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Text: Matthew 12:38-42
Title: Judgment for The Rejectors of Jesus Christ

The occasion for this passage is the healing of the demon possessed man in Matthew 12:22. The self-righteous Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out the demon by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Jesus called them into account to show that their accusation was illogical, inconsistent with their own practices, insurrectionary against God, and inane. The Pharisees committed the unpardonable sin when they accused Jesus of casting out a demon by the power of Satan.

The Pharisees were to the point where they did not really care to know Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, there was nothing Jesus could do to bring them to believe Him as the Messiah. In verse 38, the scribes and Pharisees sought Jesus for a sign.

Prior to verse 38, Jesus had given many signs to reveal Who He is.

Jesus' miracles:

Matthew 8:1-4 Jesus cleansed a leper.

Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus healed a centurion's servant.

Matthew 8:14-15 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law.

Matthew 8:23-27 Jesus calmed the raging waters of the Galilee Sea.

Matthew 8:28-34 Jesus healed the demon-possessed at Gergesenes.

Matthew 9:1-7 Jesus healed a crippled man.

Matthew 9:18-26 Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead.

Matthew 9:20-22 Jesus healed a woman with an issue of blood.

Matthew 9:27-31 Jesus healed two blind men.

Matthew 9:32-34 Jesus healed a mute man.

Matthew 12:9-14 Jesus healed a man with a withered hand.

Matthew 12:22 Jesus healed a dumb and blind man.

John wrote in John 12:37-38, ***But though he had done many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?***

Jesus' miracles were signs that pointed them to Him as the promised Messiah. In other words, the purpose of Jesus' miracles was to **authenticate His character and His relationship with His heavenly Father**. In this regard, miracles demonstrated the following: God is with Jesus (John 3:2); Jesus is from God (John 3:2; 9:32-33); God has sent Jesus (John 5:36); Jesus has authority on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10-11). Jesus is approved by God (Acts 2:22); the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father (John 10:37-38; 14:11); in Jesus, the kingdom of God has come (Matt. 12:28); and Jesus is the Messiah (Matt. 11:1-6) and the Son of God (Matt. 14:25-33).

According to verse 38 the Pharisees did not approach Jesus alone. Some of the scribes had joined themselves with the Pharisees in asking Jesus for a sign to prove He was the Messiah. The

scribes were men learned in the Jewish Law, religious teachers. The Pharisees were members of an ancient Jewish sect, distinguished by strict observance of the traditional and written law.

The Pharisees and scribes had enough evidence to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. In reality the Pharisees and scribes were only cynical in their request for a sign. They were unrepentant. They were unbelievers. Note the irony in their request, unbelieving Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus to give them belief. I would that the church today know that we have the same problem Jesus had. We live among people of unbelief. We live among people where seeing is believing. Unbelieving people are asking the church to give them belief. The request of unbelieving people is for us to show them a sign that they might believe. Gino Geraci said, "*It is not seeing that causes people to believe, it is believing that causes people to see.*" We believe to see! People who would demand proof from God in exchange for their belief in Him do not understand the nature of faith, may never be satisfied, and may resort to calling good evil.

I. False Representation of Humility and Honor: verse 38 says the Pharisees and scribes called Jesus Master.

Calling Jesus Master was not a sincere statement of the Pharisees and scribes because they were not under Jesus' tutelage. The word "master" is *did-as'-kal-os* which by interpretation means doctor, teacher, instructor. The approach of the Pharisees and scribes was a false representation of honor and humility. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8-9, "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*" They honored Jesus with their mouth, but they practiced something else. The Pharisees and scribes were outright self-deluded and deceivers.

Do not be so quick to think that people feel about you what they say of you. People say things that they do not mean. People can speak well of you and not think well of you.

II. The Request of the scribes and Pharisees: verse 38 their act of requesting a sign was evil. Think about their request in context. They were in constant conflict with Jesus. The sign they sought was for Jesus to validate His claim of being sent from God. Perhaps, they wanted some miracle to take place in the sky. However, it was evil for them to ask Jesus to dance to their music. They were seeking after something that was outside of God's will. They were given everything they needed to believe—they saw more signs than previous generations; they heard the teaching of Jesus. Jesse Campbell said, "*Often, those who demand proof from God in exchange for their belief in Him will not actually concede to His lordship when they receive the proof.*" They asked for a sign not so that they would believe, but because they did not and would not believe. Jesus is not going to perform signs to satisfy unbeliever's curiosity.

III. The Response of Jesus: Verses 39-42

Jesus answered by saying an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign (12:39a). The word “adultery” is a common Old Testament metaphor for spiritual apostasy.

Examples: Isaiah 50:1 *This is what the LORD says: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.*

Jeremiah 3:8 *I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery.*

Jesus was not accusing them of sexual adultery, but of spiritual adultery because of their unbiblical laws and regulations. They loved their religious positions and manmade traditions more than they loved God, which is spiritual adultery. Jesus told them no sign would be given to their generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah, who was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights (12:39-40a).

The sign of Jonah referred to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. To the Jews, three days and nights mean three full days or any portion of three days. Jesus was in the grave for portions of three days—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The implication here is that the proof of Jesus being the Messiah would come when He conquered sin and death at the cross and the grave.

Jesus continued by saying the men of Nineveh will stand up at judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at Jonah's preaching (12:41).

The pagan Ninevites, who had no Bible, repented at the preaching of Jonah, who performed no miracles. However, the privileged scribes and Pharisees, who had a complete Old Testament, refuse to repent at Jesus' preaching, which was verified by miracles. Therefore, in the judgment the people of Nineveh will have every right to join in condemning Jesus' unbelieving generation.

Jesus gave another example of what would increase the condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. He reminded them of the queen of Sheba who visited Solomon and was blown off her feet at his wisdom.

Jesus said in verse 42, *"The queen of Sheba will rise up at judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. One greater than Solomon is here."*

Three possible responses:

1. **Reception** – The men of Nineveh heard the words of God from Jonah and turned to God. They knew that Jonah spoke the truth and they acted on it.
2. **Respect** – The queen of Sheba came from a long way away because she heard of Solomon's reputation, and when she saw everything first-hand. She said of Solomon in 1 Kings 10:6-9, *"The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness."* The queen of Sheba had respect for Solomon, his words, and more importantly, his God.
3. **Rejection** – the Pharisees and scribes who did not believe Jesus. They did not want to believe Him. And so, they rejected Him. There is danger in rejecting Christ. I want to warn you about the danger of rejecting Christ and the judgment to come to those who draw back and turn away from Him (vv. 41-42). Notice the words, "judgment" and "condemn." The word "judgment" means a separation, sundering, the final judgement. The word condemn means against, to pronounce sentence against, to adjudge to punishment. Outside of Christ there is judgment and condemnation.

In Christ there is neither judgment nor condemnation.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

John 3:17-18 For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.