

Text: Mt 12.38-45, Lk 11.24-36; Mt 12.46-50, Mk 3.31-35, Lk 8.19-21

Last week we ended on a bit of a cliffhanger. Do you recall what it was?

In Mk 3.21, it says, “When His own people heard *of this*, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’”

We mentioned last week that the Lord’s family heard of what was happening to him and concluded he was in trouble. They set out to bring him home.

In the meantime, the Lord continues his teaching, all the while facing the challenges of the Pharisees. As we survey the accounts, we find the writers picking out highlights of what he said. Some record this detail; others record that. We will try to sort out where each piece fits in the puzzle as we look at our passages this week.

I. The immediate context

- A. The Jews accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of demons
- B. Jesus counters with spiritual logic and a warning
 - 1. The logic: if he was using the power of demons to cast out demons, Satan’s house would be divided and could not stand
 - 2. The warning: beware of blaspheming the Holy Spirit by saying his work is the work of demons
- C. With this context in mind, the teaching (and interaction with the Jews) continues

II. The conclusion of the Lord’s defense against demonism (Mt 12.38-45, Lk 11.24-36)

- A. The demand for signs [Additional material added by Matthew] (Mt 12.38-42)
 - 1. The Pharisees and scribes want proof: “show us a sign” (38)
 - 2. Jesus rebukes them with two illustrations that show their grave spiritual danger (39-42)
 - a. He calls them an evil and adulterous generation (39)
 - 1) God often accused Israel of spiritual adultery in the OT
 - 2) The Lord’s charge shows that not much is changed

b. The first illustration: the sign of Jonah (40-41)

- 1) The only sign this generation will be given is the sign of Jonah, *i.e.* the sign of resurrection (40)
- 2) The consequence of this sign is that the Assyrians (Ninevites) of that day will stand up in the judgement and condemn this generation (41)

c. The second illustration: the queen of Sheba (42)

- 1) The queen of Sheba spent great sums to travel to see the great Solomon in his court
- 2) Sheba will stand up in judgement against this generation because they did not value Christ properly

Note: we are following Matthew's order in this discussion; Luke has these illustrations later, Lk 11.29-36.

B. Resuming the defense against demonism (Mt 12.43-45, Lk 11.24-26)

1. Remember, they accused Jesus of casting out demons by demonic power
2. Jesus offers a description of "ordinary exorcism" – a problem with which Jewish exorcists must have struggled
 - a. The demon is cast out of the troubled person
 - b. The demon comes back, finding his former house "swept and put in order" (Mt 12.44, Lk 11.26)
 - c. The house is ready to receive new occupants, the demon comes back in force, with more of his friends to help him
 - d. We know there were Jewish exorcists during this period of history (see Lk 11.19, *cf.* Ac 19.15) – no doubt this was a repeating problem
 - e. When Jesus casts a demon out, they don't come back – that is because the Holy Spirit is involved

3. But the bigger point is this: “That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.” (Mt 12.45)
 - a. This generation [Israel] may sweep up its house and put things in order [Pharisaism]
 - b. But its last state is worse than its first, because it has not the Holy Spirit

C. An interruption: a woman in the crowd cries out (Lk 11.27-28)

1. She cries out a blessing on Jesus mother (27)
2. Jesus contradicts: “a blessing on those who believe and obey” (28)

Her interruption anticipates the event that occurs as this sermon is winding down, the arrival of Jesus’ family (the cliffhanger is over).

D. Notice the two parables that conclude Luke’s presentation of this material (Lk 11.33-36)

1. These parables are also taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5.14-16)
2. Their insertion here indicate one of two things
 - a. It could be that Luke is moving material around for his own purposes
 - b. It could be (more likely is) that Jesus would use illustrations more than once in his preaching
3. The point is another way of warning “this generation” – they walk in darkness

III. Jesus and his family (Mt 12.46-50, Mk 3.31-35, Lk 8.19-21)

- A. We are following Mark’s chronology in most cases, this shows that at this point, Luke is out of chronological order.
- B. The accounts are all agreed as to what happened
 1. The family, concerned for his well-being, set out to rescue him (remember his brothers do not yet believe in him)
 2. The crowd is great, the family is unable to reach him

3. The message works its way into the midst — “Your mother and brothers are here”

4. He uses the occasion to make a fitting conclusion to his preaching

C. Who is in Christ’s family?

1. His disciples

2. Anyone who does the will of God

3. Israel needs to hear this message! (The whole world needs to hear it!)

I don’t think Jesus was separating himself from his family. No doubt, as the crowd dispersed, he did see them. The point of his statement is the point of the message.

Conclusion:

What should we take away from these passages?

1. The most important decision you can make in life is to be rightly related to Jesus Christ.
2. The sermon is a warning against “mere religion” – it is like putting lipstick on a pig, you can dress someone up in morality and even religion, but unless they hear and do the will of God, nothing has happened.