

From Matthew 12:41, can we say that, although the evidence that has been given to mankind is not altogether even, everyone has sufficient evidence so Christ can judge those who do not know God?

The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:41)

Amen! It is an interesting thing to me that our blessed Lord himself talked of this matter of evidence. He is going to be the judge at the final judgment, and he talked to the people of Capernaum about this matter. When the judgment happens and the people of Capernaum are brought before Christ the judge, witnesses will be called— ‘The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with the men of this generation’ (Matthew 12:41). In that context the verb ‘stand up’ is a semi-technical term. It’s a term you would use to describe the goings on in a law court when a man would stand accused, and the counsel for prosecution would stand up and deliver the accusation. The counsel for the defence would also stand up, and then witnesses would be called, and they would stand up and say their bit.

In the final judgment the men of Nineveh will stand up. What for? Because they will be called upon as witnesses. To establish what? Before the people of Capernaum are finally condemned the question will be raised: Did they have enough evidence to secure their faith if they had been willing to believe?

On what evidence did the men of Nineveh repent? They had the preaching of Jonah. He was not a spectacularly good prophet: he had to be dug out of the belly of a whale to give his evidence at all. But he did eventually go, and they repented, even on that slight evidence of a curious miracle of being vomited up by a whale! ‘I tell you that a greater than Jonah is here’, said Christ. The men of Nineveh repented on the grounds of comparatively small evidence. That shows that the men of Capernaum who had the Son of God right on their doorstep and heard him preach many times, had enough evidence that, if they had accepted it, they could have been saved.

According to the authority of him who is to be the final Judge, that question of how much evidence people had will be an issue in the courtroom of that final judgment. The judge will make sure that they had enough evidence on which they could have been saved, and only when it is shown that they rejected that evidence will they be condemned.

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