

## **Condemnation of Israel's Leaders**

### **Matthew 12:38—50**

The Leaders of Israel vilify Jesus every chance they get. Instead of seeing Jesus as their Messiah and the spiritual and physical savior of their nation, they only see him as a threat to their power and authority over the people. They only care about themselves. This has been going on for at least 600 years so they are not about to change. They have connected themselves to the dead vine of the religiosity and traditionalism of their progenitors.

As Jesus confronts them on various issues, they resist any possibility that they may be in the wrong. They are fools who will not listen to anyone of lesser status than they.

#### **Show us a sign** (verses 38—40)

Jesus has been going through the nation healing thousands, casting out innumerable demons and other miracles such as feeding of the 5,000. Everywhere He went there were great crowds that followed Him because He offered them hope in a dark land. He had been showing Israel sign after sign, all pointing to the fact that their Messiah was in their midst.

After approximately two years of traveling throughout Israel giving thousands of signs to draw the Little Flock to Himself, the Pharisees have the audacity to ask Jesus for a sign. They have been confronted many times with proof that Israel's Messiah was right there in front of them yet they choose not to believe and each sign given seems to provide the leaders the impetus to exterminate Him.

Christ was very willing to give signs to those whose heart was willing to believe but for those whose hearts had rejected the Gospel of the Kingdom time after time, He wasn't willing to give them any more light. Even after His resurrection He demonstrated many signs (John 20:30) but not for the unbelievers. This is why in Mark 8:11—12 He refused to give the Pharisees a sign. According to Luke 11:29 there would be no more signs for those Pharisees who were part of the generation of unbelieving and evil leaders. This generation went back at least 600 years before Jesus to the time of Isaiah (Isaiah 59).

In verse 39 Jesus gives them only one sign, that of Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth. This of course was pointing to Jesus dying then rising back to life on the third day.

Jonah is usually portrayed as being alive in the belly of the fish for three days. Most assume there was enough air in the belly for Jonah to survive the ordeal. I've always heard his skin would have been bleached from the stomach acid. However, a more plausible alternative is that Jonah actually died then brought back to life. Jonah 2:2 very specifically says Jonah cried out from the belly of Sheol (place of the dead). Verse 4 says Jonah was cast out of the Lord's sight but he was looking forward to seeing the Temple (in the Millennial Kingdom). Verse 6 says God brought Jonah's life from the pit. So it would seem that while Jonah's body was in the fish for three days his soul was in Sheol.

This is what happened to Jesus when He died. He went down to the lower parts of the earth, usually understood to be Hades (Sheol in the Old Testament). Then resurrected three days later. Jonah died then rose back to life and preached to the Ninevites. Jesus, interestingly, died and went and preached to the disobedient spirits who were in prison (1 Peter 3:18—20). He definitely would not be preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom since it would be too late to change their mind (Hebrews 9:27). Perhaps he preached the victory of His death burial and soon-to-come resurrection. He then takes the Paradise side of Hades to heaven (Ephesians 4:8—10; 2 Corinthians 12:4). According to Luke 16:19—31 Hades is made up of two parts, Paradise and the place of torment.

### **Four times condemned** (verses 41—42)

So far Israel's leaders condemned themselves by what they said (Mathew 12:24, 36) and condemned by Jesus for their unbelief and rejection of Christ (Matthew 23). Now we will see two others who condemn these Leaders.

First the men of Nineveh condemn Israel's leaders because when Jonah preached that they needed to repent they immediately, man and beast, covered themselves in sackcloth and repented. Jonah 3:5 says they believed God, something the leaders of Israel refused to do. The actions of this Gentile nation will condemn Israel

The Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10) is also mentioned as one who condemns the leaders of Israel through her actions. She was an extremely rich queen from northern Africa who had heard about the God of Israel and the wisdom of Solomon and decided to visit him. She asked him many hard questions and he was able to answer them all. She understood that all of Solomon's possessions and wisdom were from God and she blessed him and acknowledge the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Since she blessed Israel, she herself was also blessed according to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:3). She was able to see God behind Solomon while the Pharisees couldn't see God behind (or in) Jesus. They were blind while she could see.

### **Prophet, Priest and King**

The Pharisees have rejected Jesus as a Prophet, a Priest and their King. In verse 6 Jesus says something greater than the temple was with them; a reference to the priesthood. In verse 40 Jesus says something greater than Jonah was with them. He was greater than the great prophet Jonah. Verse 41 says something greater than Solomon was there. This of course was a reference to Jesus as King. The Jewish leadership rejected each office Jesus was to hold, a complete and absolute rejection.

### **The clean house** (verses 43—45)

Christ, the stronger man, was going through Israel casting out Satan, the strong man (verse 29). Satan had taken possession of Israel and no person was able to break his stranglehold. Now the housecleaning had begun as Jesus was loosening the bonds that held Israel for so long. Once the house (of Israel) was clean, Israel could make a decision to be filled with God. It would not be possible for Israel as a nation to accept Christ as Messiah until Satan was forced out. The house of Israel could now freely choose to follow Christ into the Kingdom if they decided to do so.

The problem and danger was that if they did not fill their house with God that Satan would be able to go back into the newly-cleaned house and take it over. However, the real problem was they would be seven times worse off because seven times more demons will take residence. This is what will be experienced during the Tribulation. I believe if Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah that there still would have been a Tribulation to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies. The purpose of the Tribulation will be to purify Israel and get rid of any unbelievers. It's possible that the Tribulation would not be as severe if they had accepted the offer of the Kingdom because the house (of Israel) would have been filled with God instead of Satan and therefore seven times more demons would not be able to fill Israel.

### **Mother and brothers** (verses 46—50)

While Jesus is presenting Israel's future certain of the Jews interrupted Him to say that His mother and brothers were outside and wanted to talk with Him. This was probably a satanic distraction to cause the group to refocus on something trivial instead of their future. Jesus turns it into an opportunity to tell them about the Kingdom. He says His real mother and brothers are those who do the will of the Father. It's the Father's will that Israel come to Christ (John 6:39—40). He changed the conversation from His physical family to His spiritual family.

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