

Matthew 12 • The Turning Point of Rejection

Introduction

The rebellion against the Messiah has been growing increasingly worse. The religious authorities rejected His messenger, John the Baptist, and have not repented either at John's nor Jesus' message nor because of the signs and wonders He's performed in their sight. Their continual rejection of Him reaches its peak in this chapter and its no coincidence that right after this Jesus' ministry makes a big change and He begins to teach in parables, a sign that the Jews are on the verge of themselves being rejected by the Messiah.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Matthew 10:13

What does it take for someone to be ultimately cut off spiritually? And how might this apply to the church and believers living in the shadow of the End Times?

¹At 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. ²But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

³But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, ⁴how 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? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

⁹Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And 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.

¹¹And 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? ¹²How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and

[Read v.1-21]

Q: Both of the incidents here have to do with the Sabbath. What do they have in common in how the Pharisees treated the Sabbath?

A: In both cases, the Pharisees were no longer observing the plain, original intent of God's Word where the Sabbath was concerned. They had made so many additional interpretations that these man-made traditions became more revered than the original Word of God. Instead of a day meant for spiritual blessing, rest and joy, it became a legal observance that turned into a burden.

Q: How does Jesus respond to their first accusation?

A: Jesus responds with three citations from the Word of God:

1. He refers them to David. (1 Sam. 21)
2. He refers them to the Law. (Num. 28:9-10)
3. He refers them to the prophets. (Hosea 6:6)

What Jesus has just done is to answer them from the whole Word of God as the Jews defined the Word of God (The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets.)

Q: What are the parallels between Jesus and the examples He gave?

1. At the time the showbread was given to David, he was a rejected king just as Jesus was, yet to be crowned. One of the offices of the Messiah was to be King.
2. He showed that the priesthood was permitted to labor on the Sabbath. One of the offices of the Messiah was to be Priest.
3. He quoted the prophets to show that God is more interested in the heart than empty, outward observances. One of the offices of the Messiah was to be Prophet.

Q: How do we know for certain that Christ was proclaiming Himself to be the Messiah and that these aren't merely things we're inferring ourselves?

A: Jesus declares Himself in v.8 to be "Lord of the Sabbath". It was a very clear way of stating to the Pharisees of that time that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, equal with God who ordained the Sabbath.

Q: How does Jesus respond to their second accusation?

A: Jesus uses plain logic to show that their regulations were wrong.

Point: Their rejection of Jesus was not just a rejection of the whole Word of God, but a rejection of plain old common sense and logic. This shows that they were

conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

¹⁵But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, ¹⁶and warned them not to tell who He was. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

¹⁸“BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN
MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASSED;
I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,
AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.
¹⁹HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.
²⁰A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.
²¹AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE.”

²²Then 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. ²³All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”

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

²⁵And 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. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or 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. ³⁰He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

³¹“Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word

not seeking the truth, but only interested in affirming their own views at any cost. They didn’t simply reject Christ one time, but repeatedly pursued a course consistently rejecting Him at every turn for every reason. This is the kind of rejection that leads to spiritual deception.

Q: How did Jesus respond to their plan to destroy Him?

A: He withdrew from there, thus fulfilling even more of God’s Word about how the Messiah would conduct His ministry. (Is. 42:1-3)

Q: To what do you suppose the “battered reed” and “smoldering wick” refer to?

A: Most likely it refers to Christ’s enemies, people whom He would not judge until the right time because Israel was still God’s main instrument on earth.

Q: But how do we know that God’s plan is beginning to change away from Israel?

A: Because of the references in v.18 & 21 to the Gentiles.

Application: *At Christ’s First Coming, many of those who were supposed to be His followers had so misinterpreted and misapplied the Word of God that they came into conflict with Christ Himself. How do you see this repeating itself today? How is this an indication that the Second Coming is on its way? How are those who twist God’s Word also betrayed by their twisting of common sense and logic?*

[Read v.22-37]

Q: What Scripture does Jesus quote in His response to their accusation that He is in league with Satan?

A: Trick question – none. Jesus simply points out that their argument is not logical. Note that in v.33-37 that we’re accountable for the logic of our words.

Q: What is probably the true indicator that this was a personal attack on Jesus alone?

A: Because others were known to have been able to cast out demons (v.27 and see Acts 19:13), but these were obviously not accused of being in league with Satan. It’s part and parcel of their illogical argument concerning Jesus in this matter.

Q: What part of Christ’s response might also be a statement confirming Himself as not just another prophet or teacher, but the Messiah?

A: His final argument in v.28-30 is that He could never cast out demons unless He had first overcome their leader, Satan.

Point: *Whereas the previous section documents their rejection of the Messiah over things occurring in the earthly, physical realm, He is here being rejected in the heavenly, spiritual realm as well. It combines to provide a picture of total rejection of Christ at every level.*

Observation: *Keep the following in mind in order to fully understand exactly what the unpardonable sin is:*

1. **It is a sin of the heart, not the lips.** (v.34-35) The words from the lips are but evidence of the condition of the heart. Evil words are an indicator of the presence of an evil heart.
2. **It is the sin committed in the light of great evidence.** These people

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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.

³³Either 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.

³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. ³⁶But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

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

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

³⁹But 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; ⁴⁰for 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. ⁴¹The 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. ⁴²The 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.

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

⁴⁴Then 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. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes along with

had seen Christ’s miracles and yet hardened their hearts against Him.

3. ***It is the sin of willful, persistent unbelief and final rejection of Christ.*** We know from examples in Scripture that sins such as adultery or even murder are pardonable. But when a person persists in rejecting Christ, coming to a place where the heart is so calloused it has no concern for eternal destiny, then it’s too late.

Q: What is significant about Jesus using the same term John used to describe the Pharisees, “You brood of vipers”?

A: Since the beginning they’ve consistently rejected Christ, His messenger, and all the associated signs and messages, instead being like the children of that old serpent, the devil. They had become the very thing they accused Jesus of being.

Point: *They had a form of godliness, but they did not know God. Like Satan, they were merely imitators of true godliness.*

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Application: *At Christ’s First Coming, continual and systematic rejection of Him led many to commit the unpardonable sin leading to permanent separation. How do you see this repeating itself today? Can you see the difference between a heart dedicated to evil versus a simple sinner? Which false teachers/teachings have you noted where they try to reverse the roles of Christ and Satan?*

[Read v.38-50]

Q: Given what has happened so far, why is the request for a sign simply absurd?

A: They rejected all the earthly signs of healings and miracles and such, as well as the heavenly signs of casting out demons. What sign could possibly change their mind at this point given that they’ve rejected every other sign in heaven and earth?

Q: What is significant about the one sign that Jesus promises them?

A: The “*sign of Jonah*” is a promise concerning His death, burial, and resurrection as pictured by Jonah.

Point: *Jonah as a messenger to the Gentiles, another indication that Israel would reject Christ. Jesus was “greater than Jonah” (v.41) because unlike Jonah, He did not disobey God, and instead of preaching coming judgment, Jesus preached salvation.*

Q: What is the main thought that the parable of the unclean spirit is trying to teach?

A: Jesus is conveying the fact that there are people who might undergo some kind of reformation without inward regeneration. In Israel’s case, they came back from captivity purged of their sin of idolatry – they never went back to worshiping idols as before, but their hearts were empty and therefore their religion was in vain. Satan was able to re-enter the house of Israel through their other sins making them worse off in the end than at first. In the Old Testament, Israel worshiped idols, but in the New Testament, they killed their own Messiah!

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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.”

⁴⁶While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.”

⁴⁸But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Point: *The same thing occurs with people who “reform” themselves by joining a church and living respectably, but without Christ actually dwelling in their heart. This is a “false righteousness” that is only temporary until Satan gets a hold of that empty life and brings it to ruin. Religion is concerned with cleaning up the outside while biblical salvation means new life and holiness on the inside.*

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”

2 Peter 2:20-22

Q: So how does the attempted intervention of His own family fit within the overall context of this chapter?

A: In breaking all natural ties, even with those identified as His earthly family, He establishes that the only qualification for **ANYONE** to follow Him is “*whoever does the will of My Father*”.

Point: *Jesus is speaking of a worldwide family, completing the theme of Israel losing its place.*

Application: *At Christ’s First Coming, signs and wonders were not enough for those intent on accepting things only as they believed they should happen. How is this happening yet again? How might many of those in church today be like the clean house in the parable, ripe for Satan’s occupation?*

Overall Application

There is substantial, as yet unfulfilled Old Testament Scripture where God promises to return to Israel in the End Times and complete His work through them. They were an example of what happens to cause God to reject a people in favor of someone else, something that many believe will happen again in the Last Days when the church, no longer effective, is replaced by Israel. This turning point of rejection occurs:

- *First by rejecting the simple and literal meaning of God’s Word. (v.1-21)*
- *This then leads to rejection of His signs, both in the earthly and the spiritual realms, which leads to commission of the unpardonable sin. (v.22-37)*
- *And finally by Christ taking the message to those who will receive it when those rejecting it won’t be swayed by anything supernatural **OR** logical. (v.38-50)*

They say that the most dangerous thing about marijuana is that it’s a gateway to trying more dangerous and lethal drugs leading to addiction or death. The same is true where God’s Word is concerned. It all begins with rejecting or trivializing it so that deception and death eventually follow.