

The Ministry of Christ, Part 14

After Jesus cast the demon out and healed the man that was mute, some of the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign from Him. A “sign” is an object or action that demonstrates a spiritual reality or special meaning. The Apostle Paul said the “*Jews require a sign,*” (1 Corinthians 1:22). Although Jesus had just cast out the demon and healed the man who was mute, they wanted a “sign from God,” a supernatural event to certify Christ’s credentials. Remember, they had just said Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Jesus had been doing all kinds of miracles and healings publicly under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, but due to their lack of faith they had failed to see them as works of God in their midst.

Sign Seekers — Matthew 12:38-45; Luke 11:16; 24-32

Matthew 12:39–40 NKJV But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For 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.

Why did Jesus say “*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign?*”

The demand for signs was evidence of their unbelief. Rather than believing that Jesus was the Messiah, they attributed His words, authority and miracles to the Devil. Their words and actions were a direct affront to Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

John 4:48 NKJV Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.”

Remember when John’s disciples came and asked Jesus if He was “the Coming One, or do we look for another,” Jesus told them to tell John what they saw.

What was different with John’s disciples and these scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 12:38?

When John’s disciples saw the wonderful works that were done, they believed and did not require additional signs. Through doubt and unbelief, the scribes and Pharisees were looking for anything to attack and deny the reality of Jesus as the Messiah. When we tempt God through doubt and unbelief, we should not expect Him to show signs to us.

What is the sign of the prophet Jonah?

The only sign Jesus would show them was the three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He was referring to His death and resurrection. His resurrection would be the sign that would certify that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of God.

Matthew 12:41 NKJV The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

When Jonah arrived in Nineveh, he had been in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights. He cried out to Nineveh: *“Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!”* Jonah did not do miracles, heal the sick or cast out demons, and yet, Nineveh repented and prayed earnestly to God. Jesus came healing the sick, casting out devils, and doing many miracles, and they wanted more signs.

Do you remember what kind of people the Ninevites were?

The reason God sent Jonah to them was their wickedness was so great it came up before God. Yet, at Jonah’s preaching, they believed and proclaimed a fast and turned from their wicked ways.

Matthew 12:42 NKJV The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.

It is tragic that the Son of God was standing in their presence and speaking to them and they did not believe.

New Relationships Defined — Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21

Matthew 12:46–47 NKJV While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.”

What Jesus says elevates those who do the will of the Father in heaven. He was not minimizing the importance of the natural family, but He is maximizing the spiritual family.

Matthew 12:48-50 NKJV But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Our spiritual family is defined as those who do the will of the Father in heaven. Those who were standing in opposition to Jesus’ word and

works were excluded from this blessing.

Woes on Pharisees — Luke 11:37-54

Luke 11:37–38 NKJV And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. ³⁸When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.

This ceremonial washing of the hands had nothing to do with personal hygiene. In Matthew 23, Jesus spoke in detail to the scribes and Pharisees about their works and ritual cleansing. Their washing of the hands was a ritual cleansing practiced by the Pharisees to remove any moral pollution by contact with an unclean or unholy person or thing.

After the Pharisee marveled that Jesus had not washed, Jesus spoke about their true condition.

Luke 11:39–41 NKJV Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.

Luke 11:40–41 NKJV Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.

Luke 11:42 NKJV “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Luke 11:43–44 NKJV Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.”

Why was the Lord so hard on the Pharisees? After all, they were so careful to observe the outward requirements of their religion. Their method of religion ignores inner holiness and a relationship with God.

True religion is not a matter of the external life.

Woes on the Lawyers — Luke 11:45

Luke 11:45 NKJV Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, “Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.”

The lawyers were the scribes and official interpreters of the Law. The scribes imposed burdens on other people that they themselves refused to bear. They emphasized material things rather than spiritual things and were not willing to do what the Scripture required. In Matthew 23, Jesus spoke at length to these two groups and told them they were “*serpents, a brood of vipers*” who would not escape the condemnation of hell. After Jesus spoke to them, the scribes and Pharisees became hostile and

tried to trap Him into saying something they could use against Him. Jesus was still in the year of His popularity and the crowds continued growing until thousands of people were gathered around Him. He continued performing many miracles and healing multitudes of people. It is difficult to imagine the scope of the signs, wonders and miracles that Jesus did. The crowds following Him became so great that it became impossible to number them. Luke 12:1 says, the people were pushing against each other and some were being trampled.

Then Jesus warned His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees, Luke 12.

The leaven of the Pharisees is a principle of evil, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 12:2–3 NKJV For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. ³Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

Luke 12:4-5 NKJV And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

This public rebuke of the Pharisees and lawyers demonstrated their true nature. As a result of what Jesus was saying, both Jesus and those who followed Him faced increased wrath and slander from the Pharisees and legalists.

Everyone should know that God is watching over them.

It is important in every way to know that God hears every word and watches over those who belong to Him.

Luke 12:6–7 NKJV Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12:8–9 NKJV Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

Jesus was speaking this word of rebuke of the religious leaders in front of a great multitude. All of the people lived in fear of what would happen to them because they knew the Pharisees and legalist had the power to remove them from their Synagogue and as a result from buying and selling in their community. So, these words were important for them to hear. Do not be afraid of what others say about you because, God will

take care of you.

Luke 12:13–14 NKJV Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

Luke 12:15 NKJV And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

Although Jesus said, the Father has committed all judgment into His hands (John 5:22), He was not quick to judge and tell people what they should do.

James 1:19–20 NLT Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

Jesus came the first time as our Savior but when He comes again He will be the judge of the living and the dead. Jesus’ statement about possessions is important for all of us and we should know that *“life is not measured by how much you own,”* (Luke 12:15). His response to the man’s request brought Jesus to give the parable of the rich young ruler.

Parable of the Rich Fool - Luke 12:13-21

In the parable, Jesus called the rich man a fool. By all we can see, he was a good man who was conscientious about his finances and family. He was not crooked in his business but took care of his property and family. He was constantly considering how he could improve his situation in life. What made him a fool?

Luke 12:16–17 NKJV Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

The rich young ruler made a gross mistake. His focus in life was only on his earthly possessions. While it is not wrong to have things, he stored nothing in heaven.

Luke 12:18–19 NKJV So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’

Luke 12:20–21 NKJV But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Being rich toward God is more than prospering and being in health. So

far in this lesson, Jesus' attention was on our inner attitude and relationship with God. Much was said about outward religion and care of the things of this life.

God is interested in what you do and your heart, mind and inner relationship with Him.

Encouraging Word to Disciples - Luke 12:22-32

Now Jesus gave a word of encouragement about the Father's care.

Luke 12:22–23 NKJV Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

Luke 12:24–25 NKJV Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

Luke 12:26–27 NKJV If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Luke 12:28–29 NKJV If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind.

Luke 12:30–32 NKJV For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

In light of what Jesus said to the crowds about the Pharisees and legalists, why is it important to know that God is watching over them and is going to give them the kingdom?

How can we apply these words to our lives and situations?