

Matthew 12 - The sign of the prophet Jonah

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Verse 1 of Matthew 12. *“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath.” (ESV)* Let me stop you for just a moment.

When Israel was told in the Law how they should go about harvesting their fields, they were told to leave some at the end of the rows. And this was for people traveling through. This is for folks who were poor, homeless, or just pilgrims moving through. And this was just God's way of showing mercy and compassion to people who didn't have what others did. And so He said, don't harvest all the way to the end of your fields, leave the end rows for people who are just passing through so that they can glean what they need. And that's essentially what's going on.

Jesus and His disciples here on the Sabbath day are just moving through the area and they see that some of these end rows are left with the kernels still on there. And so they begin to pluck them and eat them.

And it says in verse 2, *“But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.””* I want you to take note of that. They said it was *“not lawful”* for them to do that. We'll talk about that in a minute.

And *“³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”*

And what He means by that is that even on the Sabbath, the priests do their duties. They carry out their functions, which is work. And yet, they do it on the Sabbath, which is the day that they were not to work.

And then He goes on in verse 6 to say, *“I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. (He’s referring to Himself) ⁷ And if you had known what this*

means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.'" Let's stop there, please, for a minute.

Let's talk about this and what's going on because it's important to know the history of this whole thing. In the Law of Moses, God had commanded Israel to rest 1 day out of 7. In fact, He told them to rest on the seventh day, which is Saturday. It's called, the Seventh Day Sabbath. And essentially His message to them was do no regular work. That was it. Okay. Do no regular work. That's really all God said about the Sabbath in terms of how it was to be obeyed or kept, if you will.

Now, the Sabbath is a wonderful sort of a deal because it provides an insightful and powerful prophetic picture of our salvation. Israel was being taught by the Lord to rest and to do no work.

And that's a picture of how we are saved when we put our faith in Jesus Christ. We rest in His work, His finished work on the cross, and we do not work for our salvation. We do no work of our own in order to be saved, right? You can't be good enough. You can't be whatever people try to be. You can't be that, it's just not possible. You have to rest in what Jesus did on the cross. All right. You can see that the whole Sabbath picture was given to Israel to learn how to rest.

However, by the time Jesus came along in His public ministry, the Sabbath really bore very little resemblance to the to what God had originally intended it to be. And of course, that's what happens when man gets ahold of God's Word and decides he needs to improve on it. And he starts adding rules and regulations and traditions. And that's exactly what the Jews did.

God told them in the Law, do no regular work on the Sabbath. And so they sat down together and said, well, yeah, but what does that mean? So they had to come up with all these definitions and all these rules and so forth. Then it became burdensome. It became nothing like God originally intended it to be.

That's what the Jews had done with the Sabbath when Jesus came along. And so they see His disciples plucking heads of grain and eating them, and they immediately accused them of violating the regulations of the Sabbath, because you see by plucking grain, they were harvesting. By rubbing it in their hands and separating the kernel of wheat from the chaff, they were winnowing and blowing away the chaff. And then by squeezing it all together, and that's what they would do. They'd take a bunch of kernels of grain and squeeze them together and then pop them in their mouth, that was preparing food. And they

said they were violating the Word of God according to the Pharisees, as it relates to the Sabbath regulations.

You may not agree with me on this, but this is what I call religion. This is my definition, and maybe it's not yours, but my definition of religion is what man adds to the simplicity of God's Word. And it's still going on today. It's happening all over the place.

Because we, I don't know what it is about man, we just have this, it's something that we've got to, we can't just leave things alone. We've got to add to it. We've got to comment on it. We have to interpret it. Well, I think, and you know what I think about that. Who cares what you think? It's what the Bible says that we all should be concerned about. It's not what you think, or how you interpret it, or something like that.

What does God's Word simply say? Because you see, if we don't, if we don't keep our mitts off His Word, it will quickly become burdensome and heavy and oppressive. And I believe this is what Jesus had in mind when He said, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden. You've been out there in the world of men and they've been heaping all these rules and all these regulations and all these traditions on you. And they're not anything that I told you to do, so come to Me and I'll give you rest. I'll give you rest.

Now verse 7 is of critical importance. Let's read it again. He says, *“And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’* (and by the way, that's a quote from the Old Testament Book of Hosea. He says) *you would not have condemned the guiltless.”* Or as the NIV says, *“the innocent.”*

What is Jesus saying about what His disciples are doing? He's correcting them. They said, they're violating the Word of God. He says, no, they're actually innocent because all they're violating are your traditions and your interpretations of what this apparently means. But no rules were actually broken except rules that were created by you.

This is something that the prophet Isaiah spoke of 700 years before the birth of Christ, let me put this scripture up on the screen for you. From Isaiah chapter 29, it says,

Isaiah 29:13 (ESV)

And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,”

And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth (in other words, only with their mouth, their words) and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, (look at this) and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,"

It's not something that I gave them. It's something that men added to the Word of God. And so this is an ongoing problem. And one of the things that we've tried to do here at Calvary Chapel is get back to the simplicity of what God's Word says. And be able to separate it from man-made interpretation or even traditions.

And let me say this about traditions. There's nothing wrong with traditions in and of themselves, as long as we don't elevate them to the place of God's Word. We all just got done, I assume, celebrating Christmas in whatever way you celebrate Christmas, and there's a lot of people that don't like us celebrating Christmas.

And they'll even say, well, there's nothing in the Bible about celebrating Christmas, and they're right. There's nothing in the Bible about celebrating Christmas. Do you know that it's made up a hundred percent of tradition? Some of it comes from the church, some of it comes from the world. And many of those things have nothing to do with each other. But it's tradition. It's just tradition. Doesn't mean it's wrong, but we recognize it for what it is.

If you came up to me and you said, well, I just don't like to celebrate Christmas. I don't believe in celebrating... I just say, okay, cool. Doesn't matter. It's just human tradition. We don't elevate it. It's a... I personally, I like Christmas. Okay. So stone me, if you disagree. I know some people disagree with that. I've had some very interesting conversations with people over the years about whether or not we should celebrate Christmas and that sort of thing.

But I've never ever said that you've got to celebrate it, or if you don't, you're, I doubt your salvation or something stupid like that. It's a tradition. We recognize it for what it is. It's not a biblical sort of a commandment for us to do.

So why do we do it? Well, just because we love Jesus, and we're happy that God sent His Son to save us by dying on the cross. That's why I celebrate it anyway. I mean, I don't know about you, so it is what it is. We move on here.

Verse 9, it says, *"He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰ And a man was there with a withered hand. (And they, and of course the only reason they'd go in the synagogue is because it's the Sabbath) And they asked him, "Is*

it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (in other words, does that constitute work? And they, it tells us, Matthew tells us here that they did all of this) —so that they might accuse him. (and) ¹¹ He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³ Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.”

Now that would be pretty cool to witness. Would it not? I mean, you're here, like imagine yourself in church and there's a guy in the front row, which by the way, was a plant. We know that the religious leaders had planted him there to see what Jesus would do.

And so here's this guy with this hand is all atrophied and withered. And they, and so they stand up, so what do you think there rabbi? Is it lawful to do this on the Sabbath? And so Jesus poses this rhetorical question to them that frankly is there for the purpose of just exposing their duplicity. That they care more about their farm animals than they do people. Right. And their own livelihood than the livelihood of a man here, who's only one good working hand. And is probably limited in his ability to take care of his family because of that.

And so they pose this question to Jesus and so forth. And so He basically tells the guy in the front row, stretch out your hand. He does, and in front of them all, this man's hand is instantly made whole. Right. Goes from this withered, atrophied, probably shrunken, I don't know, condition, and it just looks perfect.

Now, I don't know how you would respond. I would probably respond like I do when the Vikings win, and I would go, Yippee! Or something like that. No, I would probably even respond even more than that. I would probably be like, wow, did you see that? But that's a heart that loves the Lord. How about a heart that is frustrated by miracles?

Well, its described in verse 14 if you look with me in your Bible. Says, “*But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.*” And make no mistake about it, that means how to kill Him.

In other words, the Pharisees witnessed this supernatural event of this man's hand being made whole, and they got together and said, this Man's got to die. I mean, we just cannot have this going around. People being healed. This guy's going to take all the attention of the people from us. Boy, that's the darkened heart, isn't it? I mean, for somebody to respond to a supernatural miracle in that sort of a way is pretty incredible.

But what we can see Matthew doing for us in this chapter, as he's been doing before, is he is revealing to us the growing opposition that Jesus faced at this particular point in His ministry and that opposition, which will continue.

And knowing, as Jesus did, that the Pharisees were seeking a way to literally eliminate Him. Matthew writes in verse 15, “*Jesus, (being) aware of this, (He) withdrew from there.*”

And I want you to know, this isn't out of fear. This has nothing to do with fear. This has to do with timing. Jesus was keenly aware of the timing of His ministry related to the things that He did and ultimately His sacrifice on the cross. And so understanding that timing, it says He withdrew.

And it says, He “*withdrew... And (it says) many followed him, and he healed them all* ¹⁶ *and ordered them not to make him known.*” And that was another timing issue. That's why He told the people not to say anything. He knew that the more this got around, the more excitement, the more crowds and the more opposition it was going to produce, which could in fact interfere with the timing of the Lord.

Verse 17, “*This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

- ¹⁸ “*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*
- ¹⁹ *He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;*
- ²⁰ *a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;*
- ²¹ *and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”*”

We've been talking about biblical prophecies that pertain to a particular time in, in history, and then also to a later time in history. We talked about this earlier. We said that it was the Law of Double Reference where a particular prophecy can have a reference to two different time periods.

And this is one of them again, because you'll notice, did you notice in the course of that prophecy, as Matthew quoted it, that it refers to the Gentiles two times. Two times the Gentiles are mentioned where it says He will bring to the Gentiles both hope and justice. Right? Well, that doesn't happen actually until

later. That happens when He calls upon men like the apostle Paul, who was the apostle to the Gentiles. And that's when that ministry began to really flourish, but it wasn't exactly right here. It was later on. Right?

I love how it also goes on to talk about in verse 20, It says, "*a bruised reed he will not break,*" Have you ever seen a reed? They grow up in swamps and a reed, has an end on it. And you, it's very typical sort of, you can see. And they can get hit by something as somebody who's maybe wading through the water, or a boat hits a reed and it breaks off, or it can be damaged, or whatever. And it doesn't take much then to just separate it completely from the stock. And yet it says of Jesus, and again, this is metaphorical language, "*a bruised reed he will not break.*"

It goes on to say, "*a smoldering wick he will not quench,...*" Have you ever walked by a candle that was, somebody had blown out, but there was still a little smoldering going on there? And it's, and you just walked up and lick your fingers and put it out. It's easy. Yeah. Well, again, that's a picture. It says of Jesus, "*a smoldering wick he will not quench,...*"

Well, what are all these things supposed to mean for you and me? How are we to see this? Well, those are pictures of His gentleness. It's talking about the gentleness of Jesus. His humility, His unwillingness to be harsh. We would say like a bull in a China shop. He's the exact opposite.

And this speaks of the heart of God as it relates to how He deals with His people. And I think those are just beautiful references to the gentleness of the Savior.

Verse 22. It says, "*Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute (in other words, couldn't see, couldn't talk, he) was brought to (Jesus) him, and (it says) he healed him, so that the man spoke and (could see, he) saw.*" ²³ *And all the people were amazed, and (they began to ask) said, "Can this be the Son of David?"*" And that's simply a way of saying, can this be the Messiah? Well, the religious leaders are obviously going to hear that. This would have been very difficult for them.

So what do you do when you got this guy going around doing these miracles? And you can't deny that it's a miracle because I mean, good grief. This guy was wandering around. He had to be led around by other people to see where he didn't know where he was going and he couldn't say a word. And now he's walking on his own. He can see where he's going and he's talking.

Well, what are you going to do if you're a Pharisee who isn't very happy about that? Well, you got to make up excuses, I suppose, explanations for how something like that could happen. Well, I know how that happens. I'll tell you one thing, it isn't God. It's not God. Don't do it. I know it looks like God, but it's not. So what do they say?

Verse 24. *“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, (oh yeah) “It is only by Beelzebul, (which is another name for Satan, It is only by Beelzebul,) the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”* They're literally accusing Jesus of operating in the power of Satan, rather than in the power of the living God. Okay.

Essentially you need to understand this. They are, and by the way, when we operate, not just Jesus, but when we operate in the power of God, that is through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Okay. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to accomplish things like that. We even as children of God can do some of the things that Jesus did. And Jesus Himself, operated through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

So they are saying they are ascribing to Satan the work that the Holy Spirit is doing through Jesus at this particular moment in time. Okay, you need to understand that's exactly what they're doing, because that's going to come into play in how Jesus responds to these individuals.

Verse 25, *“Knowing their thoughts, (as Jesus, of course, did) he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.”*

And basically what Jesus is doing is He's giving you a law that is immutable. And that means it's unchanging. It cannot be reversed. It's like the law of gravity. You throw something up in the air and the law of gravity dictates the fact that it has to return to the earth. Okay. Or the law of sowing and reaping. What a man sows, so also shall he reap. Right? Those are laws that were put in place and they're immutable.

Jesus says there's another law that you need to know about and that is every kingdom, every household, every city, and that includes even the United States of America, by the way, that is divided against itself, ultimately cannot stand. It's a rule. You can't get around it.

Now He's applying that to this statement that the Pharisees are making about the Holy Spirit, that Jesus is operating not through the power of the Holy Spirit, but

in fact, through the power of Satan. And He's saying that's ridiculous because if Satan is both blinding a man and then giving him back his sight, he is at cross purposes with himself, and his kingdom is therefore divided against itself, and cannot stand. You with me? In other words, He's revealing just exactly how stupid what they just said was, right?

He goes on in verse 26. He says, *“And if Satan casts out Satan, (well) he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?”* I just cast a demon out of this man. If Satan allowed that to happen, and then Satan cast that demon back out of him, again, his kingdom can't stand because he's now working against himself. Right?

He goes on to ask this important question in verse 27. *“And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, (or by Satan if you will) by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.”*

Now, when He says sons, He's not talking about biological sons. The Pharisees had individuals, agents, if you will, who went around doing exorcisms. And I don't know whether they were successful or not, but the Pharisees had people that... I mean, demon possession was such a problem that they knew they had to do something about it. And so they tried their best to exercise these demons from people. And they had people that they have specifically had doing that for them.

And Jesus is asking the question, if I'm doing it through the power of Satan, then who are your guys doing it through? You see, it's only logical to believe or to understand that if what you're saying is true, that Satan is divided against himself and it's through Satan that these things are happening, then your guys are also doing it through Satan. Obviously something they would never in a million years admit to, but again, He's revealing the duplicity of someone coming up with these ridiculous explanations for what's going on. And He's really just exposing them for what they are.

But he says here in verse 28, *“But if it is by the Spirit of God (or by the Spirit of God) that I cast out demons, (and of course it was) then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*²⁹ Or (and here's the other thing) *how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? (who obviously is going to defend his house, and) Then (and only then will) ... he (be able to get in and) ...plunder his house.”* That's simple sort of a picture here.

If you're going to enter somebody's house, and he's living in the house, and you're going to go in there, and take his belongings, well, you're going to first have to render the man of the house weak and unable to resist you. So you got to get in there and tie him up so that you can go into his house and take what you want. It's an interesting example, is it not? Of picture of what Jesus is trying to say.

And what He's trying to say is the only way that I can cast out demons is because I have the power and the authority to bind the strong man. And I can go in and take what I want and the reason is I'm stronger than he is. I'm greater than he is.

Don't ever allow the enemy to convince you that there's this cosmic battle going on between Jesus and Satan, and they're equally matched. They are not equally matched at all. Satan is a created being. Jesus is God in human flesh, uncreated. And so you need to understand that. And that's what Jesus is saying here.

And then He goes on to give a sobering judgment against people who would make such ridiculous claims. He said, *“Whoever is (verse 30) not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”*³¹ *Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*³² *And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”*

Now, we know that Jesus said these things because of what the Pharisees had just claimed, that Jesus was operating through the power of Satan. That's why He said what He said. And what that means is, if you want to know what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, it's what just happened. It's someone whose heart is so darkened and mind is so closed to God, that he would actually claim that what Jesus did through the agency of the Holy Spirit was accomplished through Satan himself. And you see, that is a blasphemous remark about the Holy Spirit because it is through the power of Holy Spirit that these miracles were wrought.

Jesus said, a blasphemous remark against the Holy Spirit like that, which is, again, ascribing the miracles done through Jesus to Satan, is an unforgivable sin. Why is that only an unforgivable sin? I have no idea. He doesn't explain. But we're talking here about people, the people who were given this sobering statement, we're talking about people who had seen Jesus, perform miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. And when they could no longer find any way to describe what was happening to the people, they opted for a

blasphemous statement about the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they denied what their eyes saw, and what their heart really truly knew to be going on.

I've had so many people over the years, and I'm sure most pastors have, who have come to them breathless, shaking and saying, pastor, I'm pretty sure I've committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And I always say, I'm pretty sure you didn't because you weren't there. And this is something He said to the Pharisees who had seen His miracles, and still chose to blaspheme in light of what was going on. Did you do that? Are you a Pharisee? Well, no. Were you there? No. You didn't commit blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Don't worry about it.

I don't think after Jesus said this, they cared in the slightest. The people who come to me who are concerned that they've committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, they're very concerned. In fact, they're out of their mind worried. And if you care, I can pretty safely say you didn't do that. I think this is the darkened heart who does not care. And who's literally past the point of return. So if that's ever been something, and by the way, the enemy loves to accuse people of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

He just loves— cause he knows you can put him into an emotional tailspin. Don't let him do it to you. Okay. Just don't even let him do it. If he even suggests to you that you've committed that kind of blasphemy. Just tell him to go away in the Name of Jesus. The Bible says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Book of James. Just tell him, no, I believe in Jesus. My faith is in Jesus Christ.

Verse 33, *“Either 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.”* ³⁴ *You brood of vipers! (you see what Jesus thinks of these guys) How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.* ³⁵ *The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”* Again, He's exposing where these blasphemous statements come from.

He says, *“³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

And I need to tell you that the way that Jesus is using the word, justified in this passage is not the same way that Paul uses it in his letters. He uses the word,

justified to describe a righteous standing before God. Here Jesus is using the word, justified to mean that your words will either condemn you or acquit you because, the words reflect the soul. They're a window to the soul.

And I also want to encourage those of you whose hearts are tender. When Jesus says that, He says, *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,"* I want to remind you of something that I feel the need to remind you of every single time a statement regarding judgment like this is made in the Word of God. As Christians, and what I mean by that, as People who have put their faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, you will not stand before God and have your sins judged. You ought to be getting up and cheering. I'm not telling you to. But honestly, that should be your reaction.

I wonder sometimes if people really believe what I'm saying. You will not be judged for your sin, because Jesus already was judged for your sin on the cross. And He said, remember, *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30) You see, and I've told you this, and I'll keep telling you as long as I have the ability to tell you. If any, if a single word is brought against you, where a sin in your life is exposed and condemned, then what Jesus said on the cross wasn't true. It wasn't finished. There was still more to condemn. No, He took it all.

He was condemned for you. And the Bible says, *"there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) Do you believe that? I hope you believe that. I know a lot of Christians who don't.

In fact, I had a guy write to me a couple of weeks ago. I shouldn't laugh. But a guy wrote to me and he said, he started off his letter going, all right, I know that I'm saved by grace through faith. It's not by works, but it's only through the sacrifice of Jesus. He starts off that way. Then he goes on to tell me about something he did, and is there any way I could lose my salvation because of that?

And I ran back and I said, so in other words, what you told me at the beginning of your note, you really don't believe that. You see, you can know something here (Pastor Paul points to his head) and not here. (Pastor Paul points to his heart) People have said that's the longest journey of mankind; from the head to the heart. Where you know, that you know, intellectually, I am forgiven and I will not stand before God and be condemned for my sin because Jesus already was. And then you do something, and what does Satan come along and say, you're condemned, right? And he gets you all in a lather about the whole thing. And pretty soon you're doubting the fact that you're even saved. And it's

because we know things in our mind, but we struggle to embrace them with our heart.

You will not be condemned before the Father if you are in Christ today, because Jesus was condemned on your behalf. I actually love saying that. I really do. It's one of the fun nest things I get to say as a pastor. If you are a Christian, if you are a born again believer, judgment is past as it relates to sin. The only judgment that awaits you is a judgment of rewards based on what you've done with what the Lord gave you.

Verse 38, *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” As if they hadn't seen any yet. “³⁹ But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, ...”* Why did Jesus say that? You know why? Because they'd already seen a bunch of signs and they chose not to believe. And so there, this is total duplicity.

He goes on here. He says, *“...but no sign will be given to it (that generation) except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”* I think you know Jonah from the Bible. *“⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

And so He's using the picture of Jonah to talk about the fact that He, after His death on the cross, will be in the grave for a period of time before His resurrection. He calls it, the sign of the prophet Jonah. He says, you want a sign? I'll give you a sign and it's called my resurrection. But you're even going to deny that.

When you hear that the tomb was empty, you're going to say, well, they came and stole His body in the night while the soldiers were sleeping. How would that stand up in a court of law? When those soldiers got up on the stand. So you were sleeping, right? Yeah. And they stole His body while you were sleeping. Yeah. How do you know you were sleeping? Oh! Yeah, I would have been thrown out of any court. It's just, it's dumb. And so He knows, He knows that's what's going on.

There's another issue to this though, that I need to address and that is this issue of the fact that Jesus talked about three days in the heart of the earth, just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish and so forth. And there's a lot of people that read this and they're like, okay, that doesn't make sense. Because they read in the Gospels how it doesn't seem like three days at all because they're thinking of days as a 24 hour period of time. And so they go, okay, Jesus

was crucified on Good Friday, right? But He was put into the tomb in the evening, right before sundown. And then He was in the tomb all day Saturday. And then He came out of the tomb early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise. Well, that's not even close to 72 hours. And so people have had to come up with all kinds of alternate. Well see, He really didn't die on Friday, it was earlier. It was on Thursday.

I had a guy do that once. Years and years ago, I invited a guy to speak at a men's breakfast and that was his message to tell everybody the Bible's wrong. He really didn't die on Good Friday. He died actually earlier than that because if you figure it out, you have to figure out 72 hours. No, you don't.

Here's the deal. Here's where people mess up. The Jews took any portion of a day, even if it was a half hour, and they reckoned it as a day. If I came over to your house on a Friday right before sundown, and I stayed all day Saturday, and then I left Sunday morning right after the sun came up, as a Jew, I would say to you well, I've been here long enough. I've been with you for three days. And you'd go, well, not really.

Well, if you were a Jew, you'd say, yeah, you have, because that's how they reckoned a day. Any portion of a day was a whole day, or at least it was spoken of as a whole day. And so that's what's going on. That's why Jesus talks the way He does. And that's how you can figure that sort of thing. You can't think like an American living today, you have to think like a Jew living back then.

Verse 41, speaking of Jonah, He says, *“The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”*

You guys remember the whole the story of Jonah, but do you know Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian empire? The Assyrians were the ones who conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. They were a brutal, paganistic society and the Jews hated them. Hated them. And Jonah was a Jew who hated the Assyrians.

Along comes God and He goes, Jonah, I want you to go to the capital city of the Assyrian empire, and I want you to preach repentance to them. And Jonah said, no. And he hopped the first boat he could find in the opposite direction, right? And of course, we learned from that story you can't run from God. And Jonah eventually after spending some time in the belly of a fish, which must have been delightful, he ends up going to Nineveh, preaching to the Ninevites to repent because of their sin. And they repent; from the king on down to the lowest slave

and servant, they repented in sackcloth and ashes. And Jonah went outside the city, sat down, and pouted because he was mad that they repented, because he wanted God to destroy them. He didn't want Him to show them mercy. You guys know how the Book of Jonah goes.

Well, here's the point. Jesus says, the men of Nineveh are going to rise up at the judgment. They're going to condemn you. You know why? They repented at the preaching of Jonah. But when the son of God came to you, you hardened your heart. Yeah. And that's a pretty serious accusation.

He goes on to say in verse 42, *“The queen of the South (or in 1 Kings, she's referred to as, the Queen of Sheba, I think that's 2 Kings, anyway, He says she) will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”*

Did you catch these 3 references? Someone greater than the temple is here. Someone greater than Jonah is here. Someone greater than Solomon is here. The Son of God is in your midst and you hardened your heart. The queen of Sheba came all the way just to hear Solomon talk. And now the Son of God is in their midst and they refuse to listen. Pretty powerful pictures that He's giving, but He's systematically revealing Himself: Greater. Greater than. Greater than. Right?

There's so many people, I've told you this before, who are so upset about the fact that Jesus just doesn't come out and say, I'm the Son of God, okay? Or I am God in human flesh. But if you're willing to look at the Word of God and see what it says, you can see that He reveals himself for those who are paying attention and for those who have ears to hear. All right.

The next few verses here talk about Jesus revealing something that we couldn't know apart from Him talking about it. Verse 33, he says, *“When the unclean spirit (in other words, a demon) has gone out of a person, (who's been inhabited by a demon, He says,) it passes through waterless places (I have no idea what that means, but except that it's just dry places) seeking rest, but finds none.”*

Now, I don't really know what all this means, but here's the first thing Jesus reveals to us that we wouldn't know otherwise. Demons are looking for or searching for rest but they're unable to find it.

Now, I want to remind you something. Demons are fallen angels. Okay. And when they fell and followed Satan in his plan to overthrow the throne of God,

they gave up for all eternity, the ability to find rest. Like that Rolling Stone song, I can't get no satisfaction. I always thought that was demonic. Anyway, they cannot find rest. All right. What a terrible reality.

Verse 44. *“Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’* (in other words, I'm going to go back to the same person I once inhabited) *And* (but) *when it comes, it finds the house empty*, (that's important) *swept*, (and this is also important) *and put in order*.

⁴⁵ *Then it goes* (and obviously it can't enter because this home is now put in order. There's something about that order because demons are beings of disorder and so it can't— so it says I'm going to go and find some of my buddies and it tells, it says) *and* (it) *brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first.*”

So and He's going to make a concluding statement about that, which we'll look at in just a second. Fact number 2 about what He's telling us that we wouldn't know otherwise. It is possible for a demon to re-inhabit an individual who has been delivered from a demonic spirit.

Fact number 3, when a person is delivered, their house is put in order and that creates a situation where a demon is hindered from reentering.

Fact number 4, demons will at times gang up in their numbers so that they're strong enough to enter a home that maybe has been put in order.

And then fact number 5, if a person is never inhabited by God, he or she may end up worse off than before.

And by the way, that's, I believe that's what Jesus meant when he said that the demon comes back to the original host, finds it put in order, but also finds it empty. Empty.

By the way you can never have a demon. You know why? As a believer, you're not empty. You've been filled with the Holy Spirit, and believe me, no demon is going to come and inhabit a host where the Holy Spirit is living. Yeah that's just not going to happen, alright? Don't worry about that. And if anybody ever told you that believers can have a demon, be invested with a demon I suggest you ask them to show you one single verse in the Bible where a believer is invested with a demon. Just one. It doesn't exist. Okay?

Here's the conclusion though to all of these interesting insights that He's giving us. He says, *“so also will it be with this evil generation.”* Meaning the generation of people at the time Jesus was speaking. They had witnessed, again, miracle after miracle, but they were empty. They didn't invite the Lord into their lives, and so they will be worse off than before.

Verse 46, the final section, *“While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁸ But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*

All right. What is Jesus saying here? Well, first of all, we know that there was tension between Jesus and His family. We know that from other Gospel accounts. Let me show you this from Mark on the screen, chapter 3. It says,

Mark 3:20-21 (ESV)

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

Then he (Jesus) went (to His) home, (which is up in the region of Nazareth) and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, (look at this) for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

Yeah, He's out of his mind. They went to go take control of Him. Now it should, shouldn't be assumed that this was Mary's attitude toward Jesus. I don't think it was, but we know that it was the attitude of His brothers. John comes out and just says as much. Up on the screen, John chapter 7,

John 7:5 (ESV)

For not even his brothers believed in him.

For not even his brothers believed in him.

And it wasn't until later. Now, thankfully two of his brothers we know for sure came to faith because they wrote books in the Bible. The Book of Jude is written by his half-brother. The Book of James is written by his half-brother.

They were the sons of Mary and Joseph. That has a relatively happy ending as it relates to that.

But what Jesus is saying here when He says, “*Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?*” He's not dismissing the importance of family connection or family devotion, not at all. What He is doing is He's emphasizing the priority of our devotion as it relates to our devotion to God.

In other words, be devoted to your family by all means, but guess who comes first? God. God comes first. That's why He said what He did back in Matthew chapter 10. Do you guys remember? Let me put it on the screen. It was just a couple of chapters ago.

Matthew 10:37 (ESV)

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

He's not telling you not to love mother and father, or son or daughter. He's talking about priorities. In other words, if you're willing to spit in God's face to somehow save a relationship in your home or in your family, you're willing to compromise, then you've got a problem on your hands. Your first level of devotion is to God, right? Even if family tries to pull you away.

But there's something else that Jesus is saying here when He talks about, points to His disciples and says, this is my family. What He's doing is He's broadening our idea of family because we tend to think of it in terms of genetics, DNA, blood relation. But Jesus wants us to understand that family for you and me has been enlarged. Look around this room. Here's your family. That's what John writes in the first chapter of his Gospel account. Up on the screen. He says,

John 1:12-13 (ESV)

...to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

...to all who did receive him, (Jesus) who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (children) who were born, not of blood (that's like DNA) nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

You and I have been born of God and we are now children of God. And that means we're family in this room and we need to start acting like it. We need to actually, well, it starts by first of all, thinking about it. Thinking about the fact, and I got to tell you something. I have many times throughout the course of my life failed at this simple idea of treating the body of Christ like family, the same way I treat family.

Because I can safely say when it comes to my children, they're all grown now, but even so, if one of them became needy in some area, I, just like you guys, I would give everything. Wouldn't you? For your kids? You'd give anything. You want it, you got it. I love you guys so much that you want it, you got it.

Have I always been that same way with the body of Christ? No. I pray for my kids a lot. When people ask me to pray for them, do I always do it the way I should? No. But I'm trying to do better. And I think we all need to do that as well, because we're family. We've been born into the same family, amen.

Let's stand together. If you need prayer this morning, come on down front. We'd be happy to pray with you. We'll have some folks here to do that.

Father, I thank You so much for the power and majesty of Your Word. I thank You God for the things You reveal in it and the way You instruct us, and fill us with understanding.

But I thank You also Father God for the conviction of the Holy Spirit when we're in the Word as You speak to our hearts and talk to us about how we can do better. And how we need to embrace, not just with our head, but with our heart, the things that are given to us in the Word.

Lord, help us to stand strong on the promises of God. Help us to live out our life as the family of God. Help us to be a witness to this lost and dying world. And help us to glorify Your Name in all things.

Lord, as we go into this new year, lead us and guide us in the way that we are to go. Give us hearts of submission, hearts of humility, hearts that long for You above all else.

For we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And all God's people said together, amen.

Have a good rest of your day.