

Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2019 2:48 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 12

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned!" (Matthew 12:36-37)

In Matthew 12, we see the opposition to Jesus growing to a new level! Back in Matthew 9, Matthew wrote about how the Pharisees "said to themselves" (and questioned in their hearts), but didn't confront Jesus directly, when Jesus, after seeing the faith of those who brought the paralytic man to Jesus, pronounced the paralytic's "sins forgiven"! Then, in Matthew 9, they "complained" to the disciples about Jesus "dining with tax collectors and sinners"! But then, in Matthew 12--in last nite's lesson--Matthew writes how they attacked Jesus directly, and then "conspired together against Him as to how they might destroy Him"! The die is cast!

The big controversy concerned the "keeping of the Sabbath"! God had given these very words, as the fourth commandment (in Exodus 20:8-11): "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...in it you shall not do any work..."! And so, Sabbath observance was very important to the Jews! In fact, according to Dr. Constable, the Mishnah (the first part of the Talmud) eventually included 39 specific categories of activity that qualified as "work" on the Sabbath--and any Sabbath violation was considered the most heinous of crimes, and even grounds for stoning! For example, if you "plucked" corn on the Sabbath you were guilty of "reaping" it! Rubbing it in your hands constituted "threshing"! And separating the chaff from the grain amounted to "winnowing" it! All defined as "work"! For this reason, everything which was to be eaten on the Sabbath had to be prepared the day before!

And so, the Pharisee's accusation to Jesus: "Look, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath!" To which Jesus offered examples of how David and his men (running from Saul) entered the "house of God" and ate "consecrated bread" when they became hungry (I Samuel 21); and how priests every week "profane" the Sabbath (in preparing the elements). And then proclaimed that "something greater than the temple is here" and that "the Son of Man (speaking of Himself) is Lord of the Sabbath"! A claim of Deity! And thus, having the prerogative (as MacArthur notes) to "rule over not only the man-made Sabbatarian rules but over the Sabbath itself--which was designed for worship of God"!

This is followed by Jesus healing a man with a "withered hand" on the Sabbath, in violation of the Pharisee's "rule" that medical assistance was only permissible if a sick man's life was in danger! But Jesus side-stepped all the malarkey and declared that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath"--stressing the absolute priority of the law's moral standards over the ceremonial requirements! Or as Hosea 6:6 suggests, showing mercy and compassion above holding ceremonies!

The contempt and total rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees--and, more importantly, of them by God--is next shown, in Matthew 12:22-37, after they dared attribute Jesus' healing of a "demon-possessed" man (who was also blind and mute) to Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons! In fact, Jesus called their accusation as "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," an "unpardonable sin"

(since it's the Holy Spirit who gives the fullest possible revelation of Jesus)! Noting that the "mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart"!

Jesus followed this with a most sobering statement, in verses 36-37: "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment! For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned!" (While spoken in context with the words spoken by the Pharisees--as a reflection of their "hearts"--the implications for "all people" is clearly stated!)

Verse 38 indicates there may have been "some" scribes and Pharisees who had "second thoughts" (consistent with the question some raised about Jesus' identity in verse 23) by asking to see a "sign" (more than what they already had seen?). Jesus, however, understood their motives and said that "no (more) sign would be given other than the sign of Jonah"! Interesting that Jesus here authenticates the story of Jonah and the "great fish," and the "repentance" that took place in Nineveh as a result--but also foreshadows His upcoming death, burial, and resurrection! Again, He declares: "something greater than Noah is here"!

But there's more in Matthew 12! The Queen of Sheba who "came from the ends of the earth" to see Solomon's glory but in the process saw the glory of Solomon's God--and would, Matthew says, "condemn this generation" because, as Jesus (the rejected One) declared again, "something greater is here (speaking of Jesus, the Son of God"!

Then, in verses 43-45, the story of the man who gets rid of an unclean spirit only to have it "return" when it finds the "house unoccupied"--and the last state "being worse than the first"! A description of someone who attempts moral reform without being indwelt by the Holy Spirit--and, as MacArthur notes, finding that "reform without regeneration is never effective and eventually reverts back to pre-reform behavior"!

And, finally, Jesus, in verses 46-50, giving priority to His relationship to His heavenly Father and doing His will, above earthly (physical) relationship (even "His mother and brothers")! Underlying the importance of not only believing in Jesus but of giving Him first place in our lives!

Well, how do we conclude such a lesson? There's certainly plenty of stuff about the words we speak (particularly "careless words")! But what this lesson is really all about is that to God it always was, and always will be, about the human heart! Psalm 19:14 seems to sum it up well: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer!"

And so, men, go with God this week and guard your words! Oops, heart!

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