

## Matthew 12:38-50

### *Do the Will of the Father*

#### Section 1: 12:38-42

*<sup>38</sup> Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." <sup>39</sup> He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's preaching; and look—something greater than Jonah is here. <sup>42</sup> The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look—something greater than Solomon is here. (CSB)*

Is it good to ask God to prove Himself? According to Jesus an evil and adulterous generation demands a sign from God. Why are the Pharisees demanding a sign? Hasn't Jesus been healing, raising the dead, casting out demons and feeding thousands? What kind of sign were they looking for? At this point, even if Jesus called down fire from heaven as Elijah did, they would not believe. This reminds me of Romans 1:18-23:

*<sup>18</sup> For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, <sup>19</sup> since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. (CSB)*

Considering all that Jesus had been doing, how dare they demand a sign. God does not owe us anything when it comes to "proving" Himself. Because our faith is not built upon miracles, signs and wonders, our faith is built upon a relationship.

The wisest among the religious leaders were the scribes. To be a scribe you had to be thirty years old having spent years upon years studying the law. The scribes were considered the wisest in understanding and explaining the law. So, it makes sense that the Pharisees bring the scribes to test Jesus. But what happens? I believe we are seeing Romans 1:22 being played out in real time: "*claiming to be wise, they became fools*" (CSB).

Jesus point blank tells them they will receive no sign except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Why the sign of Jonah? The sign of Jonah clearly points to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. I had a professor in seminary tell me one time, "whenever you see strange things or instructions, look for Jesus." The story of Jonah is definitely strange. Jonah disobeyed God and was swallowed by a big fish. For three days. Why three days? Because it was pointing us to a greater resurrection to come. Follow the comparison between Jonah and Jesus. Jonah is resurrected, walks into Nineveh, proclaims the Word of God and people are saved. Jesus is resurrected, reveals Himself to the disciples, proclaims the Kingdom of God and now people can be saved. From Adam, to Abraham, to David, to Elijah, to Isaiah, to Jonah; God has always been faithfully pointing His people to the gospel.

To close out this section we are going to focus on two truths revealed in verses 41-42.

- (1) Jesus claims to be greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon. Who could make such a claim? The Son of God can make such a claim and it be true.
- (2) God saves the worst of us. The Ninevites were evil upon evil and the Queen of the South was as pagan as pagan can be.

The Son of God saving the “unsavable” should create great rejoicing among the people of God. The reason the gospel was of little value to the religious leaders of Jesus’ day is because they were self-focused. Their desires mattered more than God’s desires. Their traditions mattered more than God’s Word. Their positions mattered more than people’s souls. Romans 1:21 described their heart condition: *<sup>21</sup>For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. (CSB)*

### **Application**

What do we learn from this section? God has graciously given us everything we need to know Him. We need to stop chasing signs and wonders and start seeking a relationship. We need to remember that God typically works in the ordinary, everyday type stuff. Don’t get caught up in only looking for the amazing. God is very present in the little ordinary flow of life.

### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ What are your expectations of God? Are they biblical?
- ❖ What does it take for God to get your attention?
- ❖ How do you allow your personal desires to distract you from what God is doing around you?
- ❖ How much joy and hope does it bring you to know that Jesus is able to save the evil and the pagan?

### **Section 2: 12:43-45**

*<sup>43</sup>“When an unclean spirit comes out of a person, it roams through waterless places looking for rest but doesn’t find any. <sup>44</sup>Then it says, ‘I’ll go back to my house that I came from.’ Returning, it finds the house vacant, swept, and put in order. <sup>45</sup>Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that person’s last condition is worse than the first. That’s how it will also be with this evil generation.” (CSB)*

The unrepented life does not become more righteous. Morality without Christ is a sham and the more you rely upon a Christless morality, the more dangerous it becomes for your soul. Paul explains our lack of righteousness in Romans 3:9-18:

*<sup>9</sup>What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, <sup>10</sup>as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. <sup>11</sup>There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup>All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. <sup>13</sup>Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers’ venom is under their lips. <sup>14</sup>Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. <sup>15</sup>Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup>ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, <sup>17</sup>and the path of peace they have not known. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear of God before their eyes. (CSB)*

We see in this parable the “man” had been well put together. He seemed to be moral and well organized in life after the demon had left him. Yet the demon returned with more demons and ravaged the poor man. This is a perfect illustration to help us understand that morality not rooted in Christ has no hope of producing righteousness. The Pharisees and scribes have the appearance of being righteous and well put together. But they will commit evil acts in the days ahead by having Jesus crucified and the disciples killed.

We see people every day that believe they are on good terms with God because they are “basically a good person.” People are inclined to believe that as long as their good outweighs their bad they will go to heaven. Those that believe they are moral have a harder time seeing their need for the gospel. The Pharisees play the part well. They have the look, the words, the knowledge and the position but they are wicked and evil.

### **Application**

We must recognize that people are not capable of being “good” outside of Christ. People may have an appearance of “morality” but it’s a sham. We have got to stop putting our faith in man’s ability to appear good. No matter how “good” someone appears, without Christ they are evil and servants of sin and Satan. This should cause us to (1) overly praise God for His grace in our lives and (2) desperately share the gospel with a people that will be judged.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ The Bible says that no one can be righteous without Christ. Why do we believe that people can be “moral” without Christ in their lives?
- ❖ Why is morality without Christ a sham?
- ❖ Why is it hard for a “moral” person to see their need for salvation?
- ❖ When was the last time you praised God for forgiving you of your sins?

### Section 3: 12:46-50

*<sup>46</sup>While he was still speaking with the crowds, his mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup>Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”*

*<sup>48</sup>He replied to the one who was speaking to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” <sup>49</sup>Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (CSB)*

What do you think of when you hear the word “family”? Do you find yourself more focused on this life or the life to come in Christ? In other words, are you more earthly minded or heavenly minded? I think if we are honest when we think of the word “family” we often focus on a last name.

It seems that most every culture throughout human history has valued family. But Jesus makes a distinction between His earthly family and His heavenly family. So, which is the greater family, our earthly family or heavenly family? John MacArthur words it this way:

*“The Lord’s purpose in referring to His disciples as His mother and brothers was to teach that He invited the entire world into His intimate and divine family. Anyone can enter His spiritual family by trusting in Him, and the family of God is the only family that ultimately matters.”*

In Christ we become members of an eternal family. But it’s easy to become overly focused on the temporary things of this world.

In our American culture certain family names get you many privileges. For example: Rothchild, Trump, Bush, Walton and Kennedy. The only family that will live into eternity is the family of God. Jesus is the only name that is of eternal value. No other name in human history will give you the benefit of eternal life. So, which family matters the most? Eternally? The only answer is the family of God. That’s the family you want everyone to be a member of.

### Application

The greatest love you can show your earthly family is sharing the gospel and how they can become members of God’s family. So, share the gospel. Talk of Jesus. Be more heavenly minded than earthly minded when it comes to valuing family.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How much do you value the family of God?
- ❖ Are you more concerned with building the family of God or creating a family legacy here on earth?
- ❖ Will you share the gospel with your earthly family? What holds you back from doing this?