

# THE WORDS AND WORKS OF KING JESUS

## PART 9: THE PHARISEES REJECT THE KING

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### **MATTHEW CHAPTERS 11-12**

As Jesus continued his message about the Kingdom of heaven, opposition from Israel's religious elites, specifically the Pharisees, grew to the point of plotting to murder the King of Israel. Their blasphemous remarks were so bad that forgiveness was not possible. Nevertheless, Jesus continued to show that he truly is the Messiah.

## **I. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE (11)**

### **A. JESUS RESPONDS TO JOHN THE BAPTIST'S QUESTIONS (VV. 1-19).**

1. John the Baptist asks if Jesus is the Messiah (v. 3).

- ""Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"" (Matt. 11:3 NIV)
- John in prison for confronting Herod Antipas (Idumaen/Esau) about marrying his half-brother's wife (Herodias) while still being married to Aretas.
- John imprisoned in Machaerus, north-east of sea of Galilee.

2. Jesus refers John to his miracles (vv. 4-6).

- These miracles fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah.
- Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1-2 → the Messiah will do these miracles → Jesus did these miracles → therefore, Jesus is the Messiah.

3. Jesus speaks highly of John the Baptist (vv. 7-15)

- (11:7) John was not fickle and changeable ('a reed swayed by the wind').
- (11:11) He was not merely a prophet like other prophets, he was the herald of the Messiah.
- (11:11) Among those born of a woman there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.
- (11:14) "And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come." (Mal. 4:5-6). This expression does not suggest that John was Elijah, but that he came in the same spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). If the Jews had believed this, John would have been the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecies.
- John's message and dress was much like Elijah's (camel hair coat, leather belt).
- John the Baptist was the last and greatest of the prophets (Matt. 11:13-14).

## **B. THE UNREPENTANT CITIES (VV. 20-24).**

1. The Galilean cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum reject Jesus and are unrepentant (vv. 20-23).

- Jesus did most of his ministry (miracles) in the area of Galilee, yet these cities refused to accept Jesus message of repentance.
- Capernaum, chosen by Jesus to be his headquarters, faced great condemnation because of its indifference toward Jesus.

2. These cities will be held accountable on the day of judgment (v. 24).

- These cities actually saw Jesus' miracles...the greater the light, the greater the accountability (Luke 12:48b).
- Degrees of judgment and punishment will be made on that day.
- Day of judgment (GWTJ) = Rev. 20:11-15

## **C. JESUS OFFERS REST FROM RELIGIOUS LEGALISM (VV. 25-30).**

1. The simple message of God's kingdom is hidden from those who consider themselves to be wise (vv. 25-26).

- Sarcastic Jewish leaders who prided themselves on their self-righteousness.
  - "Babes, little children" are those who followed Jesus and simply put their faith in him.
2. Jesus acknowledges his divine self-consciousness of who he is (v. 27).
    - Since Jesus referred to Himself as the Son, we have another staggering self-focused statement from Jesus.
    - Here He proclaimed that only He had a true relationship with God the Father, and that the Father could only be known through the Son (to whom the Son wills to reveal Him).
  3. Jesus offers an easy yoke (vv. 28-30).
    - The easy yoke (faith and trust)

## II. JESUS CONFRONTS THE PHARISEES (12)

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### A. THE PHARISEES ACCUSE JESUS OF VIOLATING THE SABBATH (VV. 1-14).

1. Jesus' disciples pick grain on the Sabbath (v.1).
  - Actually, the Mosaic Law did not forbid picking & eating grain on the Sabbath.
  - It was forbidden by the made-up oral laws the Pharisees used to promote their own self-righteousness.
2. The Pharisees object (v. 2).
  - Effectively chastising Jesus' disciples for not being as 'religious' as they were.
3. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being ignorant of the scriptures (vv. 3-13).
  - Matt. 12:3, 5 "...haven't you read..."
  - (see Mark 7:8-9) "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" (Mk. 7:8-9 NIV)
4. The Pharisees plot to kill/destroy Jesus (v. 14).
  - "But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus." (Matt. 12:14 NIV)

- Jesus revealed their ignorance of the scriptures.
- Jesus violated the many made-up oral laws about the Sabbath that the Pharisees used to make themselves look religious.
- The “power base” of the Pharisees was undermined by Jesus.

## **B. JESUS WITHDRAWS TO PREVENT ESCALATION (vv. 15-21).**

1. Jesus withdraws from there (v. 15).
  - For a time, Jesus withdrew somewhat from public ministry as the opposition rose against Him.
  - This was not out of cowardice, but in respect to God the Father's timing for the course and culmination of His ministry.
  - It could not be allowed to peak too soon.
2. He orders his followers to keep quiet<sup>1</sup> about what they had seen (v. 16).
  - Jesus knew that publicity over such miracles might hinder His mission and divert public attention from His message.
3. This was prophesied by Isaiah (v. 17-21).
  - Isaiah 42:1-4 The quotation from Isaiah 42:1-5 speaks of the gentle character of the Messiah, who is the Servant of Yahweh.
  - A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench: This is another reference to the gentle character of Jesus.

## **C. BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (vv. 22-32).**

1. Jesus heals the demon-possessed man (vv. 22-23).
2. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of using Beelzebul (Satanic) power (v. 24).
3. Jesus shows the weakness of their thinking (vv. 25-30).
  - Why would Satan work against himself by exorcising a demon!
4. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is a sin that will not be forgiven (vv. 31-32).

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<sup>1</sup> This sometimes called the “Messianic Secret” which is the disproved theory put forth by a German Lutheran theologian named Wilhelm Wrede who stated that Jesus was denying that he was the Messiah <<https://www.gotquestions.org/Messianic-secret.html>>.

- Jesus confronts the Pharisees' deliberate rejection of deeds they know to be of God (cf. John 11:48; Acts 4:16).
- Since they cannot deny the reality of what the Holy Spirit has done through Jesus, they attribute it to Satan (Mark 3:22).

#### **D. PHARISEES ARE LIKENED TO BAD TREES THAT PRODUCE BAD FRUIT (VV. 33-37).**

1. Their wicked words reveal the evil within their own hearts (vv. 33-35).
2. They will be held accountable on the day of judgment (vv. 36-37).

#### **E. THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES ASK FOR A SIGN (VV. 38-42).**

1. Their desire to see a sign<sup>2</sup> expressed another way in which they hoped to reject Him (v. 38).
  - If Jesus did provide a sign, they would find some way to speak against it, thus proving to themselves that Jesus was who they already thought He was – an emissary of Satan (Matthew 12:24).
2. Instead, Jesus gave a sign (Jonah) from scripture which they could not refute (vv. 39-42).
  - The sign of the prophet Jonah: Jesus assured them of a sign, but the great sign He would show was the sign of a resurrected Jesus.
  - Jonah's life was a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
3. Queen of Sheba
  - The queen of Sheba came to see Solomon's glory and, in the process, encountered the glory of Solomon's God (1 Kings 10:9).
  - "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it;" (Matt. 12:42 NIV)

#### **F. THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR REJECTION OF JESUS (VV. 43-45).**

1. Using the illustration of unclean spirits Jesus shows how they make matters worse over time (43-45a).
  - In context, the main point of Jesus was not upon principles of demon possession.
  - He explained the seriousness of rejecting Him as completely as the religious leaders had.

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<sup>2</sup> If Jesus did provide a sign, they would find some way to speak against it, thus proving to themselves that Jesus was who they already thought He was – an emissary of Satan.

- This rejection and opposition of Jesus would leave them much worse off than ever before.
2. He then says the same thing will happen with this evil generation (v. 45b).
    - This wicked generation – exemplified by the religious leaders who were rejecting Jesus – would find their last state...worse than the first.

#### **G. THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS ARE HIS TRUE FAMILY (VV. 46-50).**

1. Jesus is told by a man that his mother and (*half*) brothers were outside and wanted to speak to him (v. 46-47).

#### **H. THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS ARE HIS TRUE FAMILY (VV. 46-50).**

1. Jesus is told by a man that his mother and (*half*) brothers were outside and wanted to speak to him (v. 46).
2. "Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."" (v. 47) <sup>3</sup>
3. Jesus says his family consists of those who do his Father's will (vv. 48-50).
  - Jesus is not repudiating his earthly family (cf. John 19:26, 27).
  - Jesus is emphasizing the supremacy of eternal spiritual relationships (cf. 10:37).
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### **III. DISCUSSING THE TEXT**

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1. Why do you suppose John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the Messiah (11:3)?
  - John must have heard that the Messiah's kingdom was at hand and that he would have a place in the kingdom, yet he was still in prison, suffering for his faith.

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<sup>3</sup> Some manuscripts insert verse 47.

- Did he get it wrong? Perhaps Jesus is not the Messiah, as he thought.
2. Like John the Baptist (11:3), Christians today can have spiritual doubts. Is it wrong to have such doubts? Why or why not?
- Verses that help us understand "doubt" (Matt. 14:21; Mark 9:24; John 20:25-28; Jas. 1:5-8; Jude 1:22).
  - The remedy for doubt is faith, and faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
3. What would have caused people to reject Jesus as Messiah even after seeing his miracles (11:20)?
- Some claimed it to be magic (Satanic).
  - Some may refuse to give up their own man-made religion (legalism)
4. What is the "yoke" Jesus referred to in 11:28-30?
- Faith in Christ Jesus as Savior.
  - Being "yoked" with Jesus he does all the hard work (making eternal life possible).
5. How does Jesus describe those who do his Father's will (12:46-50)? In what ways does this encourage you?
- They are described as being part of his family.
  - It encourages me because I'm part of Jesus' family, and God is my Father. From this I find peace and security.

#### **IV. CHALLENGE FOR NEXT WEEK**

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Read Matthew Chapter 13. Why did Jesus speak in parables? Why didn't he just come out and say what he meant?