! (v.7-9).

But what about Christ’s Kingdom? (See 1 Corinthians 2:1-10).

We can’t even begin to imagine what God has prepared for us. But these verses say that the Holy Spirit is a little bit of heaven in our hearts already! He can reveal something of it to us, but even then the half has never been told us, of what Heaven is really going to be like – Even if it was, we could never take it in!

**CONCLUSION**

So Jesus was certainly greater than all the Priests, greater than all the Prophets, and greater than all the Kings. But still the Jews and Pharisees of Jesus’ day wouldn’t accept Him as *their* Prophet, Priest and King.

The evidence was all there – they just didn’t want to see it!

The People of Jonah’s Day in Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba in Solomon’s Day would have put them to shame.

As Jesus said in vs.41-42 the people who responded in those days to much less revelation will rise up on the Day of Judgement to condemn the people of Jesus’ Day, and indeed the people of our own day, who have all the revelation they need, God’s final revelation, but have still not responded.

Have you accepted Jesus?

Have you accepted what He’s done for you?

- as Prophet – bringing you God’s final message,
- as Priest – bringing you God’s full forgiveness,
- and have you accepted His right to be King of your life? (Phil 2:11)

Does it show to others that your life is ruled by Christ? - In other words, Do you seek to discover His Will for your life, and then do it? (See Matthew 12 vs.46-50).