

hearts were far from him." Not all those who appear to men to honour Christ shall be saved; Matt. vii. 22. Though Jesus was daily working miracles, doing among them the works which never man did, giving hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, casting out devils, raising the dead, and curing all manner of diseases, yet obstinately shutting their eyes to all these, the Scribes and Pharisees would have from him a miracle of their own devising.

2. Our Saviour rejects their proposal.

They sought a sign, not for the confirmation of their faith, but as an excuse for remaining in unbelief. Similar requests, when made in the right spirit, had been granted Gideon. These Pharisees had in reality no wish to be convinced. They asked and received not, because they asked amiss; James iv. 3. Our Lord calls them a wicked generation—they killed the prophets, and stoned them which were sent unto them, Matt. xxiii. 37, and now they were persecuting the Lord of glory. He calls them an adulterous generation. The expression "adultery" is often used figuratively in Scripture for idolatry. Since the Babylonish captivity, the Jews had not been guilty of the sin of worshipping images; they professed to worship God, and to observe his ordinances. They had but the form of religion without the power. The love of God occupied not the chief place in their heart and affections, but the love of the world; Jno. v. 42. In the sight of God they were therefore idolaters. Our Saviour tells them that though they should not obtain the sign which they demanded, yet a sign should be given them—the sign of the prophet Jonas; ver. 39. The greatest of all the miracles of our Lord was his rising from the grave by his own power (John x. 18), on the third day. This was the complete demonstration of his Messiahship; Rom. i. 4.

3. Our Lord contrasts the position of the Jews in the final judgment, with that of the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba.

Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, our Saviour laboured among his own countrymen. Jonah wrought no miracle in proof of his mission—Jesus performed miracles innumerable; John xxi. 25. Jonah desired no good to the Ninevites, Jesus was continually holding forth the most heart-melting and persuasive invitations to repentance. Jonah was a mere man, Christ was God himself. Yet Jonah was received by the Ninevites, while Jesus was rejected by the Jews. The men of Nineveh improved their small privileges—the men of Jerusalem abused their great ones. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." And if the men of Nineveh will rise in judgment to condemn those Jews who continued in unbelief, shall they not much more condemn us who enjoy such great and innumerable privi-

leges, if we remain barren and unfruitful in the work of the Lord. The Queen of Sheba travelled far to hear the wisdom of Solomon—the Jews neglected the fountain of all wisdom. They contemned him who not only "spoke as never man spake," but had power to inspire others with wisdom, who of God is made wisdom unto all his people; 1 Cor. i. 30.

4. The lamentable condition into which their unbelief was bringing the impenitent Jews.

Since the Babylonish captivity the Jews had renounced the worship of images, the sin to which they had formerly been so prone; and they had enjoyed many advantages, and now the promised and long-expected Messiah dwelt amongst them. They heard his teaching and saw his miracles. But their hearts continued empty; ver. 44. Christ had not been received as an inmate there. Evil spirits, therefore, entered in and usurped Christ's throne. Under these very privileges, which should have tended to their eternal peace, the unbelieving Jews waxed worse and worse. And as it was with the Jews as a nation, so is it with each individual. The longer he turns a deaf ear to the gospel, all the worse, all the more dangerous will be his condition; see Heb. vi. 7, 8. This should be an incentive to every Christless soul to flee immediately to Jesus; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Learn—1st. The natural unbelief of man.—Isa. liii. 1; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2nd. That our sins are more or less heinous according to the privileges we enjoy.—Matt. x. 15; John ii. 19; xv. 22.

3rd. The great danger of continuing in a state of impenitence.—Hos. iv. 17; Jbo. ix. 41.

PAUL would not take to himself any portion of praise on account of the labours and success of others. He spoke only of the success which Christ had given him in his own work. This shows, that although all success is of God, yet that it is an honour and a ground of praise to be successful in Christ's work. Many have supposed that it is wrong to give any praise to the Lord's servants, on account of their labours, diligence, and success in his service. They have judged that this encourages a spirit of self-righteousness and of pride. But this wisdom is not from God. It is human wisdom, and tends to damp exertion in the service of Jesus Christ. All our success is in Christ Jesus, as well as our ability and disposition to labour. Yet God has given praise to his servants for their diligence and success in his work. It is a singular refinement to blame what God approves.

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