

The Pharisees Request a Sign From Jesus

Matthew 12:38-45

by David Servant

David Servant explores the Pharisees' demand for a sign from Jesus, emphasizing the significance of His resurrection and the spiritual consequences of rejecting truth.

Scripture: Matthew 12:43

Topics: "Divine Authority", "Unbelief And Pride"

Description

David Servant preaches about Jesus responding to the religious teachers and Pharisees who asked for a miraculous sign, explaining that His resurrection would be the ultimate proof of His divinity. Despite this, Jesus knew many would still not believe in Him, comparing them to a demon-possessed person who becomes more wicked after temporary deliverance. He highlights the openness to truth shown by the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba, contrasting it with the hardened hearts of the religious leaders. Jesus' claims of being greater than Jonah and Solomon point to His divinity, not pride, as only God can rightfully make such claims.

Transcript

One day some religious teachers and Pharisees asked Jesus to show them a miraculous sign to prove that He was from God. Jesus had performed many miracles already, healings in particular, and the Pharisees had surely heard the reports and even witnessed some themselves. So they were probably asking for something even more spectacular, like fire falling from the sky or the Sea of Galilee being divided in two.

Jesus replied that their request showed how evil and faithless they were, but then promised them a spectacular miraculous sign: Just as Jonah was in the belly of a great fish for three days and nights and came back to life, so He would spend three days and nights inside the earth and come back to life! That would prove beyond all doubt that Jesus was from God, because He was dead and only God could bring Him back to life! No magician could pull that off!

Jesus knew, however, that even after He was resurrected, the Pharisees and religious teachers would not believe in Him. Hoping to bring them to their senses, He told them what would happen when they stood before God's judgment seat. God would assemble the people of Nineveh who repented at Jonah's preaching, and they would condemn those who rejected Jesus. Additionally, God would bring before His

judgment seat the Queen of Sheba, who was so spiritually hungry that she journeyed hundreds of miles to hear Solomon's God-given wisdom. She also would condemn the Pharisees and religious teachers for rejecting Christ. Both she and the people of Nineveh demonstrated an openness to the truth, and were convinced of the truth with much less proof than that which God had granted to those to whom Jesus was speaking.

Finally, Jesus compared the people of His time to a demon-possessed person who was temporarily delivered. After the demon had gone out, the person's condition improved and he was temporarily clean. But he then allowed the demon to come back into him, and this time that demon brought with him seven other more wicked demons. Consequently, the man became more wicked than he was previously.

This comparison has been proven universally true. Our own nation has experienced several periods of national repentance and revival, however, the effects are short-lived. After a period of years the nation slides back into sin, and the people become more sinful than those who lived before the last revival. We are praying for another revival in our nation, but there will be no lasting righteousness until God's kingdom comes.

Q. Did you notice that Jesus claimed to be greater than both Jonah and Solomon? Isn't that an indication that He was prideful?

A. No, it's another indication that Jesus was God in the form of a human being. It would be prideful for any other human being to make such a claim. God, however, can't think too highly of Himself, because He is by far the greatest person ever. It would be impossible for Him to be guilty of pride.

Q. If a person is possessed by a demon or demons, but then becomes born again and delivered, according to what we just read, does he have to worry about becoming demon-possessed again?

A. A person who is born again has the Holy Spirit living inside him, and so he could never be demon-possessed and Spirit-born at the same time. The demons that formerly possessed him may come back to tempt him, but he can use God's Word, believing and obeying it, to resist them, and they will flee (see James 4:7). In the passage we just read, Jesus was making a comparison to describe the deteriorating spiritual condition of His generation. He wasn't trying to convey that every demon-possessed person who is delivered eventually becomes more demon-possessed.

Application: Today we learned about the varying receptivity of people to the truth. Entire cities sometimes collectively repent, while other, more spiritually privileged groups of people harden their hearts. How would you rate your city's or country's receptivity to the truth? Do you think the people are becoming more or less receptive?

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