

The Empty Tomb (Matthew 28:1-15)

Sunday, April 16th, 2023

Let's read the text (Matthew 28:1-15)!

- Rewind to the Sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-42)

Jesus said that just 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!

Guiding Principle for Old Testament Allegory:

1. Christ is the key to interpreting Scripture. All things in the Old Testament point forward to the cross. All things in the New Testament point back to the cross. We can call this the **Christocentric Metanarrative**.
 - a. We are not using Christ as some lens that is outside and an imposition on the text.
 - b. We aren't interpreting the Old Testament without the context of what Jesus has accomplished.
 - i. Christ has the power to put that meaning within the text. And this is why...
 - c. The cross reaches back into history and fulfills the meaning of Scripture because Christ has conquered sin, death, and the devil.
 - i. Don't take my word for it. Let's listen to what Jesus has to say! John 5:39, 46
 - ii. So when we find Jesus in the Old Testament and connections between stories, this is not something that us the reader is placing into or on top of the text. This is something that is built into the text, like an archaeologist we are merely digging them up. Jesus, the Word, has put these connections in the Bible for us to find so that it may deepen our faith and understanding.

Let's read the text (Jonah 1-2)!

4 Questions to Consider When Making Connections within the Christocentric

Metanarrative:

1. Am I interpreting the allegory in the right direction (Tomb → Belly of the Fish → you)?
2. Is this connection helpful and edifying for Christian teaching by pointing me to Jesus?
3. Does this connection illuminate the literal sense of the text?
4. Does this connection avoid twisting Scripture for the devil's purposes?

Compare Jonah 1-2 to Matthew 28:1-5. What are the allegorical connections (i.e. similarities)? The first connection should come easy. Later connections may be harder, but this is good because we are training our brains to work in a new way when we interact with Scripture.

Belly of the Great Fish	Jesus' Tomb
Jonah sacrifices himself to save the crew	Jesus sacrifices Himself to save the whole world
Fish as judgement to fish as savior	Death to life
Jonah "dies" to his disobedience and is vomited out as a new man	Jesus dies and is resurrected
Jonah goes down to Sheol	Jesus descends to Hell

Let's see what Dr. Reed Lessing has to say on the topic!

Lessing R. (2007). Dying to Live: God's Judgment of Jonah, Jesus, and the Baptized. *Concordia Journal*, 33(1), 9–25.

Other things to note regarding the empty tomb...

Lessing R. (2007). Dying to Live: God's Judgment of Jonah, Jesus, and the Baptized. *Concordia Journal*, 33(1), 9–25.

Conclusion

Jonah's descent into Sheol and subsequent ingestion by the fish are correlated to Christ's death when the Savior invokes the phrase "the sign of Jonah." Likewise, Jonah's regurgitation on the third day is parallel to Christ's resurrection. This connection has double significance. First, it provides an explicit Christological interpretation of Jonah chapter two. The language of ingestion and regurgitation becomes the language of Christ's death and resurrection. Second, it provides hope for the baptized, in that just as Jonah was alive on the dry ground after three days and three nights, likewise all the baptized will undergo a much more glorious resurrection on the Last Day. Luther writes:

Christ says: "If you believe in me, death shall not devour you either. Even if death should hold you for three days or so, as he detained me for three days in the earth and Jonah for three days in the belly of the whale, he shall nonetheless spew you out again."?

Luther goes on to write, "In this way death has become the door to life for us: disgrace has become the elevation to glory; condemnation and hell, the door to salvation." Jonah and Jesus had to go through judgment, condemnation, and death before they experienced new life. This is the same order of events for the baptized. We daily are dying to live.

Luther one more time-writes of Jonah's fish: "It vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. In this way death and sin are an opportunity for life and righteousness for the saints; shame becomes an opportunity for glory."⁹ Is there any more profound theology than this? Life comes only from death; Law must precede Gospel; there is no salvation without damnation. Lutheran theology holds these paradoxes together as a "both/and" and never as an "either/or." And to think this grand dialectical doctrine is located in of all places the book of Jonah!