

# **Matthew 12 - Rejection of the Kingdom by the Leaders of Israel; Jesus Challenges Sabbath Law; Historic Background on Sabbath Day Controversies; Messianic Miracle #2 (Casting Out Dumb Demon)**

## **II. Rejection of the King (Matt 11:1—12:50)**

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## Matthew 12

(3) Unbelief of the Pharisees (12:1-50)

(A) Pharisees reject Christ (12:1-24)

(a) Provocation of the controversy (12:1-23)

(i) Sabbath controversies (12:1-14) (Cf. Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5)

(a) Eating (12:1-9)

1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of *grain* and eat.

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1 At that time, Jesus walked through the grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples became hungry and began picking heads of grain to eat.

1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

- The heavy yoke of Pharisaic tradition made Israelites weary and heavy laden (Cf. 11:28-30)

— The purpose of the Sabbath was to provide rest, which Jesus said those who took His yoke would find. It was not to provide a burden, which the Pharisees had made it by their traditions

2 Now when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath!"

2 But when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

2 When the Pharisees saw this, they told him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

2 But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

- The Pharisees, by charging the disciples by plucking grain on the Sabbath, which was considering "working," do what they have not done to this point: engage Jesus in direct debate.

— The Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for doing what was unlawful under Pharisaic tradition, mainly "reaping" on the Sabbath

— The *Mishnah* listed 39 categories of activity that qualified as work on the Sabbath. It included this "crime" among those most heinous, for which a man was to be stoned.

- The disciples were not stealing: There were laws under which strangers passing by could pick the grain that they needed for hunger (Deut 23:25)

- Thus, the disciples' ostensible crime was not that they were stealing the grain, but rather that they were doing this on the Sabbath day
- The Law of gleaning which comes into play in the Book of Ruth also plays an important role here

Matthew recorded that Pharisaic opposition began when Jesus forgave sins (9:1-8), increased when Jesus associated with tax collectors and sinners (Cf. 9:9-13), and now boiled over because Jesus did not observe the Pharisees' legalistic traditions.

3 But He said to them, **"Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions—**

3 But He said to them, **"Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,**

3 But he told them, **"Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?**

**3** But he said unto them, **Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him;**

- Jesus responded to the Pharisees' question with another, which was common rabbinic style (Cf. v5; 19:4; 21:16,42; 22:31)

- The record of the incident involving David is found in 1 Sam 21:1-6; the law governing the use of consecrated bread is in Ex 25:30; Lev 24:5-9

4 how he entered the **house of God**, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

4 How is it that he went into the house of God and ate the Bread of the Presence, which was not lawful for him and his companions to eat but was reserved for the priests?

4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

- "...house of God" - the tabernacle at Nob

- The event to which Jesus referred may have occurred on the Sabbath, but that is not confirmed. However, that is inconsequential to the argument, as is the fact that David ate after lying to the priests.

— Jesus drew this illustration from a time in David's life when Israel's leadership was rejecting him. Jesus is now experiencing similar rejection.

Jesus pointed out that David violated Pharisaic Law (not Mosaic Law) when he ate the showbread. Moses never said that a Levite could not give the showbread to a non-Levite. Pharisaic Law, however, did say that. In the case of the Pharisees, they could not claim that David lived before the Oral Law, because in their theology, God gave the Oral Law to Moses; therefore, it preceded the time of David. So David himself broke Pharisaic Law, yet they (nor the OT) never condemned David. Thus, the Pharisees shouldn't either.

Since the OT set aside a regulation in the Law for David and his men in the sense that it did not condemn them for what they did (2 Chr 30:18-20), could not Jesus set aside a Pharisaic law, that had no basis in the OT, for Himself and His men? By arguing this way, Jesus was claiming that he was at least as important as David was.

5 Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath, and yet are innocent?

5 Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?

5 Or haven't you read in the Law that on every Sabbath the priests in the Temple violate the Sabbath and yet are innocent?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

- Jesus' second argument came from Num 28:9-10: Sabbath rest did not apply in every situation; for instance, the priests in the Temple. Using the Pharisaic standard, the priests broke the Sabbath every week by changing the consecrated bread and offering the burnt offerings the Law specified for that day.

— They had to work harder on the Sabbath than a normal day. There were daily sacrifices and rituals, but on the Sabbath all sacrifices were doubled. There were special rituals performed only on the Sabbath.

— However, the Law considered the priests guiltless ("innocent") for doing this "work" on the Sabbath

— This shows that the Law of Moses allowed, and even commanded, certain works to be done on the Sabbath

— Even the Pharisees allowed certain works on the Sabbath: midwifery, circumcision, and the preparation of a corpse.

6 But I say to you that **something greater than the temple** is here.

6 But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.

6 But I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here!

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is **one greater than the temple**.

- "...something greater than the Temple" - this is important because it comes up in His trial, and is what they ultimately accuse Him of
- Jesus is saying that He is greater than the Temple. If the Temple allowed certain works to be done on the Sabbath, so could He allow certain works without breaking the Sabbath.
- "something" - Jesus used the neuter "something" [see ISV] to refer to His authority; Jesus shared the authority of the temple
- "greater" - what is greater than the temple as a symbol of authority is Jesus, a superior authority
- Jesus' argument is that the temple was greater than the Sabbath. However, now something greater than the temple was there, namely Messiah, and specifically, His authority. Consequently, Messiah takes precedence over the Sabbath
- As the temple's authority shielded the priests from guilt, Jesus' authority shielded His disciples from guilt.

7 But if you had known what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, RATHER THAN SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

7 But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

7 If you had known what 'I want mercy and not sacrifice' means, you would not have condemned the innocent,

7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

- Quoting Hosea 6:6...works of necessity, such as eating, and works of mercy, such as healing, were always allowed on the Sabbath.
- Jesus again criticized the Pharisees for failing to understand the Scriptures (Cf. v3), and He again quotes from Hosea 6:6 (Cf. 9:13)
- Previously, Jesus cited this verse to show the Pharisees that they failed to recognize their own need. Now He used it to show them that they failed to recognize Him.
- The Jews of Hosea's day relied on mere ritual to satisfy God; the Pharisees were doing the same thing

8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

8 for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

- Jesus' authority was greater than the authority God granted the Sabbath to have over His people

- As Lord of the Sabbath, He could allow what the Pharisees disallowed, and He could disallow what they allowed. As long as He did not violate the Law of Moses Himself, they had no grounds for any accusation against Him (Mark 2:28).
- He abolished its observance when He terminated the entire Mosaic Code, even as the temple effectively abolished it for the priests within the Mosaic system.

This was the first of seven incidents recorded in the Gospels in which Jesus came into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders over Sabbath observance. The chart below lists them in probably chronological order:

<b>SABBATH CONTROVERSIES</b>				
<b>Event</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
The disciples plucked ears of grain in Galilee.	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
Jesus healed a paralytic at the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem.				5:1-18
Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in Capernaum.	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus referred to the Jews circumcising on the Sabbath.				7:22-23
Jesus healed a man born blind in Jerusalem.				9:1-34
Jesus healed a woman bent over in Judea.			13:10-17	
Jesus healed a man with dropsy in Perea.			14:1-6	

### **Seven Healings on the Sabbath**

1. Demoniac, in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-27)
2. Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)
3. Impotent Man (John 5:1-9)
4. Man with withered hand (Mark 3:1-6; Matt 12:8-14)
5. Woman bowed together (Luke 13:10-17)
6. Man with Dropsy (Luke 14:1-6)
7. Man born blind (John 9:1-14)

Not all healings were on the Sabbath (Cf. Mark 1:32). In all of these instances, Jesus showed that He placed human need above mere external ceremonial observance of the Sabbath.

### **Historical Background on the Sabbath Day Controversies**

To understand the controversial issues between Jesus and the Pharisees, it is necessary to look at the historical background Pharisaic Judaism.

When the Jewish people returned from the Babylonian Captivity, the spiritual leaders recognized that the reason for the captivity had been disobedience to the Mosaic Law. Ezra began a school called the School of the Sopherim, or the School of the Scribes. They went through each of the 613 commandments God gave to Moses and expounded them to the Jewish people. Their thinking was that, by giving them a clear knowledge of what the Law was and how to keep it, they would not bring on another divine discipline like the Babylonian Captivity.

When the first generation of the Sopherim passed away, the second generation took the task more seriously. The second generation said, "It is not enough for us to expound the Law; we must build a fence around the Law." The fence they would build around the Law would consist of new rules and regulations logically derived from the original 613 commandments. The principle they used was: a sopher may disagree with a sopher, but he may not disagree with the Torah, which was sacrosanct. Therefore, there was no basis for denying the validity of that Law. In making these new rules and regulations, they could disagree among themselves until they reached a decision by majority vote. Once a decision was reached, it became mandatory for all Jews everywhere in the world to follow. This process of building a fence around the Law began around 450 BC and finally ended in 30 BC. Normally, it passed from rabbi to rabbi. The Sopherim is said to have lasted from Ezra the Scribe to that of Hillel, at which point it came to an end. Then came a second school of rabbis called the Tannaim, meaning "teachers." The Tannaim looked upon the work of the Sopherim and declared, "There are still too many holes in this fence." They continued the process for a period of 250 years, from 30 BC until 220 AD. However, the principle of operation changed. The new principle was: a tanna may disagree with a tanna, but he may not disagree with a sopher. This meant that from 30 BC all the thousands of rules and regulations passed down by the Sopherim became sacrosanct and of equal validity with Scripture.

In order to validate to the Jewish audience why the laws of the Sopherim were equal to the laws of Moses, they came up with a teaching that all Orthodox Jews believe and teach to this very day. Their teaching was that what really happened on Mount Sinai was that God gave Moses two laws: the Written Law and the Oral Law. The first law is called the Written Law because it contains the 613 commandments that Moses actually penned in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The second law is called the Oral Law because Moses did not write down those commandments; he memorized them all. By memory, they were passed down to Joshua, who then passed them down to the Judges, who then passed them down to the Prophets, who then passed them down to the Sopherim. So the Sopherim did not really innovate all these rules and regulations; they got

them from the Prophets who got them from the Judges, who got them from Joshua, who got them from Moses, who got them from God. Indeed, from about 450 BC until 220 AD, these rules were never written down. Key rabbis and scribes had them memorized, and thousands and thousands of laws were kept strictly on the basis of memory. They were not written down for about six centuries. By 220 AD, fewer and fewer people were around to memorize all these laws, so they finally wrote them all down at the order of Judah Ha-Nasi, the patriarch in the Land. This ended the period of the Tannaim.

The work of the Sopherim and the Tannaim together is now called the *Mishnah*. It is the *Mishnah* that became the cause of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisaic concept of the Messiah was that He would be a Pharisee; He would be in submission to the laws of the *Mishnah*; in fact, He would join them in the work of making new laws to plug up the holes in the fence. A Messiah who was not a Pharisee under the *Mishnah*'s authority could not possibly be the true Messiah. Any time the terms Mishnaic Law, Pharisaic Law, Rabbinic Law, or Oral Law are used, they refer to the body of material now known as the *Mishnah*.

The Sabbath had become a major observance in Pharisaic Judaism, to the point that it was personified as the Bride of Israel and as Jehovah's Queen. When the question was raised, "Why did God create Israel?" the answer was, "God made Israel to honor the Sabbath." Therefore, Israel was made for the Sabbath. While the Messiah and the Pharisees debated over the authority of the *Mishnah* in general, one specific area of debate was on the proper way of observing the Sabbath.

- 9 Departing from there, He went into their synagogue.
- 9 Departing from there, He went into their synagogue.
- 9 Moving on from there, Jesus went into their synagogue.
- 9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

(b) Healing (12:10-14) (Cf. Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11)

10 And a man was *there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might bring charges against Him.

10 And a man was *there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him.

10 Suddenly, a man with a paralyzed hand appeared. The people asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on Sabbath days, intending to accuse him of doing something wrong.

10 And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

- The Pharisees believed it was permissible to give medical assistance on the Sabbath only if a sick person's life was in danger

11 But He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?

11 And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?

11 But he asked them, "Is there a man among you who, if he had one sheep and it fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, wouldn't take hold of it and pull it out?

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out?

- Jesus supposed that the Pharisees would indeed lift out a trapped sheep

— Sheep were not pets, they were an economic unit. If one waited to save it until after the Sabbath it may die or be stolen, so it is practical to get it out.

— It is one thing to ordain the Sabbath so it has reverence and respect, but it is another to ignore the pragmatics of a situation

— This shows that even they believed that it was permitted to do good on the Sabbath

12 How much more valuable then is a person than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

12 How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

12 How much more is a human being worth than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on Sabbath days."

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

- This is the third time in Matthew that Jesus argued for the superiority of human life over animal life (Cf. 6:26; 10:31)

- Neither the sheep in the illustration, nor the man in the synagogue, was in mortal danger. Jesus cut through the Pharisaic distinctions about how much help one could give, to the more basic issue of doing good.

13 Then He \*said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

13 Then He \*said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

13 Then he told the man, "Hold out your hand." He held it out and it became normal, as healthy as his other hand.

13 Then saith he to the man, **Stretch forth thine hand.** And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

- Jesus again healed simply with His words (9:1-8), confirming the power of His Word
- The miracle again confirmed Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath (v8) and His authority to forgive sins (9:1-8).
- Matthew does not mention the healed man's faith

The lesson of v1-13 is that not only should human need take precedence over ritual worship (v1-8), but human welfare should also take precedence over ritual worship (v9-13).

### **Pharisees Plan to Destroy Christ (Cf. Mark 3:6; Luke 6:11)**

14 But the Pharisees went out and **conspired** against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

14 The Pharisees, however, went out and plotted against Jesus to kill him.

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

- "...conspired" - *sumboulion elabon*, plotted; means the Pharisees made a definite decision. The phrase means to come to a conclusion, not to deliberate whether or not.

#### **(ii) Christ's identity (12:15-21) (Cf. Mark 3:7-12)**

15 But Jesus, aware of **this**, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all,

15 But Jesus, aware of *this*, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all,

15 When Jesus became aware of this, he left that place. Many crowds followed him, and he healed all of them,

15 But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

- "...*this*" - the fact that the Pharisees planned to kill Him

— Jesus withdrew, as it was before His time to go to the Cross had arrived (Cf. 4:12; 14:13; 15:21). He had instructed His disciples to do the same (10:11-14,23-24). He withdrew specifically to avoid open conflict with the Pharisees.

— Jesus' pattern of ministry until His time had come was opposition, withdrawal and continued ministry; repeat

16 and warned them not to tell who He was.

16 and warned them not to tell who He was.

16 ordering them not to make him known.

16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

- Jesus extensive ministry continued (Cf. 4:23; 8:16; 9:35), as did His encouragements to those He healed to keep quiet about what had happened to them (Cf. 8:4; 9:30)

17 *This happened* so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled:

17 *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

17 This was to fulfill what was declared by "the prophet Isaiah when he said,

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

- Cf. Is 42:1-4

18 "BEHOLD, MY **SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN**; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL DELIGHTS; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE WILL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

18 "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

18 "Here is my Servant whom I have chosen, whom I love, and with whom I am pleased! I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to unbelievers.

18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

- Verses 18-21 are quoted from Is 42:1-4, a passage that presented Jesus as the Son of God, the Son of David, and God Himself

- "...SERVANT" - *pais*, can mean servant or son; since the Hebrew word it translates means servant, this is how it's translated here

- "...WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN" - Matthew recorded "whom I have chosen" instead of "whom I uphold" from Is 42:1 evidently to stress God's election and love of Jesus

- Notice the Trinity present in this OT passage: the Father is speaking, about His "Servant," and God put the Spirit on Him

19 "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

19 "He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

19 He will not quarrel or shout, and no one will hear him shouting in the streets.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

- Isaiah predicted that Messiah would minister with gentleness and humility. He would not present Himself arrogantly or brashly.

20 "A BENT REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A DIMLY BURNING WICK HE WILL NOT EXTINGUISH, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

20 "A battered reed He will not break off, And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory.

20 He will not snap off a broken reed or snuff out a smoldering wick until he has brought justice through to victory.

20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

- The Servant would be very compassionate. He would not advance His own program by stepping on others.

— He would bring salvation, finally, to the harassed and helpless (9:36), as well as to the weary and burdened (11:28), without crushing the weak

— This concept of Messiah was much more gentle than the one Jesus' contemporaries held. They expected Him to crush all opposition.

— He would, however, bring justice to pass

- See [Dispensational Gaps](#) for a list of the 24 intervals in Scripture

21 "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

21 "And in His name the Gentiles will hope."

21 And in his name unbelievers will hope."

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

- In Matthew, "justice" (*krisis*, v20) means fast-approaching judgment, not simply justice as opposed to injustice. Justice in the kingdom is in view. Consequently, the Gentiles would put their trust in Him.

This OT quote from Is 42 helps us today to see how many of the characteristics of Jesus and His ministry, presented in Matthew, fit the pattern of messianic prophecy.

Is 42:1-4:

1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

2 "He will not cry out nor raise *His* voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street.

3 "A bent reed He will not break off And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.

4 "He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice on the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

(iii) Healing of the demoniac (12:22-23) (Cf. Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-26)

**Messianic Miracle #2: Casting Out a Dumb Demon**

**22** Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to Jesus, and He healed him so that the man who was unable to speak talked and could see.

**22** Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

**22** Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to talk was brought to him. Jesus healed him so that the man could speak and see.

**22** Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

- In Judaism, there were procedures for exorcism, but these procedures required the demon to identify himself

— If it was the type of demon (one that could identify himself) that had struck this guy dumb, there was no way to exorcize him. In this case, this exorcism was recognized as unusual

**23** And all the crowds were amazed and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

**23** All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

**23** All the crowds were amazed and kept saying, "This man isn't the Son of David, is he?"

**23** And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

- This was the key purpose of this miracle: to get them to see that He was indeed the Son of David

— After all, He was doing the very things they had been taught from childhood that only the Messiah would be able to do. The people raised this question because they recognized from the teachings of the rabbis that this was a messianic miracle.

— However, the public was not willing to judge His Person by themselves, but were looking to their religious leaders, the Pharisees, to come up with some kind of judgment concerning Him...either He is the Messiah or He is not.

— If it was deemed that He was not the Messiah, the Pharisees must offer an alternative explanation as to how He was able to perform these miracles, especially the miracles that were supposed to be unique to the Messiah alone (Messianic Miracles).

### **Messianic Miracles**

Prior to the Incarnation, the ancient rabbis separated miracles into two categories: miracles anyone would be able to perform if they were empowered by the Spirit of God, and miracles that only the Messiah would be able to perform ("Messianic Miracles"). Jesus performed miracles in both categories: general miracles and Messianic Miracles. Because of the rabbinic teaching that certain miracles would be reserved only for the Messiah to do,

whenever He performed a Messianic Miracle, it created a different type of reaction than when He performed other types of miracles.

- Messianic Miracle #1: Healing a Leper (Matt 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16)
- Messianic Miracle #2: Casting Out a Dumb Demon (Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-26)
- Messianic Miracle #3: Healing a Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)

### **Leadership Complex**

The Jewish masses have always tended to labor under what is called the "leadership complex." Whichever way the leaders went, the people were sure to follow. Consistently throughout the OT, when the king did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, the people followed. But when the king did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, the people also followed. Even in this day, when Jewish believers witness to their Jewish contacts, they consistently hear this same objection: "If Jesus really is the Messiah, then why is it that our rabbis do not believe in Him?" In NT times, because of the stranglehold that Pharisaic Judaism had upon the masses, this leadership complex was extremely strong. So, while the Jewish masses were willing to raise the question, "Is this not the Jewish Messiah?" they were not willing to make that decision for themselves. Instead, they looked to their leadership to make that decision for them.

### **Jewish Exorcism**

The act of casting out demons was not unusual in the Jewish world of that day. The Pharisees, rabbis, and their followers all had the ability to cast out demons. But casting out demons within the framework of Pharisaic Judaism required one to use a specific ritual, which included three stages. First, one had to establish communication with the demon. Second, the exorcist would then have to find out the demon's name. Third, he could, by the use of that name, cast out the demon. On other occasions, Jesus used the Jewish method (Luke 8:30).

There are occasions that Jesus used the Jewish methodology, as in Mark 5, when He, being confronted with a demoniac, asked the question, "What is your name?" The answer on that occasion was, "My name is Legion for we are many."

When demons speak, they use the vocal cords of the person under their control. However, in the case of the dumb demon, the Jewish approach to exorcism was to no avail because one couldn't find out the demon's name. So within the framework of Judaism, it was impossible to cast out a dumb demon. But Jewish theology taught that the Messiah, when He came, would be able to cast out even that kind of demon. The Jewish observation that dumb demons were different was validated by the Messiah in Mark 9:17-29, particularly in

v17,25,29. Jesus, however, was able to cast a demon out of a blind and dumb (mute) man in v22.

### **The Jewish Leader's Response**

In light of the second messianic miracle and the questioning by the masses, the Jewish leaders realized they had to make a public declaration concerning their final decision about Jesus' messianic claims. They had two options: First, declare Him to be the Messiah in light of all the evidence. Or, the second option was to reject His messianic claims. If they took the second option and rejected His messianic claims, they also had to explain to the Jewish masses why He was able to perform the very miracles they themselves had said only the Messiah would be able to do.

(b) Pharisees attribute Christ's power to Satan (12:24)

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

24 But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."

**24** But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

- At this point, the expression "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" virtually disappears from Matthew's Gospel. The phrase does not resurface until the offer is re-extended to a distant generation of Jews during the future Tribulation period (Matt 24:14).

— Such an absence signifies that God took the kingdom offer off the table when the Pharisees demonstrated unbelief when confronted by Christ's miracles

— The rejection of the offer of the kingdom is illustrated by the Unpardonable Sin, which Jesus classified as something that would not be forgiven

— There was a previous time when God issued a judgment, and no amount of forgiveness was possible...at Kadesh-Barnea in Num 13-14

They refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah because He did not fit the pharisaical mold, or their idea of what the Messiah was supposed to say and do. Their alternative explanation as to how He was performing His miracles was to say that He Himself was possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. This, then, became the official basis of the rejection of Him as the Messiah. This is the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1); the false teaching about which the Messiah would warn His disciples. They were to beware of the leaven of

the Pharisees: their claim that Jesus was not the Messiah, rather, He was demon possessed. It was on these grounds that the Pharisees rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. This action by the leadership of Israel set the stage for Jewish history for the next two thousand years.

### **The Rejection of the Messiah & Kingdom**

For background, see Offer of the Kingdom note in Matt 3.

In the layout of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus began His ministry in Matt 4. In Matt 4-12, He is seen going around Israel proclaiming the Kingdom and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of the Jewish prophets and performing many miracles. The purpose of all His miracles between in these chapters is to authenticate His Person and His message. They are signs to force the nation of Israel to come to a decision regarding two things: first, His Person, that He is the Messiah; and secondly, His message, the gospel of the Kingdom. Then in Matt 12, the whole purpose of His miracles and His ministry underwent a radical change. The rejection of His Messiahship occurred in Matt 12:22-37. By attributing Christ's miracles to Satan, the Pharisees rejected Jesus' offer to set up his earthly Kingdom. There are two reasons why Israel rejected Christ's offer to establish the Kingdom:

1. Christ emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount that the kingdom was not only physical and political but also moral and spiritual (Matt 5-7). Here, Christ reiterated what the OT had already revealed (Ezek 37:23-24). Thus, citizens of Christ's kingdom had to exhibit certain moral qualities (Matt 5:3-12). Because Israel was far more interested in a physical and political kingdom that would overthrow an oppressive Rome than they were in a spiritual and moral kingdom (John 6:15,26), Christ's emphasis upon the moral characteristics of His kingdom set the stage for Israel's ultimate rejection of the kingdom offer.
2. Israel pursued righteousness by way of self-effort rather than by accepting the imputed or transferred righteousness offered by Christ (Matt 5:20). Israel's works-oriented Pharisical system (Mark 7:13) caused the nation to stumble over Christ's simple message that righteousness can only be gained by faith alone (John 6:28-29). Rom 9:30-32 explains, "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over THE STUMBLING STONE." While a small Jewish Remnant did accept Christ's message, the crux of the nation as well as the nation's leadership stumbled over it.

For more information about why Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah, and the Offer of the Kingdom, see [The Coming Kingdom 10\\_The Kingdom Rejected: Why? \(John 6:15\)](#). Paul's

explanation of why Israel rejected the Offer of the Kingdom is found in Rom 9:30-32.

### **Jesus' Response to Israel's Rejection**

Jesus responded in two ways:

1. Defend Himself (v25-29):
  - a. It's illogical to have a division in Satan's kingdom
  - b. The Pharisees recognized exorcism as a gift of the Spirit and they and their followers were able to cast out demons (although not dumb demons)
  - c. According to their teachings, this miracle authenticated His claims and message
  - d. It showed Jesus was stronger than Satan rather than subservient to Satan
2. Condemnation of the Jewish Leaders (v30-37)
  - a. That generation was guilty of the Unpardonable Sin—blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
  - b. Judgment was not set against that generation, and under no circumstances could be alleviated

(B) Christ rejects 1st century Israel (12:25-50)

- (a) Refutation to charge of demon possession (12:25-37)
  - (i) Satan's kingdom cannot be divided (12:25-26)

**25** And knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, **"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and no city or house divided against itself will stand.**

**25** And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, **"Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.**

**25** He knew what they were thinking and told them, **"Every kingdom divided against itself is destroyed, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.**

**25** And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, **Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:**  
- Jesus' responded to the Pharisee's accusation by telling them that it didn't make logical sense. Their statement could not be true because it would mean that Satan's kingdom was divided against itself.

— Any kingdom, city or household that experiences internal conflict will destroy itself eventually if the strife continues. This holds true for the domain over which Satan rules as well.

**26 And if Satan is casting out Satan, he has become divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?**

**26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?**

26 So if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How, then, can his kingdom stand?

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

- For Satan to cast out demons would amount to his casting out himself, since the demons do his work

(ii) By whom do your magicians cast out demons? (12:27)

27 And if by Beelzebul I cast out the demons, **by whom do your sons cast them out?**

Therefore, they will be your judges.

27 If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges.

27 If I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own followers drive them out? That is why they will be your judges!

27 And if I by Beelzebul cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

- Jesus is referring to they, the other Jewish followers, who did have demonstrated power to cast out demons (Acts 19:13ff)

- "...by whom do your sons cast them out?" - Judaism also had exorcists

— These "children" of the Pharisees were probably their "disciples"

— If the Pharisees believed that Jesus cast out demons by Satan's power, they would have to admit that their "sons" did so by the same power

(iii) Christ's miracles evidence the kingdom (12:28)

28 But if I **cast out the demons** by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God **has come upon** you.

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

- Jesus is claiming that He received His power from God's Spirit, a clear messianic claim

- "...cast out the demons" - the casting out of demons is linked with the presentation of the kingdom (Cf. 9:35; 10:7-8). Direct suppression of the demonic realm characterizes the kingdom (Rev 20:1-6).

- "...has come" - *phthano*, "has come" [see NASB, ISV]; this word is used instead of similar Gr. words *erchomai*, "comes" (Luke 17:20), or *anaphaino*, "appear" (Luke 19:11)

- *phthano* occurs only in the latter, weakened sense of *reaching to*...the phrase is similar to the one in 1 Thess 2:16, where, manifestly, it was not designed to represent the wrath spoken of as *already poured forth* upon its objects
- This word choice gives the idea of a near approach of the Kingdom to the Jews in the person of Christ, implying an offer of establishment which might be withdrawn
- *phthano* better fits a contingency, something “overhanging,” which was available immediately if the contingency was fulfilled. If Jesus had inaugurated the kingdom in Matt 12:28, it’s much more likely that either *erchomai* or *anaphaino* would’ve been used instead of *phthano*.
- Christ’s statement here was not indicative of the fact the kingdom had arrived. Rather, His statement simply meant that the “tokens” of the kingdom (His miracles, exorcisms, etc...) could have become a reality for the nation of Israel had she responded to the contingency of the offer that Christ was extending to her.
- Kingdom Now theologians believe this verse means that Christ began a spiritual form of the Kingdom at His First Advent; however, this phrase must be properly understood within the Offer of the Kingdom framework.
- They see this verse as the “breaking in” or inauguration of the Kingdom “in minuscule” or “spiritual form”
- The presence of the Kingdom in the life of Christ could have become a reality had Israel fulfilled the responsibility of enthroning its King (Deut 17:15)
- “...upon” - this does not mean the kingdom had somehow entered the Jews or overtaken them and that they were now in it
- Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, and He did not mean the kingdom had entered them, but rather that it had “suddenly arrived” and was “among” them with His presence
- In other words, Jesus is showing, through these miracles, what life will be like in the kingdom. What life could be like for the nation of Israel if they accepted and enthroned their Messiah. He’s showing them in small form what would grow to worldwide scale if Israel would’ve accepted and enthroned Him as their King.
- For example...the Transfiguration. Jesus appeared in His glorified body, along with Moses and Elijah, to show what He is like in His glorified state. This isn’t the kingdom...it’s a “token” of the kingdom. It’s to show that this sort of thing could be a reality for the whole nation of Israel, in fact for the whole world, if Israel simply enthroned Him as King.
- Some of the readers of Hebrews had seen these “tokens” of the kingdom by witnessing Christ’s miracles (Heb 6:5)
- Both Scripture and Jesus Himself always speak of the kingdom as an earthly, physical one. They both also speak of people entering the kingdom, not the kingdom entering people.

Other passages "Kingdom Now" or Progressive Dispensationalists use to support the coming of the kingdom in spiritual form include: Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:20-21. See [The Coming Kingdom \(brief\)](#) for a complete list of passages along with a refutation of this doctrine. See also [Offer of the Kingdom](#), along with notes on the passages above. See [The Coming Kingdom 47 The Kingdom Has Come Upon You \(Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20\)](#) for a list of **8 Proofs for the Offer of the Kingdom Framework**.

Even with full revelation, including the Messiah standing in their presence performing miracles of the kingdom, the leaders of Israel rejected Him. From this point on, the kingdom will never again be presented as something "at hand" or "near." In fact, shortly before His final entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus would give a parable to show that the kingdom of God was not "going to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). The kingdom would only become "near" again in the distant future with the events of the Tribulation (Luke 21:31).

(iv) Binding of Satan necessary for Christ's kingdom work to go forward (12:29)

29 Or, how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

29 Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house.

29 How can someone go into a strong man's house and carry off his possessions without first tying up the strong man? Then he can ransack his house.

29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

- Jesus provided the Pharisees another way to view the same issue: only a stronger person can bind a homeowner and ransack his house

— Jesus is speaking of Himself binding Satan and spoiling his house by casting out demons (Cf. Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22)

— Thus, Jesus was claiming superior power to Satan, which could only be from God

— A possible future allusion to the binding of Satan for 1000 years during the Messianic Kingdom (Cf. Rev 20:2)

(v) Pharisees placing themselves against Christ (12:30)

30 The one who is not with Me is against Me; and the one who does not gather with Me scatters.

30 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

30 The person who isn't with me is against me, and the person who isn't gathering with me is scattering.

30 **He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.**

- Jesus' point is that there can be no neutrality in one's relationship to Him: those who do not side with Jesus by default side with Satan
- The OT viewed man's judgment as a harvest that God would conduct: here, Jesus claimed that He would be the harvesting Judge
- Jesus expressed the opposite truth in Mark 9:40: "For he that is not against us is on our part"

### **The Unpardonable Sin: The Judgment on "This Generation" (Matt 12:31-37; Mark 3:28-30)**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convict you of sin and your need for a Savior, while Satan tries to condemn you for your sins (Rom 8:1). How does one tell if it is conviction from the Holy Spirit or condemnation from Satan? Is what is happening drawing you closer to or away from God? If your feelings of remorse for your sin is drawing you into God's Word, confession and prayer, then that is the Holy Spirit. If the feelings, attitudes, thoughts and doubts over the issue cause you to shun the Word, confession and prayer (out of self-doubt, guilt, or otherwise) that is Satan trying to get you on a guilt trip.

(vi) Pharisees had committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31-32)

**31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.**

**31 "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.**

**31 So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.**

**31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost* shall not be forgiven unto men.**

- Jesus, in context, is stating that because of their rejection of Him, that specific generation had committed the unpardonable sin
- This is the Jewish leader's formal rejection of Jesus as their Messiah (Cf. John 12:37)
- If you are worried about having committed the unpardonable sin, you haven't!

**32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.**

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the one to come."

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

The Unpardonable Sin is not an individual sin, but a national sin. It was committed by that generation of Israel in Jesus' day and cannot be applied to subsequent Jewish generations.

***The unpardonable sin was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus while He was physically present, on the grounds that He was demon possessed.*** For that generation, this sin was unpardonable and judgment was set. The judgment came 38 years later in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people. This does not mean that individual members of that generation could not be saved, for many were. It did mean, however, that nothing they could do would avert the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

The Unpardonable Sin had four ramifications:

1. It was a national sin, not an individual sin. Even for members of that generation, it was possible to escape the judgment for the unpardonable sin by repenting. No individual can commit this sin today because: (a) it was never an individual sin, and (b) all sins are forgivable to those who come to God through Jesus.
2. It was a sin limited to the generation to whom the Messiah came. From that day forth, the Gospels placed special emphasis on the guilt of "this generation."
3. This is not a sin that any nation can commit today because the Messiah is not physically and visibly present and offering Himself as that nation's Messiah. This was unique to His relationship to Israel.
4. That generation's commitment of the unpardonable sin meant two things for that generation:
  - a. The offer of the kingdom was rescinded, meaning they lost the opportunity to see the kingdom established at that time. Instead, it will be offered to a later Jewish generation, who will accept it.
  - b. The generation which saw Jesus was under special divine judgment, which was the physical destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (70 AD).

(vii) Pharisees' speech dictated by their nature (12:33-37)

33 "Either assume the tree to be good as well as its fruit good, or assume the tree to be bad as well as its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten, because a tree is known by its fruit.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

- Conduct reflects character (Cf. 7:16-19)

— To have "good fruit" one must "make the tree good" for example by cultivating, fertilizing, etc.

— If someone "makes the tree rotten" by neglect, abuse, they will get bad fruit

— A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree yields bad fruit

34 You **offspring of vipers**, how can you, being evil, express any good things? For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.

34 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

34 You children of serpents! How can you say anything good when you are evil? The mouth speaks about what overflows from the heart.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

- "...offspring of vipers" - every time Jesus uses this phrase in Matthew, it is addressed to the Pharisees (Cf. 3:7; 23:33); refers to "deadly antagonists"

- Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are speaking evil things because that is their nature (they were evil). They mouths were just fulfilling their hearts.

— Jesus tells them the problem was not what they said, but what resided in their hearts. Their mouth was the result of their unregenerate heart.

— Jesus' point was that character determines conduct, and the mouth reveals the heart. The Pharisees' extreme slander of Him revealed their rejection of Him.

### **Parable of the Two Men (Cf. Luke 6:45)**

35 The good person brings out of his good treasure good things; and the evil person brings out of his evil treasure evil things.

35 The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil.

35 A good person brings good things out of a good treasure house, and an evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure house.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

- This "parable" makes more explicit the point about human conduct that Jesus had just made about trees. The conduct of people follows from their character.
- The heart is man's treasury. What makes the heart good is proper orientation to Jesus as a disciple. The "good man" has chosen to follow Jesus faithfully as His disciple, but the "evil man" has decided to pursue worldly wealth and happiness.
- A person's speech normally expresses what "fills his heart"
- It is vital that we take "every thought captive" (2 Cor 10:5)
- In this case, fruit stands for what is said, not what is done: out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks

36 But I tell you that for every **careless word** that people speak, they will give an account of it on **the day of judgment**.

36 But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

36 I tell you, on Judgment Day people will give an account for every thoughtless word they have uttered,

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

- Jesus did not want the Pharisees to gain any satisfaction from what He just said. Their appearance of righteousness did not excuse them from speaking as they did.
- "...careless word" - an unscripted word; unplanned or unchoreographed; a word spoken without deliberation
- "...the day of judgment" - refers to the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the judgment of the unsaved
- Believers are not subject to this judgment because we've been imputed with the alien righteousness of Christ

37 For by your words you will be **justified**, and by your words you will be condemned."

37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

37 because by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

- Words are important: since our words are a window into our hearts and motives, God will use our words to judge us
- Our words reveal our character, so they become the instruments by which God judges
- "...justified" - *dikaioō*, the same verb Paul uses to describe our justification before God

- How could Jesus base people's justification or condemnation upon their words?  
Shouldn't He do so based on their faith or lack of faith?
- He can do so because of the principle that out of the heart the mouth speaks, reflecting either the faith or unbelief that is in each person's heart
- In the context immediately preceding v34-37, the Pharisees denied that Jesus was the Messiah (v23). They expressed their unbelief saying, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (v24).
- Their words did not justify or condemn them other than their words were a reflection of what was in their hearts. Their hearts were in unbelief, and their words reflected that unbelief.
- Jesus saying that by their words they will be either justified or condemned is really saying that their heart condition (faith or lack of faith in Him) would justify or condemn them, and their words accurately reflected their heart condition.

(b) That generation only to be given the sign of Jonah (12:38-40) (Cf. Luke 11:24-26,29-32)

**38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

**38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

**38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees told Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

**38** Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

- Some of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus to perform a "sign," not just a miracle. He had performed many miracles...they just saw a leper healed, two blind men, a demoniac, etc., plus the very miracles they themselves labeled as messianic miracles...and they had concluded that they were satanic.

— It's possible they wanted to see a sign that Jesus Himself did not originate. They believed Jesus could not produce one and that His failure would discredit Him.

**39** But He answered and said to them, **"An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign; and so no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet;**

**39** But He answered and said to them, **"An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;**

**39** But he replied to them, **"An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign. Yet no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah,**

**39** But he answered and said unto them, **An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:**

- "...evil and adulterous generation" - a larger group of unbelieving Jews that the scribes and Pharisees represented
- Adultery is a common OT metaphor for spiritual apostasy, departure from God (Is 50:1; 57:3; Jer 3:8; 13:27; 31:32; Ezek 16:15,32,35-42; Hosea 2:1-7; 3:1; 7:13-16)
- God had granted signs in the past to strengthen the weak faith of believers such as Abraham, Joshua and Gideon. Jesus refused to give His critics one, since they wanted a sign to trap Him rather than bolster their weak faith.
- "...the sign of Jonah the prophet" - this was not a sign for the scribes and Pharisees; it became a sign to believers in Him later
- The "sign of Jonah" means the sign that Jonah himself was to the Ninevites. He signified one whom God had delivered from certain death.
- Jesus changed His policy on miracles at this point...
- While He performed miracles after this time, their purpose changed. No longer were they for the purpose of authenticating His Person and His message to get the nation to make a decision about Him...the decision had just been made.
- Instead, His miracles from this time forward were for the purpose of training the 12 Apostles for the new kind of ministry they would need to conduct as the result of His rejection

**40 for just as JONAH WAS IN THE STOMACH OF THE SEA MONSTER FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for **three days and three nights.****

**40 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.**

**40 because just as Jonah was in the stomach of the sea creature for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.**

**40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

- For that generation, the only sign they would see is the sign of resurrection. It would be given to them on three occasions:

1. Lazarus (John 11:1-46); rejected by the Sanhedrin in John 11:54-57
2. His own resurrection (Matt 16:1-4); rejected in Acts 1-7, culminating in the stoning of Stephen
3. The resurrection of the Two Witnesses in the Tribulation (Rev 11:3-13)

— The first two signs will be rejected, the third will be accepted. The resurrection of the Two Witnesses will lead to the salvation of the Jews of Jerusalem.

- "...three days and three nights" - as the Jews reckoned time (new day begins at sundown, not midnight), this meant three full days and three full nights, or any parts of three days and three nights
- However, in a Friday crucifixion scenario, Jesus was in the grave for parts of three days, but only two nights (not part of three nights)
- By referring to Jonah, Jesus just authenticated the Book of Jonah! The book is not just a myth, it's a real story.

In Jewish reckoning, part of a day accounts for the whole day, all 24 hours of it, both the day and the night of it. Actually, the Gospels have three statements that appear contradictory in Gentile reckoning of time but not in Jewish reckoning of time. Sometimes Jesus said He would rise "on the third day." Sometimes He said He would rise "after three days." Jesus also used the expression "three days and three nights." All three statements are in the same Gospel so it is not merely a variation among the Gospel writers. These would be contradictory expressions in Gentile reckoning of time but not in Jewish reckoning where part of the day counts for the whole day. He did rise "on the third day" because Friday before sundown was the first day, Saturday was the second day, and Saturday evening when three stars became visible was the beginning of the third day, Sunday. Because part of Sunday counts as all of Sunday, He also rose "after three days." And the phrase "three days and three nights" refers to any period of time that touches three days, because part of a day counts for the whole day, both the daylight and night time of it.

For example in Esther 4:16, Esther tells the people to fast for three days and three nights and after these three days of fasting she will then go see the king. Left to itself that might imply that a three full 24 hour fast, and on the fourth day she will see the king. However, in Esther 5:1, it is on the third day that she goes to see the king and there is no way to squeeze three 24 hour periods from that passage, nor is it necessary in light of Jewish reckoning.

(c) Ninevites and the Queen of the South to condemn present generation  
(12:41-42)

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented **at** the preaching of Jonah; and behold, **something greater than Jonah is here.**

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented **at** the preaching of Jonah; and behold, **something greater than Jonah is here.**

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment and condemn the people living today, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. But look—something greater than Jonah is here!

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here.

- The Pharisees believed, correctly, that judgment followed resurrection. Jesus followed His comments about resurrection (v40) with instruction on judgment.

- In v41, He compared them with Nineveh; the condemnation of “that generation” would be greater than the Ninevites because the Ninevites repented at Jonah’s preaching, but they would not repent at Jesus’ preaching.

— The people of Nineveh, along with the Queen of Sheba (v42) were Gentiles. With much less revelation to go on, they responded even without miracles, while that generation did not.

— At the Great White Throne Judgment, these Gentiles will be able to stand and condemn that particular Jewish generation for being guilty of the Unpardonable Sin

- “...at” - *eis*, “in the face of” or “because of” (Cf. Acts 2:38)

- “...something greater than Jonah” - the authority of the Messiah

- The sign Jesus provided, at the request of the scribes and Pharisees, did not meet their demands, since they did not need weak faith strengthened. It was a sign for His disciples.

42 The **Queen of the South** will rise up with **this generation** at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, **something greater than Solomon** is here.

42 *The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*

42 The queen of the south will stand up and condemn the people living today, because she came from so far away to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But look! Something greater than Solomon is here!”

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

- “...Queen of the South” - Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-13)

— She came from the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, which for the Jews at the time was “from the uttermost parts of the earth” (Jer 6:20; Joel 3:8)

— She traveled to Jerusalem because she heard about the great wisdom of Solomon

- “...something greater than Solomon” - Jesus, the embodiment of divine wisdom

The Queen would join the Ninevites in condemning the unbelievers of Jesus' day because they failed to acknowledge One with greater wisdom than Solomon's, as well as One with a greater message than Jonah's. Jesus was greater than Solomon in His wisdom, wealth and works.

In both of Jesus' comparisons, Gentiles responded and the Jews did not. Such had been the case in Jesus' ministry so far, and this would continue. The scribes and Pharisees undoubtedly resented Jesus comparing them unfavorably with Gentiles.

### **Swept, Garnished and Empty**

Before embarking on an interpretation of this passage, it's important to understand the context and setting. The Jewish leaders, and thus the general public, had rejected Jesus as their Messiah on the basis of demon possession. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus issued a solemn pronouncement on those who had determined to destroy Him, and were guilty of the unpardonable sin. He declares that the judgment of God shall yet be sent upon apostate Israel.

The central figure in this "parable" is the "unclean spirit."

(d) Present generation likened to a reposessed person (12:43-45)

**43** "Now when **the unclean spirit** comes out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it.

**43** "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it.

**43** "Whenever an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it wanders through waterless places looking for a place to rest, but finds none.

**43** When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

- In v43-45, Jesus tells the story of a demon to illustrate what the final outcome of that generation would be

- "...the unclean spirit" - one of 13 NT allusions to the Antichrist; the evidence for this conclusion is in the fact is the definite article: "the" unclean spirit; it is not simply "an" unclean spirit, but refers to a *specific* unclean spirit

— See [The Antichrist](#) for additional information.

- The history of this "unclean spirit" is divided into three stages:

1. It dwelt in a man
2. It went out, walked through dry places, seeking rest and not finding it; this references his present condition during the interval
3. It will "return to my house" (v44)

— This unclean spirit, who has already been here, is now away in a place where rest is not found, will come back again

44 Then it says, 'I will return to **my house** from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

44 Then it says, 'I will go back to my home that I left.' When it arrives, it finds it empty, swept clean, and put in order.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

- "...my house" - the house of the unclean spirit; does this unclean spirit represent Israel?

- Casting out a demon from someone leaves a vacancy

— One may cleanse the man of the demon, but one must fill the vacuum left behind

45 Then it goes and brings along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they come in and live there; and the last condition of that person becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and settle there. And so the final condition of that person becomes worse than the first. That's just what will happen to this evil generation!"

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Jesus related the account of a demon who left a man that he had possessed. He was not cast out, but left of his own free will to find a better place to live. But when he was unable to find a new body to indwell and control, he returned to his original abode. Although he found it swept and garnished, he also found it still empty, and the individual was still receptive to the demon's presence, because no superior power occupied that person. The individual never took the opportunity to fill his life with the Holy Spirit. Nor had another demon entered him. So the demon re-entered the man he originally possessed and invited seven other demons (more wicked than himself) to join him. The outcome was that the last state of the man had become worse than the first. He was originally possessed by only one demon. He had the opportunity after the demon left to fill his life with the Spirit of God, but

he failed to do so. Now, the last state of the man was worse than the first, because now he was possessed by eight demons.

The point of the story is often missed. Jesus compared the unbelieving Jews of His day to the demon-possessed person. When that generation began, it began with the preaching of John the Baptist. Through the preaching of John, that generation was swept, and garnished. But now that the Messiah had come, they rejected Him on the basis of demon possession. The nation that was swept and garnished now remained empty on account of the rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. And because it remained empty, the last state of that generation was to be worse than the first.

When that generation began, it was under Roman rule. Nevertheless, it had a national entity. It had a semi-autonomous form of government in the Sanhedrin. Jerusalem stood in all its Herodian glory, and the religious worship system in the Temple remained intact. But in 70 AD, as a result of the rejection and judgment, the national entity of Israel ceased to exist. In the place of bondage, they were dispersed by the Roman armies. The Temple, the center of Judaism, was completely destroyed so that not one stone stood upon another. Eventually, the Jews were dispersed all over the world, and today they await their final judgment: the Great Tribulation. So, indeed, the last state of that generation became worse than the first. They went from bondage to worldwide dispersion.

(e) Christ rejects physical ties and instead embraces spiritual ties (12:46-50)  
(Cf. Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21)

**46** While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

**46** While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

**46** While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him.

**46** While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

**47** [Someone said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your **brothers** are standing outside, seeking to speak to You."]

**47** Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

**47** Someone told him, "Look! Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak to you."

**47** Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

- "...brothers" - Jesus had four brothers: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas; and at least two sisters (Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3)

**48** But Jesus replied to the one who was telling Him and said, **"Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?"**

**48** But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, **"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"**

**48** He asked the man who told him, **"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"**

**48** But he answered and said unto him that told him, **Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?**

- Jesus question did not ridicule His physical mother and brothers. His answer showed that He simply gave priority to His heavenly Father and doing His will (Cf. 10:37)

— Jesus' point is that spiritual relationship takes precedence over physical relationship (Cf. 8:18-23)

49 And extending His hand toward His disciples, He said, **"Behold: My mother and My brothers!"**

49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, **"Behold My mother and My brothers!"**

49 Then pointing with his hand at his disciples, he said, **"Here are my mother and my brothers,**

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, **Behold my mother and my brethren!**

50 **For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."**

50 **For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."**

50 **because whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."**

50 **For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.**

- Jesus was saying that His circle, His allegiance, was to His family of faith

— This passage reveals more about the spiritual family that was forming around Jesus. In spite of rising opposition, God's purposes through Messiah were advancing (Cf. v18,20).

The end of Matt 12 is a major turning point in Matthew's Gospel. From this point on, **Jesus will only speak to the public in parables.** The reason may surprise you...

## **Changes in Jesus' Ministry**

After the rejection of the Jewish leaders, Jesus radically changed His ministry in four major areas:

### **1. The Purpose of His Miracles**

Miracles would no longer serve as signs to Israel to get them to make a decision concerning His messianic claims. That decision had been made. Instead, the purpose of His miracles from that point on was for the training of the twelve disciples for the kind of work they would perform because of this rejection; the kind of work they conducted in the Book of Acts. But for the nation, there would be no more signs except one: the sign of Jonah, the sign of the resurrection.

### **2. The Basis of His Miracles**

Until this event, His miracles were for the benefit of the masses, without requiring them to first have faith. But from this point on, He only performed miracles for the benefit of individuals, in response to the needs of individuals, and He demanded they first have faith. Until this event, when He healed a person, He told that person to go and proclaim what great things God had done for him. But from this point on, He told the healed individual to tell no one what God had done for him.

### **3. His Message**

Until this event, He and His disciples went all over the Land of Israel proclaiming His Messiahship, and He sent out His disciples two-by-two to do exactly that. But from this point on, He would forbid His disciples to proclaim His Messiahship. When Peter made his great confession in Matt 16:16, and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus instructed Peter to tell no one that He was the Messiah.

### **4. The Method of His Teaching**

Until this event, when He taught the masses, He taught them clearly and distinctly in terms they could and did understand. One example of this was the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5-7. Matthew points out that when Jesus was through with His sermon, not only did the people understand what He was saying, but also more significantly, they clearly understood where He differed with the Scribes and Pharisees. While Jesus had periodically used short parables to illustrate His teaching (Cf. 5:15; 7:3-5,13-14,15-20,21-27,35; 11:16-17; 12:25,29,43-45). However, from this point on, whenever He taught the masses, He taught them only in parables. In Matt 13:10-14 when He began His parabolic method of teaching, His disciples asked Him, "Why speak you unto them in parables?" Jesus answered that the parabolic method of teaching was for the purpose of hiding the truth from the masses, while revealing new truth about the kingdom for His disciples. Parables were a common teaching device among the Jews,

to illustrate what had been said or taught. In Jesus' case, from this point forward when addressing the masses, Jesus used them as the foundation of His teaching.

Transition from Public to Private Ministry		
	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Matt 1–12</b>	<b>Matt 13–28</b>
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Nation</b>	<b>Remnant</b>
<b>Miracles</b>	<b>Proof to nation</b>	<b>Training for remnant</b>
<b>Kingdom Offer</b>	<b>Prominent</b>	<b>Disappears</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Discourse</b>	<b>Parabolic</b>
<b>Interim program</b>	<b>Not mentioned</b>	<b>Prominent</b>
<b>Crucifixion; Resurrection</b>	<b>Not mentioned (4:17)</b>	<b>Prominent (16:21)</b>