

Matthew 12:38-45

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[0:00] When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest but finds none. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came, and when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order.

Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last day of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.

While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brother stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?

And stretching out his arms towards his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my mother and sister and brother.

Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, this text is complicated. There's a lot to it. It's a little foreign to our understanding. There's a lot of references that we might not understand.

[1:06] There's cultural context that we don't know. But God, your spirit is powerful to illuminate truth to us. God, I pray that you would help us to see Christ, to exalt him, to see that his words are good, and the fact that they point us in right directions, and teach us to truth, and lead us to truth, and lead us to life.

God, help us as we open your word together. Bless us with a better vision of the life you've called us to, and the Christ that we serve.

Amen. Amen. Amen. So what I hope we get today, this is kind of a wordy purpose statement, but I hope that everybody sees this text and is equipped to fight this battle of belief.

Right? And I think that's one thing that Jesus is doing. Jesus is equipping people for the battle of belief by exposing the root of unbelief. He is pointing them to truth that saves, and he is motivating them both through warning and through promise.

So the structure of the passage is pretty simple. So the Pharisees, which are the religious leaders of the day, they ask a question. They say, hey, show us a sign. And Jesus responds, no. But then he goes on to teach.

[2:22] Basically, no, but I'm going to teach you what you really need. That's how I interpret it. That's the Jordan translation. Next slide. All right.

So that's going to be kind of the structure of our talk today. So first we're going to talk about the question, the ask. We're going to talk about Jesus' response. It's three parts.

And then we're going to talk about the promise. Next slide. So Jesus starts, or the Pharisees start by asking a question.

They ask, they wanted Jesus to confirm his identity through something extraordinary. They ask him for a sign. So this might be foreign to us. We might not really understand what it means to ask for a sign.

But think about, think about, they say, then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying, teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. Basically, they wanted him to show them something extraordinary.

[3:27] They wanted him to prove in their minds beyond a shadow of doubt that he was who he said he was. Think about, like, a sign from heaven. An Old Testament example might be Gideon and his fleece.

When he was afraid to go into battle, he was not confident that God had chosen him. He asked God to make a fleece wet and then make it dry, and God did this. So this was a confirmation in Gideon's mind that God was calling him to this task.

So they wanted this from Jesus, and the request seems kind of innocent up front, right? Well, Jesus claims to be the Messiah.

They want to know whether or not that's true. Well, let's look at Jesus' response. But he answered them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Jesus refuses to give them a sign, claiming that their desire for this sign is evil and idolatrous. Do we think Jesus is overreaching here? Is he going kind of beyond the scope there, innocently asking him, like, help us believe?

[4:41] And he goes on and says, no, it's because you're evil and idolatrous. It might seem like that on the surface, but let's dig a little deeper. Next slide, please.

I think what's going on on the surface here is that this question was a subtle rejection of all of Jesus' ministry up to this point. Jesus had been doing plenty of signs.

His whole ministry was involved with it, right? There's lots of evidence for these religious leaders, these religious leaders especially, evidence to who Jesus was.

We have the Old Testament. Matthew is very clear at showing us linking Jesus to Old Testament prophecy. So we see that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Jesus fled and returned from Egypt. The rage of Herod was against the Israelite babies. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and ministered in Galilee. And that he would minister through healing.

[5:43] So these are all specific things that Matthew calls out in the beginning of these chapters, how Jesus fulfilled specific Old Testament scripture, right? And so these scribes and Pharisees should have known these things, but they're kind of maybe ignoring what was before them or blind to it, right?

It was a rejection of all of Jesus' miracles up to this point. Jesus had demonstrated power over demons. He had shown his power over sickness. He healed many. He healed the blind.

He healed the mute. He healed the cripple. He healed those with leprosy. He healed through touch by the word of his mouth. He even healed when somebody touched him. And he healed people close to him.

And he healed from a distance, right? So Jesus had demonstrated that he had power over sickness and over disease and all that stuff.

He had shown that he had power over death. At this point in his ministry, he had twice demonstrated that he could raise people from the dead. He did this with Jairus' daughter in Matthew. And in Luke, it records the account of raising the widow's son from name.

[6:52] Jesus had demonstrated his power over nature. He calmed a storm. And he made, on several occasions, made food, like lots of food out of a small five loaves, two fish, right?

And made food for 5,000 people. So Jesus had demonstrated his power. He had given lots of evidence that he wasn't a fake, right? But they're also rejecting Jesus' teaching, right?

Jesus had also proven to be competent orator of the law, right? He taught people what there's a true heart behind the law. When people saw him, they were amazed. And they said, this man is a man who teaches like one with authority, right?

So this rejection is rejecting all the wisdom that he demonstrated in his understanding of God's word. It was a rejection of his character. And everything he did, he was humble.

He was sinless. He was compassionate. So in order to reject him here, they have to basically put a blind eye to all that he had displayed as his character so far in his life, in ministry.

[7:58] So in short, this was a subtle yet all-out rejection of Jesus himself. And they wanted to raise questions in the minds of the crowd. If we ask for something miraculous that he can't do, then the crowds will be convinced that this is not the Son of God.

So I think there was an attempt to reject who Jesus was and deceive through their question. And I think Jesus notes this. And this is why he says, calls him evil and idolatrous.

But on top of all the rejection of his ministry and who Jesus was, it gets a little deeper. I think it gets a little more sinister, right? They were, in essence, telling Jesus the Messiah, the author of life, to meet their desires, right?

So they were turning the cosmic scale and saying, no, Jesus, you serve us. You prove yourself to us, right? And so they were taking Jesus and trying to use him for their own needs, right?

And so I think in this way, Jesus calls that out, rightly so, as evil. They were turning the cosmic sails and seeking to pressure the Son of God, the author of light, to meet their superfluous desires.

[9:11] They're demanding that Jesus serve them. They were trying to manage Jesus. So I think the question next is why.

But before we get to that, I think we're all guilty of this at some point, right? We all have this desire to use Jesus to get what we want.

That's not the Messiah of the Bible. That's not the Messiah we see here. Jesus will not be manipulated to serve the needs of man or to serve the whims of man. He is a Messiah that we submit to, not a Messiah that we manage.

And I think this happens in small areas in our hearts. And in big areas. For those who know Christ and for those who don't. For those who don't know Christ, there's a saying that's out there.

Come as you are, right? And I think that's a good saying, right? Because it communicates that we can't clean ourselves up to come to Christ. Only he can clean us up, right?

[10:13] But what I think our culture oftentimes misses is we think, come as I am means Jesus is going to meet me on my terms. And that's a bad application of that, right?

Jesus is the Messiah. We meet him on his terms. His terms are good. And they're life-giving. But they don't affirm our sinful desires.

And so I think that's what's happening here. These people are rejecting Jesus and trying to get him to affirm and submit to their sinful desires. For those who are Christians, I think we do this.

I do this. I did this multiple times through the sermon. I'm sitting there up late, really late, pretty late last night. Sitting there kind of like upset at God. Like, God, like I've been working hard.

Like, why don't you meet me on my terms? And help me get ready for this a lot sooner. And it's like, no, God doesn't meet me on my terms. I serve him, and it's a gift, you know?

[11:08] And we bring these kind of requests to God all the time, and we forget that he's God and we're man. And I think when we have forgotten that he is God and we are man, it opens our hearts to all kinds of abuses.

All kinds of usury of God. And I think he gets at that here as he goes to idolatry. So the question is, they had plenty of evidence. They had plenty of evidence to understand who Jesus was, but they still rejected him.

So the question is, why? Why would they reject him? And I think, next slide. I think Jesus points out that it's rooted in their idolatry. So he calls them evil and idolatrous.

I entitled this section, Exposing the Root of Unbelief, because idolatry is a tricky, blinding thing. It was for the Jews in Jesus' time, and it is for us today as well.

Throughout scripture, idolatry is defined as serving someone or something other than God. For the Israelites of previous generations, this looked like actually bowing down to gods. They would go through a nation and they would see the gods of that nation.

[12:08] They would see that that nation was more prosperous for them. And they're like, oh, that god must be more powerful than our god. So we're going to go bow down to that god. Right? And that led to all kinds of problems in the lives of the Israelite nation.

They were in exile and all kinds of stuff. But these post-exilic Jews of Jesus' time, they were largely orthodox. So this call out on their idolatry is not something that they would have expected.

Right? Because they were following the law. They were working really hard to follow the law. Right? And Jesus says, yet you're still idolatrous in your heart. Right? And so this whole thing of idolatry is very blinding.

Tim Keller says, what is an idol? This is his definition. What is an idol? Is anything more important to you than God? Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God? Anything you

seek to give, what only God can give.

So the rejection of Jesus and desire to use him was motivated by their idolatry. They were worshiping someone or something other than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the promised Messiah.

[13:17] And Jesus seeks to expose this in his two examples. Next slide. So first off, Jesus 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. So we have Jesus comparing the Israelites of that generation to Nineveh.

So some background on Nineveh. Nineveh was known for their brutality, for their violence. They were a nation that ruled a lot of the world or the known world to the Israelites throughout Jonah's time.

They were known to be specifically brutal. So if you go to Nineveh, well, not go to Nineveh, right? So archaeologists who have dug up findings at Nineveh, right? They find carvings on the wall that kind of signify them skinning their enemies alive or having banquets with the heads of their enemies hanging from trees or causing their enemies, their defeated enemies, to grind the bones of their fallen countrymen, right?

And so this is a nation that's known for its brutality, for coming in and taking wealth and kind of whirling through people in the meantime, right? And so this comparison for these Jews who were largely devout to these Ninevites was pretty stark.

[14:42] And I think Jesus is really pointing at something here. We'll get more into that later. But just the fact that Jesus would compare them to the Ninevites exposes kind of their idea of self-righteousness.

Because in their minds, they would never be in the same category as the Ninevites. They would never be deserving of judgment like the Ninevites did. But yet Jesus is turning the tables here and he's saying, no, the people of Nineveh will rise up and condemn you at the judgment, right?

And so Jesus is kind of poking at their self-righteous identity, their identity that says, hey, because we follow God's law, we are worthy of him, right?

And so that's turning everything around because you follow God's law because it's good, not to obtain God's favor. And so they weren't interested in this Messiah.

They were blinded to the true Messiah who came to save his people from their sins because the Messiah that they desired would exalt them for their righteousness. Next slide. Next, Jesus brings up the Queen of the South.

[15:58] The Queen of the South 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. Behold, something greater than Solomon is here. So we see the Queen of the South versus Israel.

And here Jesus is exposing the idolatry, their idol of self-exaltation. So why does he specifically call out the Queen of the South?

I believe it's because he was poking at another stronghold of Jewish idolatry. We here in the West are very individualistic. The Jewish mindset was very nationalistic, right?

So knowing this, I believe Jesus is intentionally referring back to the height of the Jewish kingdom. For this is the type of kingdom they desired to return to. And they expected that Christ, the Messiah of God, would restore them to this place of world prominence.

So we hear it from the words of the Queen of Sheba, also the Queen of the South, in 1 Kings 10. So this is what she recorded or said when she came to see Solomon's kingdom.

[17:05] Now when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions.

She came to Jerusalem with a very great routine with camels, bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind.

And Solomon answered all her questions, and there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his

servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings, they offered at the house of the Lord.

There was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, He has made you king that you may execute justice and righteousness.

Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came in such abundance of spices as these that were the Queen of Sheba had given Solomon.

[18:43] So that was a kind of long reading. But basically, she came and she was just in wonder. And she said, none of the reports are true. You surpass, Solomon, your wisdom and your kingdom surpass any of my expectations.

Right? And so in the Jewish mindset, this was the height of their kingdom. This is what they wanted to return back to. This is what they thought their Messiah, the promised Messiah, would usher in. This time where the Jewish kingdom became the center of prominence again. MSN Money did an estimate of Solomon's net worth.

They estimated it at \$2.3 trillion in today's money. So I'm sure there's some logic to it. But that just kind of blows anything in our minds out of perspective.

So Solomon's net worth was far surpassing net worth of anybody living today. So this is what the Jewish mentality wanted to return to. And this is what they wanted their Messiah to take them to.

[19:50] So they were blinded to the Messiah of the true kingdom of God because they were looking for some Messiah that would return them to their kingdom.

So they were not interested in a Messiah that called them to humility and was okay with them being under Roman rule. They wanted a Messiah that was going to bring them back to a place.

They wanted a Messiah that was going to be exalted, but them along with that Messiah. And so when Jesus came and was humble and didn't try to take over or rule or make Israel great again, they weren't interested.

And so they were blinded by their desire for a great Israel that they couldn't see the truth of the Messiah that was right in front of them. And so how about you? What idols in your life blind you from seeing the truth about Christ?

What things are you seeking after that capture your heart and lead you to not see Christ for who he is and how he's good? I think these idols kind of take our attention in two ways.

[21:05] One, we pursue them because we think that's where we're going to find satisfaction and happiness. And two, they just distract us, right? And so we never value anything good.

We never actually do anything hard. We never actually think about who Christ is. So maybe you're here today and you don't know Christ. Is that because you're trying to find significance in something else?

And is that working? Or are you just too distracted chasing after whatever you desire, whatever comes that you don't have time to think hard about the claims of Christ?

Christians here today, right? This is a battle for belief, right? I think the text is aimed primarily at people who reject Christ or through their own blindness reject Christ.

But for the church, we do this all the time because every moment, every decision we make is a decision based on what we believe is good and right. And so in a lot of small ways, we can be acting as if we don't believe Jesus is who he says he is.

[22:14] And he's given us all that he's given us. So we can make these choices. Maybe we in the moment would prefer a career promotion, right? And so we settle to think about that rather than trusting that our Savior cares for us, right?

We look for significance in a spouse when we forget that we have significance in our Savior. And so there's all kinds of ways that we forget about who Jesus is because we've distracted ourselves with idols.

And I think Jesus wants to equip you for this battle of belief by telling you, hey, these desires that sneak up in your heart, they blind you to truth. They blind you to me and all that I am.

And you need to pay attention to that if you're going to understand. Next slide. Next slide. So Jesus then begins to point them to truths.

Well, he doesn't then. I'm kind of like taking things, so it's kind of the same text again. But in his responses, he's actually pointing them to substantial truth. He's not just poking at the negative. He's actually giving them positive things too.

[23:18] So Jesus says, But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 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.

The men of Nineveh will rise up at judgment with this generation and condemn it. For they repent of the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south will rise up in 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. So we're looking at the same text, but we're going to look at it from some different areas.

We're going to discuss the necessity of repentance, the sign of Jonah, and the warning against judgment. So first off, next slide.

Repentance is crucial. We see this again, so we're going to go back and focus on this comparison. This Nineveh to Israel, Jonah to Jesus comparison. I think what happens here is Jesus kind of redefines what wickedness is, at least in the Jewish mentality and probably in ours.

[24:28] We know that these Ninevites are not some people that we would like. The Jewish people, however, are people that we would like. They were largely law-abiders. They were devout. They followed the rules.

They had good morals. They were moral, upstanding citizens. Whereas the Ninevites just kind of rolled in and took what they wanted, and who cares what happened in the meantime, right? And so we sit here with the Jews kind of wondering, well, that doesn't seem right.

Why are the Ninevites standing in judgment over the Israelites? But, Jesus says it anyways, it is these people of Nineveh who arise up in judgment on the Israelites of that generation.

And Jesus was redefining evil that presses against our modern sensitivities. But what is crucial? What is kind of the key to this? It's this idea of repentance, right? So these Ninevites repented at the messenger. So the idea is that the Ninevites, or the Israelites of that day, received a greater messenger with a greater message to a more privileged audience.

[25:49] So the Israelites of that day, their messenger was Christ, not Jonah. What was Jonah? Jonah was reluctant. He was grumpy. He wanted the Ninevites to burn for their sin. And so he ran away from God and didn't go there.

But God, in his compassion, he ran away because he knew God was compassionate. But God, in his compassion, swallowed Jonah up in a whale or a fish, took him to where he was supposed to go, where he was able to preach his message.

But what was his message? His message was simply a message of judgment. What did Christ come? Christ came preaching not simply judgment, but preaching life in him, preaching forgiveness of sins, preaching restoration with the Father, preaching life eternal, preaching the filling of the Holy Spirit, right?

And so these Israelites had a greater messenger and a greater message. They were a more privileged people. The Ninevites, they didn't know anything about God until this guy Jonah shows up, right? The Israelites had a history of God's work.

They should have been the people that were ready to hear from God, yet because of their idolatry, they didn't. But what is highlighted here is that repentance is crucial. Unlike the Israelites who were rejecting Jesus, the Ninevites were willing to repent at the messenger that God sent.

[27:04] And so on the day of judgment, the Ninevites will stand as people that are standing against the Israelites who rejected this message.

And so what is redefined as evil, well, evil is still evil, and we'll talk about it in a second, but redefined as crucial, is their acceptance or rejection of Jesus, the acceptance or rejection of the messenger, right?

And that's something that the Israelites had trouble believing. They had trouble understanding, and I think we do too, right? Because we all have this works-based desire, but what is important is that we respond to Christ.

You can't remain neutral on Christ. We'll look at the Queen of the South, Israel versus Solomon. So the point here is that the Israelites had a greater wisdom, there was a greater kingdom, and they were a more privileged audience.

So it's kind of similar, but instead of wickedness versus self-righteousness, it's kingdom versus kingdom, wisdom versus wisdom, right?

[28:25] And so Solomon was very wise, but his wisdom was given to him by God. And the Queen of the South, the Queen of Seabird, realized that this was given to him by God, and she praised God. Whereas the Israelites, they had the embodiment of wisdom in front of them in the living, walking Christ, and they rejected him.

He was bringing in a better kingdom, a greater kingdom. He was bringing in an eternal kingdom. Whereas Solomon was the head of a temporal kingdom, a limited kingdom. And so recognition of who Jesus is is crucial here.

Recognition of where wisdom comes from and what is crucial. Next slide. Next slide. Next slide. All right.

Do we have questions? I don't know if it's confusing. I'm going to step out for a second. Good? Anybody brave enough for a question? No?

Okay. I'm not sure if that's good or not. If that's a good sign or not. So we'll talk about the sign of Jonah.

[29:53] Jesus says, For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. So what's Jesus getting at here?

Well, I think he's getting at his resurrection. So what was a sign to the people of Nineveh was the fact that this messenger came from the belly of a fish. Right? And what Jesus is pointing the Israelites to is a future sign.

Right? He said, I'm not going to give you a sign. But then he says, Oh, but I'll give you the sign of the prophet Jonah. It's kind of confusing. But this is a future sign. It's not something they probably understood. But if you think about how gracious it was, this is a people that were rejecting him.

They're rejecting him because he didn't live up to their expectations. Jesus came for them. He gave up his place in heaven. He humbled himself and became like man in our weakness. And they said, No, you're not good enough.

We want somebody different. We want somebody, something different. And Jesus in his kindness says, Hey, but I will point you to a sign. Right? And so I'll point you to the sign of my death and my resurrection. And so this is not simply a sign of evidence, but it's also a sign of power because it was in this death and in his resurrection that the people like the Ninevites can receive forgiveness.

[31:05] Right? Because God doesn't just forgive sin. He just doesn't say, Oh, the Ninevites repented. So that's cool. Right? Sin is paid for. And it was paid for by Christ. So Jesus, what he hears, he's pointing them to, he's pointing them to his eventual death for their sin.

And he's saying, Hey, oh, by the way, and I'm going to raise from the dead. And so when you are walking around here having rejected me and you hear the story of the resurrection, you hear the fact that I defeated the grave, that should be a stronghold of evidence for you.

And so Jesus is pointing them to truth that will save them, literally by dying for their sin and raising in victory over it, restoring them to the Father, but also helping them to see.

Right? They don't see. They're blinded by it. And he says, Here is some truth that you can see and that you will see. And so when those people come, we'll talk about Acts later, we see that this is both the power unto salvation, but it's also a stronghold of evidence for them.

And so what's crucial here is believing. You know, with the Ninevites versus Israelites, what was crucial was that they repented.

[32:14] Here it is crucial that they believe. This is a stronghold of evidence. It was a stronghold of evidence for the Jews of that day. And it's also a stronghold of evidence for us today.

This is kind of cool. Charles Colson, or Charles Colson, he served as a special counsel to President Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1970.

Once known as President Nixon's hatchet man, Colson gained notoriety at the height of the Watergate scandal for being named among one of the Watergate Seven and pleaded guilty to an obstruction of justice for attempting to defame Pentagon Papers defending Daniel Ellsberg. In 1974, he served seven months in a federal Maxwell prison in Alabama as the first member of the Nixon administration to be incarcerated for Watergate-related charges.

Background on who he is. Probably wordy, right? He was one of the main guys in the Watergate scandal. So he says about the resurrection, he says, I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me.

[33:26] How? Because 12 men testified that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one of them was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison.

They would not have endured that if it were not true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world, and they couldn't keep alive for three weeks.

You're telling me 12 apostles could keep alive for 40 years? Absolutely impossible. So it's interesting, if you look at the evidence for the resurrection, no historian out there will say that the resurrection didn't happen.

What they will say is that somebody did something to the body. Somebody stole the body. There's no historian. There's so much historical fact that people believed that the resurrection happened, that historians that don't believe in Christ's resurrection have to point that it was a real event and have to think of some way that it's not true.

But one, I think, the strong evidence that we have that Charles Coulson points out is the fact that these disciples, they wouldn't give themselves 40 years for a lie. They wouldn't die.

[34:34] They wouldn't be beaten. They wouldn't do all these things for something they knew they made up. If they went in and stole the body of Christ, pretended it was a resurrection, there's no way they would have given their lives for that lie.

And that's Charles Coulson's point. And so this resurrection was, Jesus points them to the resurrection, the Jews of that day, because it was a stronghold of evidence for them, but it's also a stronghold of evidence for us.

So if you're a Christian, learn about that because it's a place where we can really understand our faith and its historicity, right?

But if you're a non-Christian, look into that as well because as Paul says, kind of the faith of Christianity hinges on the resurrection because if Christ didn't raise from the dead, then there's no victory over sin.

There's no hope. There's no restoration with God. And so this is really a linchpin of the faith, and it's one that we happen to have a lot of historical evidence that backs up the claims of the Bible.

[35:39] Next. Jesus also points to the reality of final and complete judgment.

We see this in, again, that the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba rise up on the judgment day and condemn that generation. He wants to make sure that his hearers know where the path of unbelief leads.

He is equipping them so that they will not be deceived. A couple weeks ago, we talked about Jesus had cast out a demon.

The religious leaders at that time said, hey, you cast a demon out by the power of the devil. And then Jesus kind of rebuts that. But he also says, those who...

Let me just read it, actually. Okay. Whoever is not with me is against me.

[36:49] Whoever does not gather with me scatters. And so Jesus wants you to understand that there's two choices. You can't remain neutral in Christ.

He's either who he says he was, and you accept him and submit to him, or you choose to reject him. There's no middle ground. Jesus is the way to the Father, and it is the only way.

And so he wants you to be sure. He made that point with the Ninevites. The Ninevites repented at the message of Jonah, and he is much greater, and he is here. And so the point is, you have to do something with the knowledge of Christ.

So if you're here today, and you don't know Christ, Jesus' words are clear. It is a matter of life and death. It's a matter of eternal life or death. Right? He is what matters most in this world, and you cannot remain neutral on Christ.

And actually, him telling us that is loving, because it doesn't allow us to be deceived, and all of that. You can't remain neutral in Jesus.

[37:55] You must accept him as Messiah, or reject him. He is not one to be managed, but submitted to. He offers life to those who believe, and judgment to those who reject. So let's talk about the nature of truth a little bit.

Truth, by definition, is universal. For example, we all know that getting hit by a bus is a bad thing. We all know that that truth applies to everybody. There's not a subset of people out there that are immune to bus hits.

People don't, buses just don't go through people. Buses don't bounce off of people. We know this is true. It's evidenced by when we, our kids don't know it's true, right?

Right? Just because they don't understand that that bus will get them. Right? You as parents grab your kids, and you make sure you have accounting of all your kids before you get to the corner, because you know that truth, that that bus is dangerous, is universal, and it applies to all.

In the spiritual realm, I think we have this mentality in our modern culture that what's true for you is what's true for you. And we kind of, we know there's universality in truth when it comes to a bus, but when it comes to spiritual truth, we say, maybe, you know?

[39:12] It's really what matters to you. And Jesus is here to say, no, that's not true. Right? This is a universal truth. The universal truth of Christ, he is the way to God, and without Christ, there is no way to God.

And so, in this realm of truth, so, if you're a Christian here today, and you know that's true, I'll read another quote.

This is Penn Jillette from Penn & Teller. He says, I've already said, I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all.

If you believe there is heaven and hell, and people are going to hell, or not getting eternal life, or whatever, and you think that's not really worth telling them, this is because, because it would make it socially awkward.

Sorry, I kind of, he's basically saying, hey, if you believe there's heaven and hell, life and death, right, and you're afraid to tell somebody that because you think it's socially awkward, he says, how much do you have to hate somebody not to proselytize?

[40:23] How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? Right? So, if you're here today and you don't know Christ, right, know that his call is real.

You don't have a choice to be neutral on him. He is the way to life and without him there is no way to life. There is only judgment. Right? If you're a Christian here today and you believe this is true, like, are you going to love people and help them look through their idolatry?

Right? Just like we help our kids at the corner when our kids don't understand there's a bus there. Right? We help them along and we make sure that they know what is good and what is true.

Right? So we as Christians, we have been given the truth of life. We know that life is found in Christ and death is found apart from him. Are we motivated by love towards people to protect them, to help them see through their idolatry, to help them see through the lies of culture, the lies of the devil, so that they can be introduced to Christ and find life.

So I found that fairly compelling. All right. Now the fun part. I don't even know how long it's been. Oh, it's been long.

[41:35] Shoot. Thank you, guys. All right. So we'll get to the last one. Next text. We're moving. I'm going to move fast to this. I don't know if you'll like that or not. When an unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but it finds none.

Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came, and when it comes, it finds a house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last day of that person is worse than the first.

So also it will be with this evil generation. Next slide. Confusing? No? Okay. Cool. For me it was, right? I think what's key there is you see, so it will be with this evil generation.

Right? So there's people that take different views on this. They say, hey, this man that just had the demon cast out of him, you know, if he doesn't turn to Christ, then he can be in a worse state than he is.

But I think the true application of it is, hey, it's that generation. The aim is this generation. Jesus isn't trying to give us demonology here, although there's probably some truth you can glean there. What he's trying to point at is the evilness of the generation, and if they don't turn to Christ, they're susceptible to worse evil.

[42:53] And so what we see here is that there are spiritual powers at play in this world seeking to enslave people and keep them from Christ. So if we look at Christ's ministry, Christ comes, and he's pushing out the works of demons.

He's pushing back the work of the evil one. In the text from a couple weeks ago, he says he tied up the strong man. And so Jesus is coming, and he's displaying his power and pushing back the works of evil.

But what we see in the life of the children of Israel is Jesus comes, and there's reform.

They repent at the preaching of John the Baptist. Things seem to get better. But at the end, what are these people doing? They're enamored with his gifts. They go to get his bread. They wonder at his wisdom.

They say, could this be the son of man, or the son of God? But when Jesus is put before the crowds at his crucifixion, what are they saying? They're saying, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him.

[43:58] And so I think Jesus' point is that unless you actually turn to me, you are susceptible to the works of evil forces on your life.

Because he is the one who binds the strong man. And without him, we are susceptible to the power of the evil forces in this world. And so this nation was worse off later on in their interactions with Christ.

So at first, they were amused by it. They were happy. They were in wonder. And then finally, they were yelling, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him. They had turned on him. They had treated him like a despised sinner.

And so I think that's kind of what's going on here. Next. We can talk more about that. Sorry we had to do it so fast. I'm going to read Acts 2 really fast.

Well, yeah. So Jesus also points them to promise. He gives them promise. So within that context of a crowd that turned on him, was once enamored with him, finally turned on him, and had him crucified.

[45:09] Acts 2 starts off. This is Peter talking. He said, Men of Israel, hear these words of Jesus Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did them in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered him up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand. I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced and my flesh will dwell in hope.

For you have not abandoned my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the path of life and you will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that both he died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ and he was not abandoned to Hades and he did, nor did his flesh see corruption.

[46:21] This Jesus God raised up that we are all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God having received from the

Father the promise of the Holy Spirit that he's poured out on you yourselves and that you're seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens but he himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies your footstool. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now when they had heard this they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brother, what shall we do? And Peter said to him, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off everyone to whom the Lord calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized and there were out of that day about 3,000 souls. And so this crowd, all that to say, this crowd that rejected Christ, that crucified him, Peter came and preached promised, restored life with God through him and they repented.

[47:35] They were cut to the core and they repented. And then finally, there's also hope that we see in the next text. Jesus calls those who obey him which is where intellectual ascent and desires meets belief in obedience and so he calls them family.

So not simply is Jesus equipping you for the battle of unbelief by giving you truth that you can take your lives on. He's also given you lots of promise. He's given you lots of compelling reasons to come to him.

Forgiveness, life eternal, the Holy Spirit, being a member of his family and all these things. And so, we'll pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, I thank you for this text.

I pray that it bears fruit in our lives. I pray that you would work truth into our hearts in your kindness, not because we're deserving or because we're competent, but because you're good.

So we thank you for all you've done. God, I pray that we would be a people who love people and point them to Christ, that we wouldn't be worried about awkward situations, but that we would compel people to come to Christ because we know it is a life or death thing.

[48:48] God, help us put away idolatry that keeps us from seeing you so that we might follow you truly and walk in obedience. Amen. Amen. Amen.