

The Absolute Necessity of Believing in Jesus

Matthew 12:38-50 - NCBC, May 31, 2020

Main Point: **Whoever does not believe in Jesus is outside of God's family.**

- God has given you clear evidence that Jesus is your Lord and Savior (38-42)
 - The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest sign He is the Messiah (39-40)
 - Greater revelation without repentance only results in greater judgment (41-42)
- External religious moralism only enslaves you to Satan (43-45)
 - Religious moralism is the evil of outward obedience apart from faith in Jesus
 - Outward change without submission to God's Spirit only results in greater evil
- Only those who live their faith in Jesus are in God's family (46-50)
 - If you reject Jesus you are outside God's family (46, 48)
 - Faith's obedience identifies those inside God's family (49-50)

Application: **Reject moralism and live out your faith in Jesus.**

Opening Announcements:

- **Remember to visit myncbc.org** and follow our NCBC Facebook page to stay informed on all ministry/event updates during this season of sheltering, that has now been extended by our Governor through the month of May.
- Watch for important email announcements this week regarding our plans for regathering as a church family. God is working!!

<<Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery>>



There is no greater source of hope for sinners than the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Well good morning. It's so good to quiet our hearts and set time aside on this first day of the week to Behold King Jesus together and celebrate His resurrection. Our Scripture this morning comes from **Matthew chapter 12**, so please open your Bible to **Matthew chapter 12** and prepare for our Scripture reading together in just a moment.

A friendly reminder that the links alongside this livestream offer you fill-in-the-blank sermon notes, the preaching manuscript, and children's coloring pages. At any time you may pause this video, print those files, and then rejoin our worship with those notes in front of you.

I appreciate Pastor Shaun's message from **verses 33 – 37** last week about *What my words say about me*. Isn't it interesting to see Jesus' teaching about our words in the immediate context of Israel's blasphemy against the Spirit? Jesus says our words betray the treasure of our

hearts as a response to Israel's officially and finally rejection and attributing the power of God's Spirit to Satan himself.

Remember Matthew's gospel is arranged to prove that Jesus is the Messianic King in fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW				
1-3 Presentation of the King				
4-7 Proclamation of the King <i>Sermon on the Mount (5-7)</i>	8-10 Power of the King <i>Sending out the 12 Apostles (10)</i>	11-13 Rejection of the King <i>Kingdom Parables (13)</i>		
Kingdom offered to Israel			12 Kingdom offered to all Nations	
26-28 Passion & Proof of the King				

And here in **chapter 12** – right in the middle of the book, we have the hinge-point of Israel's history. Everything before **chapter 12** is Matthew's presentation of how the kingdom of God is offered to Israel. Everything after **chapter 12** is Matthew's presentation of how the kingdom of God is offered to all nations.

So I realize that when a church spends nearly two years studying one book of the Bible... like we are doing in our study of the Gospel of Matthew... sometimes major points can get lost in minor details. So listen carefully.

A year from now if someone asks you what's something you took away from our series in Matthew, I pray you will

¹ Romans 9-11

² I.e. Matthew 13:11

recall the importance of **Matthew chapter 12**. Everything changes for Israel in **Matthew 12**.

In the first half of **chapter 12**, Israel rejects Jesus and calls Him Satanic. Israel's leaders blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and are effectively cut out of God's kingdom to make way for the Gentile church.¹

Now in the last half of **chapter 12**, Jesus rejects Israel and reveals they are actually the ones who are controlled by Satan. From this point forward in redemptive history, Jesus hides the glories of His kingdom from Israel,² and begins to build His church from believing people of every nation and tongue.³

So as we consider the end of this most important **chapter 12** this morning, I pray that,



The Absolute Necessity of Believing in Jesus becomes crystal clear for all of us. This Scripture brings us to the valley of decision – will we believe that Jesus is our

³ Matthew 16:18

Savior and Lord, or will we continue to believe that we are able to save ourselves?

Let's read **Matthew 12, verses 38-50**, in the ESV:

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ⁴³ "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation." ⁴⁶ While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁸ But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching

⁴ Luke 15:11-32

⁵ Luke 15:24, 32

out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

This is God's Word.

Let's Pray Together.

Luke 15 tells a familiar Bible story about a man with two sons.⁴ We call it "the parable of the prodigal son."

The younger son was very selfish and rebellious. He demanded his inheritance early, only to move away and live a riotous life of irresponsibility and wickedness.

The older son was more of a rule follower. He despised the fact that his younger brother would shame his father by such a sinful life, so he stayed home and worked in his father's estate.

Years later the younger son finally tanked out, came to his senses, and realized how sinful and foolish he had been. And when he returned to his father in humble repentance, his father surprisingly welcomed him back with lavish mercy and a grand celebration exclaiming, "My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and now is found!"⁵

But while the entire household was celebrating – one man was furious. The older brother. His rule-following nature didn't allow him to appreciate his father's grace.⁶

⁶ C.f. Luke 15:2

By his way of thinking, the younger son deserved to be disowned and put outside the family. In his mind, only one son deserved to be celebrated...and that should be the son who kept His father's rules all these years and didn't run off in prodigal rebellion!

So you understand the story right? 1 father. 2 sons.

And parents... think about this for moment, which son would you prefer to have in your family?

The older son is moral, upstanding, rule-following, and helpful to the father...but he is self-righteous and proud. The younger is immoral, shameful, rebellious, and self-serving...but he is humble and repentant.

Which son would you prefer?

What if I told you the older son is now in hell, and the younger son is forever safe with Jesus in heaven?

That's right, in **Luke 15** the older son represents Israel and their law-oriented leaders. The younger son represents the sinners, the prostitutes, and the demon-possessed.

The older son is the religious moralist who rejects God's grace in self-righteousness. The younger son is the repentant sinner who is forgiven and welcomed into God's family by the Father's mercy and grace.

But here's the trouble with us. We too quickly prefer the older brother!! We just want a child who minds and behaves! We don't care about the condition of their

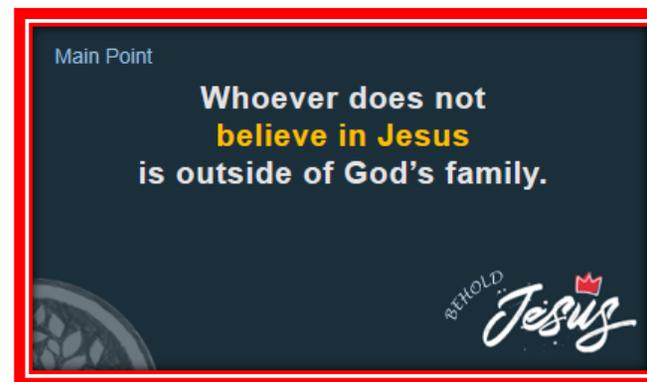
hearts – I just want my kids to do what I say when I say it, right?

As adults, we just want moral neighbors. We don't really care if people love Jesus or not—as long as they are nice, pull their weight, and don't inconvenience us... we're all one big happy family!

But the Scripture before us in **Matthew chapter 12** is urging us to reconsider our "older son" preferences. Yes, the scribes and the Pharisees were the most honorable and most respected religious people in Israel during Jesus' time. They followed all the rules all the time.

But they did not believe in Jesus. They despised His grace towards sinners. Their pride blinded them from seeing their need for such a Savior.

So listen carefully: The only way to be eternally saved is to believe in Jesus. The end of **chapter 12** makes the point crystal clear:

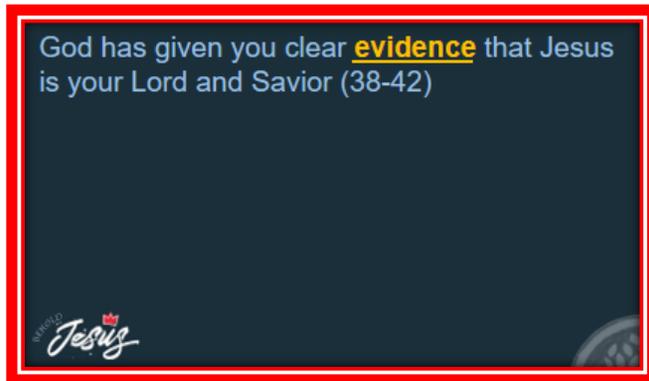


Whoever does not believe in Jesus is outside of God's family.

It doesn't matter how moral, respected, or self-righteous you are. It doesn't matter how many rules you keep. If you don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died in your place and rose again to bring you to God... you are outside of God's family...destined to eternal judgment along with the rest of Satan's family in hell.

The only way to know God the Father is through His Son.⁷ Whoever rejects Jesus is outside of God's family.

The end of **Matthew 12** offers three reasons for the absolute necessity of believing in Jesus.



First in **verses 38-42**, you must believe since **God has given you clear evidence that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.**

In **verse 38** the religious leaders respond to Jesus' claim that the kingdom of God has come.⁸ Remember back in **verse 24** they had committed the unpardonable sin –

⁷ John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 5:20

⁸ Matthew 12:28

⁹ Maybe they wanted Jesus to turn the moon to blood in fulfillment of the end times prophecy in Joel 2:30-31? After all, in **Matthew 16:1** the leaders

rejecting Jesus as their Savior and associating Jesus with Satan's power.

Jesus had responded with strong condemnation of their hard hearts which produced such verbal unbelief from their lips. So now in **verse 38**, it's as if the leaders say... well then, if you are truly the Messiah, prove it by showing us some spectacular sign in the heavens.⁹

But Jesus knew that Israel didn't reject Him for a lack of evidence.¹⁰ His birth, life, and ministry had fulfilled scores of Old Testament prophecy. His preaching and miracles over the last year and a half were more than sufficient proof that He was Israel's Messianic King.

And so in **verse 39** Jesus condemns the entire nation as an "evil and adulterous generation." Israel had a hard, two-timing heart. They refused to believe God's Word and instead trusted in their own law-keeping efforts more than God's grace. No further sign would be given Israel *except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

Now quickly – who was Jonah? Jonah was the only prophet of Israel ever sent to a Gentile nation, outside of the Jewish family – to the wicked Assyrians living in Nineveh.

And remember how Jonah was like the older brother from **Luke 15**? Jonah hated that God actually forgave the sins of the wicked Ninevites!¹¹

specifically asked for a sign that could be seen in the heavens.

¹⁰ C.f. Luke 16:31

¹¹ Jonah 4:1-4, 9

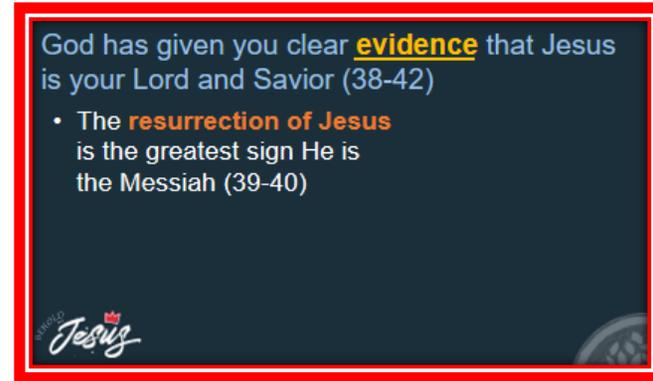
So after Israel rejects Jesus, He references Jonah as a sign of how God's salvation was no longer limited to the Jewish people. Whoever responds to God's message with repentance and faith will be saved!

But the sign of Jonah was also a powerful proof that Jesus was God's messenger in another way. Look at **verse 40**:

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.

Jesus knew that the Jews tended to focus more on how God delivered Jonah from the whale's belly after 3 days than on his salvation of sinful Gentiles.

So He tells them – this will be your sign: God's Messiah – the Son of Man – will spend 3 days in the earth, and then He will rise again – just like Jonah!



In other words, **the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest sign that He is the Messiah.** The only future sign of Jesus' Lordship for Israel will be the resurrection of Jesus after He spends Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in a grave.¹²

This is why the resurrection of Jesus is emphasized so much in the preaching of the early church,¹³ and should remain the center point of all Gospel preaching today!!

Jesus' victory over sin's death is the greatest proof that He is the God who creates life and can forgive sins. The historical fact that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples and even more than 500 people at one time,¹⁴ is the greatest proof that Jesus is our Lord and Savior!

Friends – we have all the evidence that we need to

¹² NOTE: For Matthew's Jewish audience the phrase "day and night" doesn't require a full 24 hours. It can be representative of any part of a day. The Jewish Talmud held that "any part of a day is as the whole." Therefore Jesus' use of three days and three nights does not require a literal interpretation of 72 hours. Since Jesus was in the grave from dusk on Friday to dawn on Sunday (likely around 36 hours total), this wording is appropriate. C.f. other examples of similar usage in Genesis 42:17-18; 1

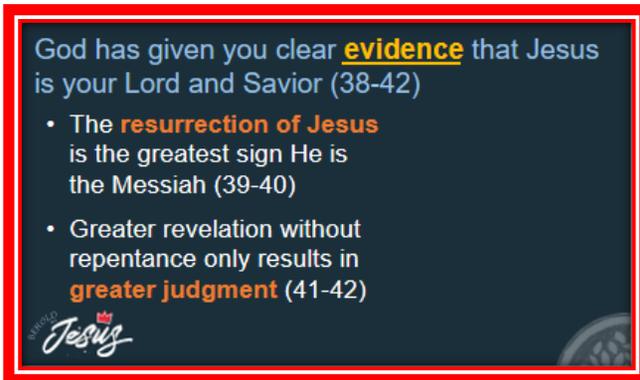
Samuel 30:12-13; Esther 4:16, 5:1.

¹³ I.e. Acts 1:22; 2:24, 32, 36; 3:15, 26; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34, 37; 17:18, 31; 23:8; Romans 1:4; 4:24-25; 6:4-5, 9; 7:4; 8:11, 34; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15; 2 Corinthians 4:14, 5:15; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20, 2:6; Colossians 2:12, 3:1; Philippians 3:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:3, 21; 3:21; etc.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

believe in Jesus for our salvation. His resurrection secures the hope of our resurrection¹⁵ and eternal life with God above!

So whenever you doubt – and all Christians do at some point or another¹⁶ - ask yourself, “Do I believe that Jesus rose from the dead?” The historical and biblical facts leave no room for doubting this truth. Since Jesus in fact did rise from the dead, He is our Lord and Savior, and we have no good excuse for not believing in Him.



After all, **Greater revelation without repentance only results in greater judgment.** That’s Jesus’ point in **verses 41-42.** When your heart is determined to not believe in Jesus despite all the evidence for Him, don’t ask God for more signs. Because greater revelation without repentance only results in a greater responsibility for your soul.¹⁷

Let me try to make **verses 41-42** clear for us:

Ninevites	Israel	Queen of Sheba
Wicked Assyrians (Gentile)	God's Chosen Jews	Arab Woman (Gentile)
No law from God	Given God's Law	No law from God
Jonah	Jesus	Solomon
Preaching Judgment	Preaching Deliverance	Preaching Wisdom
1 Miracle	Many Miracles	No Miracles
Repented & Saved	Resisted & Condemned	Sought Wisdom & Blessed

Jesus compares two Gentile audiences – the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba – with the Jewish audience of Israel. Israel had all the spiritual advantages -- They had been given God’s law, while the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba had been given no special revelation from God.

The Ninevites only received a message of judgment. No miracles except Jonah’s deliverance from the fishes’ belly – and yet these wicked Gentiles repented and experienced God’s salvation!

The Gentile Queen of Sheba traveled over 1,200 miles at her own personal expense to seek God’s wisdom from God’s King...and even though she had no invitation, and no authenticating miracles, yet she recognized Solomon as a messenger of God’s own wisdom, and was blessed.

¹⁵ Romans 6:4, 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:13-24; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁶ I.e. Matthew 11:3; Jude 22

¹⁷ Luke 12:48

Ninevites	Israel	Queen of Sheba
Wicked Assyrians (Gentile)	God's Chosen Jews	Arab Woman (Gentile)
No law from God	Given God's Law	No law from God
Jonah	Jesus	Solomon
Preaching Judgment	Preaching Deliverance	Preaching Wisdom
1 Miracle	Many Miracles	No Miracles
Repented & Saved	Resisted & Condemned	Sought Wisdom & Blessed

But Jesus is greater! Jesus has revealed the glory of God's grace and truth in a far greater way than Jonah or Solomon ever could!¹⁸

So Jesus is explaining why this Jewish generation will be so profoundly judged. For Jesus reveals God's grace and truth to them with a far greater witness than any previous prophet or king...and yet still Israel had rejected Jesus!

God has given you clear **evidence** that Jesus is your Lord and Savior (38-42)

- The **resurrection of Jesus** is the greatest sign He is the Messiah (39-40)
- Greater revelation without repentance only results in **greater judgment** (41-42)



This is why whoever rejects Jesus today has no part in God's family. It doesn't matter how religious or nice or generous you are. If you don't believe in Jesus' death,

¹⁸ John 1:14
Page 8a of 14

resurrection, and ascension for your standing before your Creator, then you are condemned and without any excuse. For God has given you clear evidence that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.

Now the second reason that faith in Jesus is an absolute necessity is due to the fact that,

External religious moralism only **enslaves** you to Satan (43-45)



External religious moralism only **enslaves** you to Satan.

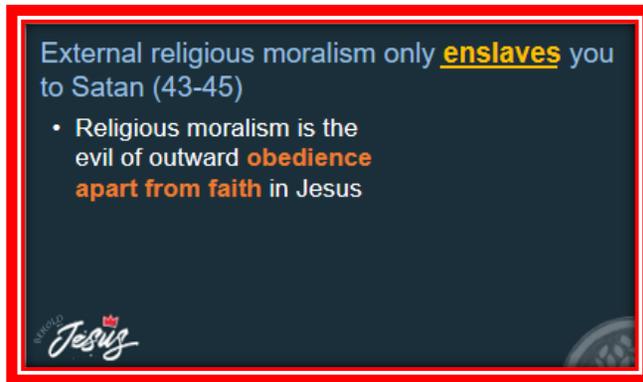
This is an ironic reversal of Israel's blasphemy. While they accused Jesus of being Satan's worker, Jesus now reveals that their proud self-righteousness is actually proof that Satan is their spiritual father.¹⁹

Just like the older brother in **Luke 15**, this generation of Jews did not think that they needed a Savior. Their nation had kept themselves from worshipping Baal ever since they returned from Babylonian captivity. Herod's temple was a source of national pride, and they were fastidious in their Sabbath law-keeping.

¹⁹ John 8:42-44

From the standpoint of Israel's leaders, their nation had undergone spiritual reform. Their spiritual "house" was cleaner than it had been in generations!

But Jesus wanted to expose the deceptive blindness of their religious moralism.



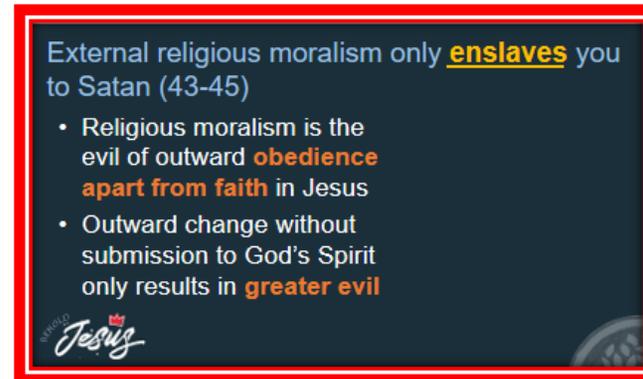
Now those are some fancy words...so let's quickly define what we mean by "religious moralism." **Religious moralism is the evil of any outward obedience apart from faith in Jesus.** Any effort to obey God before I trust God.

Listen carefully. Anytime your obedience comes before your trust in Jesus – even your most righteous behaviors are despised like filthy rags to God.²⁰

Because if you do the right thing to please God or others *before* you are trusting in God for your ability to act... then you are trying to work your way into God's favor. And this is the proud evil of moralism – the belief that God is satisfied merely by the right outward actions or speech, apart from faith in Christ.

²⁰ Isaiah 64:6. This should remind us of Jesus' main point from His Sermon on the Mount: "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." 5:20
Page **9a** of 14

But Jesus tells a parable in **verses 43-45** about a traveling homeless demon to make the point that,



Any outward change without inward submission to God's Spirit only ultimately results in greater evil.

God cares more about who rules your heart, than your outward habits. God demands that worship precedes work. Just like we learned from the Sermon on the Mount, true righteousness only comes from a Spirit-transformed soul...and can never be achieved by the highest extent of human reformation or law-keeping.

So church – please discern the difference between moralism and true Christianity. Moralism is pragmatic – teaching that the end justifies the means. So as long as an addiction program frees the addict, we've truly helped the person. So long as the counseling goals are met, we've truly helped the person. So long as the Sunday school lesson helps children obey their parents and feel better about themselves, then we've disciplined them.

scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." 5:20

But Jesus exposes the surprising evil of all such moralism: *any change* without submission to God's Spirit only results in a more evil state than at first.

Moralism is not neutral. Any moralistic teaching or practice that seeks to improve a person's spiritual condition apart from faith in Jesus is actually demonic.

Look at **verses 43-45**. The person who has just been delivered from the demon is Israel.²¹ Whether through the religious reforms of the last centuries, or through the more recent ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus,²² Israel had experienced significant outward reformation and cleansing.

But Jesus says true change is never about rule-keeping...it's about a personal relationship with Jesus.

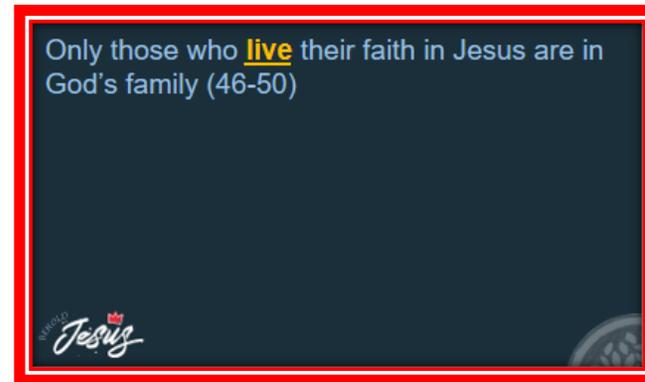
So if you just experience freedom from sin's consequences without ever repenting and filling your life with the Holy Spirit of God²³ – you will only feed a self-righteous pride that will lead you to greater judgment from God.

So let's make this personal. Why do you obey God's Word? Do you obey so God will accept you? Or do you obey because God has already accepted you in Christ? Is your faith in your works, or in Jesus and His work on your behalf?

Believing in Jesus is absolutely necessary – for apart from faith in Christ your attempts to obey His Words will

only increase your self-righteous pride and eternal judgment.

Finally, in **verses 46-50** Jesus concludes His response to Israel's rejection of Him. Whoever does not believe in Jesus is clearly outside of God's family since,



Only those who live their faith in Jesus are in God's family. Only those whose faith in Jesus motivates their obedience are inside of God's family.

Look at **verse 47**... while Jesus was responding to the scribes and the Pharisees, his immediate family shows up and provides a perfect illustration of who is truly inside and outside of God's family.

What does **verse 47** say?

Well...unless you are using the King James, or NIV, or Holman, or New King James... your translation doesn't have a **verse 47** does it? Most English translations omit

²¹ C.f. Matthew 12:29 where Jesus claims to have bound Satan

²² Matthew 4:23; 9:35

²³ Ephesians 5:18

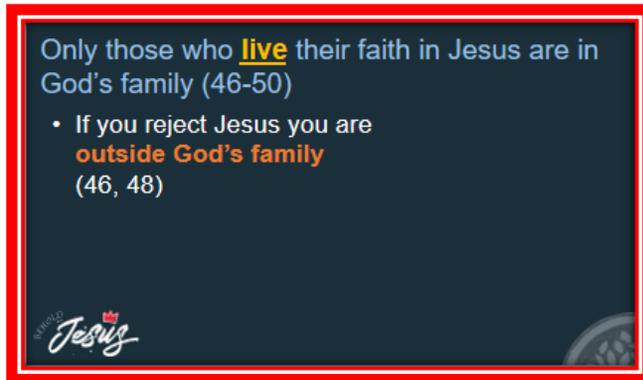
this verse, or put it in the footnotes, since it is basically a repeat of **verse 46**.

Directly translated the missing verse reads,

Someone told Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You."

So obviously it's inclusion or omission doesn't change our understanding of the account at all. It neither adds nor takes away anything from the text.

But here's the point Jesus is making:



If you reject Jesus you are outside God's family.

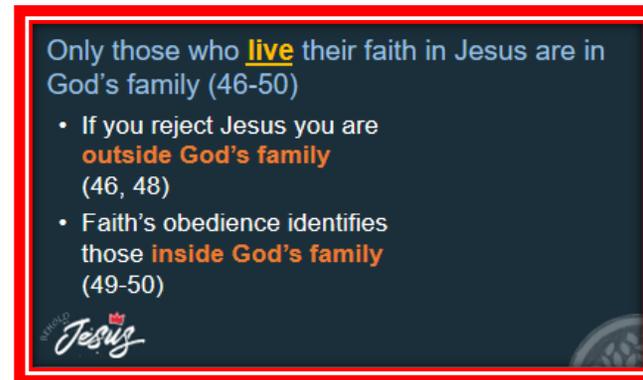
The leaders believed national Israel was God's children, and God Himself was their father. The leaders had a nationalistic approach to God's family. God's family was Jewish first and foremost.

But in **verse 48**, Jesus speaks as God's messenger and questions who truly belongs in His family. Is God's family just biological – just people linked by a common genetics – like His concerned²⁴ mom and half-brothers²⁵ standing outside their group in this moment?

No. God's family is not biological, but spiritual. God's family is formed only by belief in Jesus.

So **in verse 49**, Jesus reaches out over those who are following Him and declares,

Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.



In other words it is **Faith's obedience that identifies those inside God's family.**

Only those whose outward obedience is produced by their inner faith in Christ are God's true children. It doesn't matter if you are Jew or Gentile, religious or

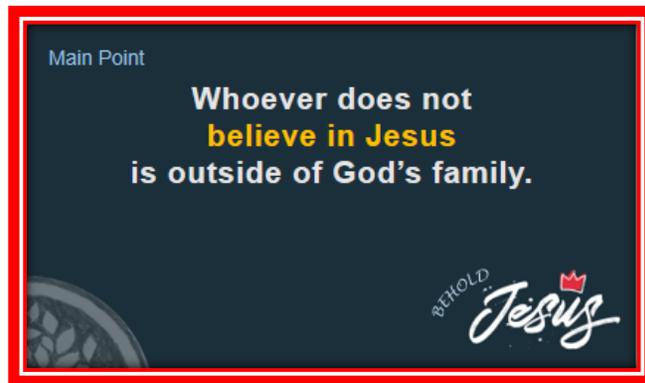
²⁴ Mark 3:20-21; 31-32; c.f. Luke 8:19-20

²⁵ James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, not to mention His half-sisters, who are

not named in Matthew 13:55-56. Incidentally, this revelation destroys the traditional Catholic teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

irreligious...the older brother or the younger brother. You can be adopted as God's child and belong in His family forever simply by believing in Jesus as your Lord.

So do you see how absolutely necessary it is for you to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior?



Whoever does not believe in Jesus is outside of God's family.

But whoever believes that Jesus died in your place, and rose again and ascended to send His Spirit to indwell you and empower your righteous fulfillment of God's royal law... will be eternally saved and accepted by God our Father.

So then, as we conclude this monumental chapter of **Matthew 12**, we are faced with this powerful call to,



Reject moralism and live out true faith in Jesus.

Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.²⁶

So stop trusting in religious lists of dos and don'ts. Stop believing the lie that the "older brother" of **Luke 15** is better than the "younger brother."

You must reject any value you place upon outward obedience that is not the fruit of saving faith and love for Jesus. Both in you and in others around you! Moralism is often convenient...but it destroys souls. For external moralism inflates one's pride to the point that they will continue to reject God's offer of salvation in their contented self-righteousness.

There's only one way to obey God in a way that please Him...and that's through the obedience of faith.²⁷ The obedience that is the fruit of God's Spirit ruling our worshipping heart.²⁸

²⁶ Matthew 5:20

²⁷ Romans 1:5; 16:26

²⁸ Compare Romans 8:4 and 13:10 with Galatians 5:5-6, 14, 22-23, and James 2:8.

So will you truly surrender your whole life to the control of God's Spirit today? Will you join with the younger brother in **Luke 15**, and agree that you need God the Father to save you by His mercy – not because you have done anything right?

In **Luke 15**, the story ends with the father trying to help the self-righteous older brother understand how grace rejoices in the salvation of sinners. And what we know from history is that the older brother hated His father's forgiveness of his sinful younger brother so much, that he ended up murdering his father!

That's right...self-righteous Israel hated Jesus and His forgiveness of sinners so much that they murdered Him on the cross.

So how will you respond to Jesus today? Will you humbly acknowledge your sinful need, and believe on Jesus to be eternally saved? Or will you reject God's salvation in self-righteous pride?



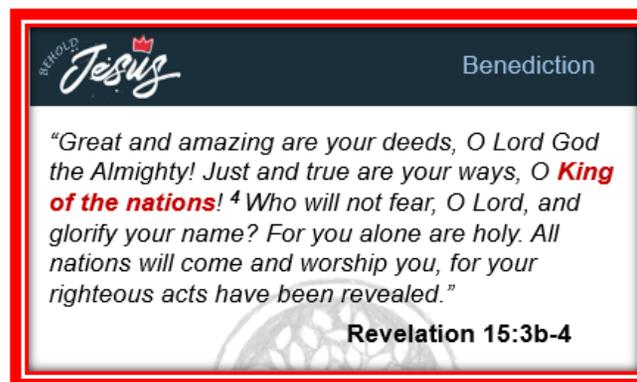
There is nothing more important for your soul than that you would receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior today.

Let's pray.

<<Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me>>

Remember to take advantage of the Sermon-Stretcher Downloads links!

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.
Revelation 15:3b-4

Recommended Resources on The Absolute Necessity of Believing in Jesus:

- 1 Kings 10:1-13
- Jonah 3:4-6, 10
- Matthew 7:21-23; 23:27-28
- Luke 15:11-32; 16:31
- John 6:29; 14:6; 15:21-24; 16:9
- Acts 4:12
- 1 Corinthians 1:22
- 1 Timothy 5:24
- 2 Timothy 3:5
- 2 Peter 2:20-22

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-making-of-a-modern-pharisee>
- <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/42-161/the-danger-of-moral-reformation>

- *God is the Gospel*, John Piper
- *Knowing God*, JI Packer
- *How does Sanctification Work?*, David Powlison

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Matthew 12:38-42. How was Jesus' resurrection from the dead the ultimate sign that He was Israel's Messiah? Compare and contrast the generation of the Jews in Jesus' day with the Gentile Assyrians living in Nineveh in Jonah's day and the Gentile Queen of Sheba who traveled 1,200 miles to seek the wisdom of Solomon. Compare what each was given, and how each responded to God's messenger.
2. Review Matthew 12:43-45. Religious moralism can be defined as any obedience that comes before faith. Why is it so dangerous to only teach moral lessons to our children, in order to just get just to obey our rules? How does the teaching of "moralism" destroy and deceive those who attend churches today?
3. Review Matthew 12:43-45. Why is discipleship such a necessary part of evangelism? What happens to a soul who is set free from Satan's kingdom, but then never disciplined or taught how to submit to God's Spirit? (C.f. Ephesians 5:18). How does Jesus' illustration of the homeless demon picture the realities of the nation of Israel in Matthew chapter 12?
4. Read John 16:9. What is the essence of all sin? Why is faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God so absolutely central and essential for salvation?
5. Review Matthew 12:50. It's common to hear unbelievers refer to everyone as "God's children." How does Matthew 12:50 help us rightly define God's family? (c.f. Matthew 7:21-23)
6. Read Luke 12:48. Explain why the consequences of Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah were so severe. How much of God's grace and salvation plan has He revealed to you? Are you responding in faith to all that God has mercifully revealed to you?