

**Matthew 12:22-45; Luke 8:1-3***NIV Harmony 82-84; Compassionate 103-104; Loyal 100-105***Introduction**

1. Have you ever been rejected?
  - a. When I was in Junior High School, I tried out for the basketball team.
  - b. I worked hard and made the initial cut. So, I worked even harder.
  - c. However, the week before our first game, two last players were cut. I was one of them.
  - d. I gave it my best, but my best wasn't good enough in the eyes of the coach.
  - e. It hurt to be cut and rejected right before the first game after a month of tryouts and practice.
2. How much more it must have hurt Jesus to be rejected by the Jewish leaders. Jesus, the Messiah, was the best player on God's kingdom team, but the Jewish leaders didn't see it that way and cut Him.
3. **Read Mt 12:22-50.**

**A. Public Rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees (22-37)**

1. Mark (Mk 3:20-30) records a similar account of Jesus' rejection by the Pharisees, but Matthew's account includes unique material related to the context of the encounter and Jesus' reaction to the Pharisee's rejection.
2. Mark recorded, "Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him for they said, 'He is out of his mind'" (Mk 3:20-21).
3. Matthew added context regarding what happened in the house as Jesus' family came to get Him.
  - a. A demon possessed, blind, and mute man was brought to Jesus in the house.
  - b. "...Jesus healed (Gk., *etherapeusen*) him, so that he could both talk and see" (Mt 12:22b).
  - c. As usual, "All the people were astonished (Gk., *eksistanto*) and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'" (Mt 12:23).
4. It was then that the "Pharisees" (Mt 12:24) and "teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem" (Mk 3:22) publicly rejected Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah.
  - a. They said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (Mt 12:24).
  - b. Beelzebub is another name for Satan, the Devil.
5. Jesus knew what they were thinking and saying and responded with a parable recorded in both Mk 3:23-26 and in a slightly different form in Mt 12:25-28.
  - a. **Read Mk 3:23-26 and then Mt 12:25-28.**
  - b. The point Jesus made as recorded by both Mark and Matthew is the same.
  - c. "If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?" (Mt 12:26)
  - d. Matthew added a question from Jesus to the Pharisees: "And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out?" (Mt 12:27a)
    - 1) The implication of Jesus' question was that some of the Pharisees or other righteous Jews were also exorcising demons in the name of God.
    - 2) According to Acts 19:14-16, the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were said to have cast out demons.
    - 3) Jesus sent the Jewish leaders to their own exorcists to determine the source of their powers. Were they also driving out demons in the power of Satan rather than the power of God?
    - 4) Jesus concluded, "...So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Mt 12:27b-28)
    - 5) Jesus affirmed that He was the Son of David, the Messiah, as the people had wondered in Mt. 12:23.
6. In both Mk 3:27-30 and Mt 12:29-32 Jesus spoke the Parable of the Strong Man.
  - a. The strong man is Satan.
  - b. The only way to rob Satan's house (i.e., to cast out one of his demons) is to have power over the strong man by binding him first.

- c. Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, has power over Satan, and that is how He cast out demons by using the power of God at work in Him.
- d. Warren Wiersbe concludes, “Jesus was able to cast out demons because He had first defeated Satan, the prince of demons. Jesus entered Satan’s kingdom, overcame his power, and claimed his spoils. His victory was through the Spirit of God...and not in the power of the evil one. This means that God is Victor over Satan, and that men must decide on whose side they will stand. There can be no compromise. We are either with God or against God” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 100).
- 7. Jesus then added, “...every sin and blasphemy (Gk., *blasphemia*) will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Mt 12:31). What did He mean?
  - a. There is only one sin/slander that cannot be forgiven, and that is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the continual, repeated rejection of God and His truth, especially as that truth is revealed in Jesus.
  - c. The Jewish teachers had already charged Jesus with blasphemy.
  - d. Jesus turned the tables on them. He was not the blasphemer, they were. They had attributed the powerful work of God in Jesus’ casting out of demons to Satan instead of to God at work in His Messiah.
  - e. They had rejected the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior sent by God to redeem His people.
  - f. Wiersbe concludes, “Is there an ‘unpardonable sin’ today? Yes, the final rejection of Jesus Christ. Jesus made it clear that *all* sins can be forgiven (Matt. 12:31). Adultery, murder, blasphemy, and other sins can all be forgiven; they are not unpardonable. But God cannot forgive the rejection of His Son. It is the Spirit who bears witness to Christ (John 15:26) and who convicts the lost sinner (John 16:7-11)” (Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 101).
- 8. Matthew added more unique material in Mt 12:33-37 as a conclusion to Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees.
  - a. In words reminiscent of those in His Sermon on the Mount (cf., Mt 7:15-20), Jesus reiterated His teaching about trees and their fruit.
    - 1) Good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit. The tree is known by its fruit.
    - 2) The conclusion is that by rejecting Jesus the Pharisees produced bad fruit and revealed their error.
    - 3) The good fruit produced by those who place faith in Jesus as Messiah reveals that they are right.
  - b. Jesus then directly confronted the Jewish leaders, “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good?” (Mt 12:34)
    - 1) The Jewish leaders’ mouths spoke rejection of Jesus because of the evil in their hearts.
    - 2) The good or evil in all of us is ultimately revealed in our words and actions.
  - c. Jesus pointed the leaders to their accountability to God for their words/actions in the final judgment.
    - 1) He said to the Jewish leaders and to each of us, “For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your word you will be condemned.” (Mt 12:37)
    - 2) Our words and consequent actions regarding Jesus ultimately reveal our decision about Him.
    - 3) May every word and action of our lives point to the fact that we believe Jesus is the Messiah.

## **B. Request for a Sign Refused (38-50)**

- 1. The account of the Pharisees’ request for a sign and Jesus’ rejection of their request in Mt 12:38-45 is unique to Matthew’s gospel.
  - a. This account is like another request from the Pharisees for a sign in Mt 16:1-4, but that one is in a different context.
  - b. Mark also mentioned a request for a sign from the Pharisees (cf., Mk 8:11-13) which appears to have come in the same context as the one mentioned later in Mt 16:1-4.
- 2. The Jewish leaders did not stop pressing Jesus for proof that He was the Messiah.
- 3. They said to Jesus, “...‘Teacher (Gk., *Didaskale*), we want to see a miraculous sign (Gk., *semeion*) from you” (Mt 12:38).
  - a. How interesting. Jesus had just performed and justified a miraculous sign by casting out a demon.
  - b. However, the Jewish leaders were not convinced and wanted further proof.
  - c. No matter what miracle He would have performed, they would not have believed in Him.

4. Jesus replied that they were "...‘A wicked and adulterous generation...’" and that He would give them no other sign than the "sign of the prophet Jonah," (Mt 12:39)
  - a. Jesus referred to Jonah’s three days in the belly of the whale (cf., Jon 1:17).
  - b. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," (Mt 12:40)
  - c. Of course, Jesus referred here to His death and resurrection after three days.
  - d. These same Jewish leaders would kill Jesus, and by His death Jesus would perform His greatest miraculous sign—resurrection from the dead. It would be a sign even greater than that of Jonah.
  - e. Jesus’ resurrection is the last and greatest sign that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.
  - f. Jesus again pointed the leaders to the final judgment. "'The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.'" (Mt 12:42)
    - 1) The Queen of the South is the Queen of Sheba who came to hear Solomon’s wisdom and learn from it (cf., 1 Kgs 10:1-13).
    - 2) The Jewish leaders had failed listen to the wisdom of Jesus which He had demonstrated in both His words and actions.
    - 3) Jesus is the one whose wisdom is greater even than that of their revered King Solomon. Jesus is the one who brings an even greater salvation.
    - 4) Again, these leaders will be held accountable for their rejection of Jesus in the final judgment.
  - g. Since the encounter began with casting out a demon, Jesus returned to that thought in Mt 12:43-45.
    - 1) Jesus stated that when a demon is cast out, it looks for a new home.
    - 2) Not finding a suitable new home, the demon returns with seven "...other spirits more wicked than itself..." to inhabit the same person again. (Mt 12:45).
    - 3) The point Jesus made is that the Jewish leaders along with all their generation who rejected Him are like that person, who having been freed from a wicked spirit finds himself ultimately in an even worse condition than before.
      - a) God’s Messiah had come into the world to free them from sin, death, and evil.
      - b) However, by rejecting Jesus, the Jews had hardened their hearts against the very Savior whom God had sent to them.
      - c) In the end, due to their blasphemy, they were in an even worse condition than they were before Jesus came due to their unbelief and rejection of God’s salvation in Messiah Jesus.
      - d) Wiersbe concludes, "It is not enough to clean house; we must also invite in the right tenant. The Pharisees were proud of their ‘clean houses,’ *but their hearts were empty!* Mere religion, or reformation, will not save. There must be regeneration, the receiving of Christ into the heart (see Rev.3:20). We cannot be neutral about Jesus Christ" (Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 103-104).
5. Mt 12:46-50, Mk 3:31-50, and Lk 8:19-21 all record the arrival of Jesus’ mother Mary and His brothers at this point.
  - a. They came to see and to speak with Jesus and presumably to remove Him from what they felt was an unhealthy and dangerous situation before it escalated further (cf., Mk 3:20-21).
  - b. However, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’" (Mt 12:48-50)
  - c. The kingdom of God is more than biological relationships. Our true kinship is found in our common spiritual bond through our shared faith in Jesus Christ and our actions together in doing the will of God as directed together by the Holy Spirit.

### C. Reflections

1. Who do you say Jesus is? He is the Messiah, the Son of God, your Savior and Redeemer.
2. Affirm who Jesus is with your self-sacrificial words and actions.
3. Let every word of your mouth and action you take reveal the goodness of God which is in your heart.
4. Don’t test God by asking for a sign but by trusting Him fully as you live out your faith in Jesus.
5. Look around at your brothers and sisters in Christ. Give thanks to God that you are part of this loving family of faith!