“THE REJECTION OF THE KING” (PART 2)

Last week we looked at the first half of Matthew Chapter 12 and the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders…remember there were two confrontations and plans were hatched as to how they could kill Jesus. Their rejection of Jesus, their hatred for Him was so strong that they wanted Him dead. Today we will pick up the action beginning in verse 22. But before we do I just wanted to follow up on the discussion from last week. The point was raised that as Christians we might be capable of feeling something so strongly that isn’t true and being so entrenched in what we believe that we are blinded to the truth. In other words the question is – Can Christians today be as spiritually blinded and rebellious as the Pharisees of Jesus’ day?

[one difference – we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us as believers, but clearly we can resist the HS (Acts 7:51), we can rebel against and grieve the HS (Isa 63:10, Eph 4:30), insult the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29), quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19), lie to the HS (Ananias in Acts 5:3), set our desire against the Spirit (Gal 5:17)]

First John 4:4-6 says this: “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them (false teachers), for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

READ Matthew 12:22-32. Here we have a third confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. Notice the reaction of the people in verse 23. They are amazed and ask, “Can this be the Son of David?” Can this be the Messiah? And immediately, feeling threatened by what the people said, and the thought that they might assume Jesus to be their Messiah, the Pharisees quickly and publicly try and squelch this. They cannot deny that what Jesus did was supernatural so they claim that what He did was by the power of Satan, it was the work of the devil. You need to see the seriousness of this. They called Jesus, the perfect Son of God, satanic. God’s glorious gift from heaven, they said was from hell. They not only blasphemed Jesus by their erroneous conclusion but they also blasphemed the Holy Spirit who was empowering Him.

Philippians 2:6-8 tells us that Jesus “though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus while He is in human flesh is still God, but He is voluntarily set aside the prerogatives of His deity and submitted to the will of His Father, placing Himself totally under His authority and becomes totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit clearly directs and energizes what Jesus does in His earthly ministry. The Spirit of God descended and rested on Jesus (Matt 3:16). The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt 4:1). Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee (Luke 4:14). The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him (Luke 4:18). And we know that Jesus cast the demon out in the passage we just read by the power of the Holy Spirit because He says as much in His response to the Pharisees in verse 28.

So this is why Jesus accuses the Pharisees of blaspheming, of speaking against the Holy Spirit. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit when they attributed the work of God, done in the power of the Holy Spirit through the person of Jesus, to Satan rather than to God. They should have been glorifying God. Instead, they blasphemed Him.

Jesus threefold response to the Pharisees accusation is (1) vs 25-26, the idea that Satan would cast out his own demons is absurb, this makes no sense at all; (2) vs 27-28, if I am casting out demons by the power of Satan, then by whose power do your sons (disciples of the Pharisees perform exorcisms, such as in Acts 19:13) casting out demons? How did you arrive at that conclusion? (3) vs 29-30, gives a parable of binding a strong man to show that He must be from God to be able to do what He did (casting out a demon) because only God is more powerful than Satan (the strong man in this parable). Jesus basically says, “Haven't I shown you that My ability to steal Satan’s property, to control his hosts, to throw out his demons, to deliver men who are captive to his system and free them from their diseases, haven't I shown you that I can spoil his house? If I can spoil his house, I can bind him up; and if I can bind him up, then I am greater than he is."

Well, for their blasphemy Jesus condemned them in verses 31-32. These religious leaders have been given all revelation they could possibly have – His miracles, His teachings, His life and the godly character He exhibited. Their conclusion that He was from the devil was unforgiveable. Having been exposed to all truth they concluded the very opposite. Their words ultimately damned them. It wasn’t that they were condemned just because of something they said, but their words revealed the corruption of their heart.

Last week Lon Latham summarized the Pharisees this way: “Their heart was so hardened by their laws that they had lost their way.” They were truly lost, weren’t they. I want to mention something about the hardness of the Pharisees heart. They stood condemned because they did not believe the truth, they could not see the truth right in front of their eyes. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16, the rich man who is in hell begs Father Abraham, “I beg you, father, that you send him (Lazarus) to my father's house-- for I have five brothers--in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.” But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” Why was the rich man in hell? What was his great sin? He went to hell because he would not heed God’s word. He did not believe God. He would not listen to the prophets who proclaimed God’s truth. He rejected God’s free gift of salvation which comes through faith. He rejected God’s grace. He rejected God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Well, the rich man said “No” to God while he was alive on the earth. Now in death, listen to his response to Abraham…But he said, “No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!” But he said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.” In John 11 Jesus travels to Bethany and raises another guy by the name of Lazarus from the dead. The report of this miracle makes its way to the Pharisees in Jerusalem. In John 11:53 we read that instead of believing that Jesus really was the Messiah sent by God, they plotted to kill Him! When Jesus Himself arose from the dead, did the hard-hearted Pharisees repent and believe? No! Even then they still refused to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. In fact, Matthew records in the 28th Chapter that after Jesus had been resurrected the Jewish leaders actually paid the Roman soldiers to lie. “Tell the people the disciples came by night while we were asleep and stole His body!” So, as you can see, the rich man’s claim to father Abraham that if someone came back from the dead people would believe proved to be false. No matter what Jesus said or did they refused to believe. And thus they stood condemned.

In verses 33-37 Jesus teaches that a tree is known by its fruit. It’s a simple parable and one He has used before in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:15-20). Bottom line: Jesus tells them “You cannot say that I am evil if I what I am doing is good (healing, casting out demons, preaching the gospel, etc). If I have good fruit, then I must be a good tree. By contrast, Pharisees, your corrupt fruit (your blasphemy, your uncaring attitude, your pride, etc) shows you are corrupt trees. Jesus calls them a “brood of vipers.” They are descended from that old serpent of Genesis 3, Satan himself. Verse 34 says, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” The heart here is referring to the mind and the will of man. Proverbs 23:7 in KJV: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Sooner or later the mouth will spew out of it what is overflowing in your heart (anger, joy, frustration, fear, irritation, pain, etc). That’s when our careless words come out.

READ Matthew 12:38. The Pharisees ask to see a sign. Specifically they want to see a sign from heaven (we know this from a similar exchange with Jesus later in Matt 16)… “Prove yourself. Validate thru a sign that you really are the Messiah!” As if Jesus had not already proved who He was!

Jesus knew that nothing He said or did was going to convince them that He was from God. They stood firm in their rejection of Jesus.

Look at Jesus’ response. READ Matthew 12:39-40. “No sign will be given except the sign of Jonah.” You all know the story of Jonah…flees from God, gets on a boat, storm, thrown into sea, swallowed by big fish, in fish for 3 days, fish vomits him up, goes on to Nineveh and preaches a one-point sermon – “in 40 days Nineveh is going to be overthrown!” Jesus explains what the sign of Jonah is in verse 40…it’s a prophecy about His resurrection, His bodily resurrection from the grave. What happened to Jonah in the O.T. serves as a type of what will happen to Jesus. It looked like the end…buried in the depths…came out…after three days.

That’s the only sign you are going to get. And even then having already been condemned He knew they would still not believe. Jesus knew the heart of these hypocritical snakes. He was not going to bend to the whims of those who rejected Him.

READ Matthew 12:41. Those Gentile, pagan, idolatrous Ninevites with no law of God and no understanding were preached to by a sinful, foolish, rebellious, disobedient prophet who had a rotten attitude. They were preached a message of doom, were given no signs, no miracles. And yet, read Jonah Chapter 3 – they all repented, every one of them, from the king to the poorest peasant, in sackcloth and ashes. “They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold something greater than Jonah is here” – Jesus Himself, the very Son of God, the God of Jonah. Jesus says, “the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment and condemn you.”

Jesus isn’t done. READ Matthew 12:42. This is referring to the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10. A wealthy, pagan, Gentile queen, an Arabic woman travels a long way across the desert with her entourage to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She makes this incredibly long hard trip with no invitation. And after she had heard him, she honored Solomon and bestowed on him extravagant gifts. Jesus says, “Something greater than Solomon is here” – the God of Solomon. And you didn’t even have to travel anywhere…He came to you. This pagan woman, the queen of the South will rise up at the judgment and condemn you.

The Pharisees had been given so much light, so much revelation. They were completely without excuse. Application: We too have been given much light…in fact we have the whole canon of scripture…more light, more revelation even than what they had. So, like the Pharisees, we are without excuse.

Expect rejection, be faithful in your witness where God has placed you. Plant the seeds, let the Holy Spirit convict hearts.