**WITH JESUS OR AGAINST JESUS**

November 11, 2018

Matthew 12:22-50 / Key Verse: 12:30, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

In today’s passage we see two responses to Jesus. One is “with Jesus” and the other is “against Jesus.” The people who are “with Jesus” are those who humbly repent, believe in Jesus, and live under his rule. The people who are “against Jesus” are those who refuse Jesus and live as they want. Some may say, “I am not with Jesus and I am not against Jesus, either. I am neutral.” But in reality, there is no such thing. There is no neutral ground in spiritual world. Jesus clearly says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” So, every individual person must make a choice and decision between two lives; “with Jesus or against Jesus.” The consequence of our choice is serious. Those who do not want to repent have tendency to live with miraculous sign-seeking mentality. But in today’s passage, toward sign-seeking people, Jesus says lamentingly, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” The sign of the prophet Jonah is the fore-shadow of our Lord Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. Let’s learn why Jesus offers his death and resurrection as the only sign for wicked and adulterous generation.

1. **Jesus works by the Spirit of** **God (22-37)**

Verse 22 says, “Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.” Considering verse 14, it seems that the Pharisees brought this man to Jesus to trap him. A blind and mute person was most difficult case to heal. They expected Jesus to fail. But to their surprise, Jesus healed him immediately out of his great compassion and power. Nothing is impossible to Jesus. Jesus heals anyone who comes to him. All who saw this were astonished and responded, “Could this be the Son of David?” (23) As we learned, the Son of David is another expression of the Promised Messiah. Everyone acknowledged that Jesus could be the Promised Messiah. The Pharisees could not dispute the fact of what had happened. However, they were not happy to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. They had already made up their minds to reject Jesus and were determined to kill him. As they heard people’s positive response to Jesus, their blood pressure began to rise and panicked and they were willing to do anything to turn people away from Jesus. In desperation, they attributed his power to Beelzebul, the prince of demons (24). It was a bold, blatant lie. What is the source of such lies? Ultimately, it is Satan, whom the Bible calls “the father of lies” (John 8:44). Especially, Satan lies about God. He plants doubt about God’s love, slanders God’s character, and hinders people from trusting in God.

How did Jesus handle this slanderous lie? Jesus did not take it personally, become upset and burn the Pharisees with divine fire. Instead, Jesus spoke reasonably and objectively to defend his person and work for the sake of those who would believe in him. Jesus exposed this lie in two ways. *First, Jesus exposed the Pharisees’ irrationality*. Jesus said “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.” (25) Internal conflicts within a country, town or even a family will tear it apart. At present, in America, hostility between Trump’s side and anti-Trump’s side is becoming a big threat for the State’s national unity. When a husband and wife fight continually, they will eventually destroy their household. Satan is not an exception to the ruin caused by division. Jesus said, “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?” (26) The Pharisees’ slander was not rational. Satan is not that stupid. *Next, Jesus exposed the Pharisees’ hypocrisy*. Jesus asked, “And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges” (27). Some people among the Pharisees drove out demons. The same accusation the Pharisees made against Jesus could be made against their own exorcists. The Pharisees’ slander was empty word like spitting into the wind.

After speaking reasonably, Jesus appealed to them, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (28) Since Adam’s fall, Satan has been the prince of this world. His rule is called the dominion of darkness. He fills people’s hearts with lies, anger, hatred, violence, lust, pride, jealousy, and depression. Spiritually speaking, Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel (2 Co4:4) Satan is so powerful that no human being can defeat him. But the Spirit of God is more powerful than Satan. The Spirit of God brings God’s reign: restoration, righteousness, love, and peace. Jesus’ power source was the Spirit of God. Through Jesus’ ministry, countless people’ bodies, minds, and spirits were fully restored. In verse 29, Jesus uses an analogy to reveal his power. He said, “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.” Satan is the strong man and people under his control are his house. Jesus entered Satan’s dominion, bound him, and set his captives free. Jesus proved that he was stronger than Satan. 1 John 4:4 tells those who believe in Jesus, “…the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

After defending his ministry, Jesus gave a strong warning to his enemies. Let’s read verse 30. “Whoever is not with me is against me, an whoever does not gather with me scatters.” As we have studied thus far, Jesus is gentle and humble in heart; he does not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick (Matt11:29; 12:19-20). But there is another side of Jesus. In fighting against God’s enemies, he is very strong like the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This Jesus proclaimed that all people can be divided into two categories: with Jesus or against Jesus. Those who are with Jesus will be saved and receive eternal life. Those who are against Jesus will be condemned to eternal punishment. Jesus alone is the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through him (Jn14:6). These days our culture is becoming more and more pluralistic and relativistic. In the name of tolerance, people try to embrace all kinds of ideas. We should embrace all kinds of people without prejudice. But we must never compromise regarding gospel truth. Christ is the center of the universe. This truth never changes while everything on earth can change. From him and through him and to him and for him are all things. (Ro 11:36) Jesus is Creator. He began human history and will close human history. He will start a new history when he comes again. On the last day when Jesus comes again, he is not coming as Savior but as judge; as the King of kings and the Lord of lords to judge each person’s life. To be with Jesus or against Jesus is each person’s solemn decision. No one can make it for you and it will give each person’s final destiny. Jesus gives a strong warning about blasphemying against the Holy Spirit (31-32). To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is a flagrant, willful rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit, attributing his work to Satan. Jesus warns that all sins against the Son can be forgiven but blaspheming the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

In verses 33-35, Jesus uses a tree analogy to explain the root of the Pharisees’ problem. Jesus said, “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad for a tree is recognized by its fruit.” We easily recognize good trees, such as apple, peach, and cherry, and so on, by their good fruit. On the other hand, there are bad trees, such as the yew berry tree or the strychnine tree, and others, which are poisonous to people. Yew berry or strychnine have been used as poisons which can kill people. As trees are known by their fruit Jesus teaches that people are known by their words and deeds. Our words and deeds spring forth from our inner nature. The Pharisees’ evil inner nature produced their blasphemous words. To bear good fruit they needed to change from within. Jesus rebuked them in the hope they would see their root problem. “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (34-37) When we stand before Jesus at the last day, if we had spoken empty words during our lives, we will be condemned. But if we spoke words of faith in Jesus, we will be acquitted (Justified). Are you speaking now words of faith in Jesus or empty words? The words we are speaking will determine our final destiny.

1. **Only the sign of the prophet Jonah will be given (38-50)**

Though Jesus had given a strong warning and proved that he worked though the Holy Spirit, the Pharisees did not accept his teaching. Instead, they found another way to attack Jesus. Some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” (38) They had just seen an amazing sign. What kind of sign did they want? Perhaps a sign in bigger scale than a sign of casting out a demon; such as a spectacular sign from heaven, like pouring the fire from heaven or a solar eclipse. We don’t know exactly. But their intention was evil. It was not to genuinely believe in Jesus but to demand just to please their own desire. Jesus answered in verse 39. “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Why do wicked and adulterous people keep on asking and seeking for a miraculous sign one after another? It is because they do not want to repent. They are not interested in repentance; changing themselves; their mind and attitude. Because they do not want to repent, they cannot experience the kingdom of God. Because they can not experience the kingdom of God in their heart, they keep on seeking outward miraculous sign to satisfy their inner emptiness. Jesus performed many miracles in response to humble cry and faith. But this time to wicked and adulterous people’s demand, Jesus did not react. Instead, Jesus said that they would be given a sign different from their demanding sign. It was the sign of the prophet Jonah. The sign of Jonah was the foreshadowing sign of Jesus’ death and resurrection. As Jonah emerged from a huge fish after three days and nights, so Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day. Staying in a huge fish’s stomach for 3 days and night not being digested in it and coming out alive from it was really a miracle of miracles. In the same way, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead in the third day is a miracle of miracles. In human history no one had ever been resurrected from the dead with perfectly new spiritual body and soul and spirit. But Jesus was raised from the dead in the third day and proved that he is the Son of God. This Jesus’ death and resurrection is the greatest sign of God’s marvelous love, justice, and wisdom for our salvation, healing, restoration, reconciliation, and living hope of eternal life because he dies for our sins and rose again for our eternal life. This Jesus’ death and resurrection demands our new attitude; new mind. It is called repentance; changing our mind; turning from self-centered mindset to God-centered mindset and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord and live according to his words.

To help unrepentant Pharisees, Jesus gave two examples; one is the example of repentance of the men of Nineveh and the other is the example of the Gentile Queen’s longing desire to listen to Solomon’s wisdom. The men of Nineveh were the oppressing enemies to the Jew. They were Gentile unbelievers who did not believe in God. But though the prophet Jonah, a nationalistic Jew, preached the message of repentance reluctantly, all people from the top king to all bottom servants repented with fasting and dressing in sackcloth with great tremble and fear. So they were saved. Also the Gentile Queen of the South (now South Sudan) came to Jerusalem and brought many expensive gifts to hear Solomon’s wisdom. Jesus is far, far, far greater than Jonah and Solomon. Jesus is God incarnate. But his own generation did not listen to him and repent. So the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with that generation and condemn it. In verses 43-45, Jesus warned when the wicked generation did not repent, their spiritual condition would become seven time worse than before Jesus came.

In verses 46-50, when Jesus’ own mother and brothers came to see him and stood outside while he was still talking to the crowd, and someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to speak to you,” he replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” and pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Compared to the elite leaders of Israel, Jesus’ disciples looked shabby and unimpressive. But they were humble enough to listen to Jesus and follow him. They gave Jesus first priority. They were on the side of Jesus. To Jesus’ eyes, they were most precious. They were Jesus’ family members. Anyone who is with Jesus, doing the will of God can be God’s family members. In short, the will of God is to believe in Jesus. In this world there are numerous people. But God’s eyes look at his children just like all the parents’ eyes mostly look at their children even though there are many children playing in the playground. Becoming God’s family is most blessed life you can have in this world. As a conclusion, let’s be with Jesus as his family by believing in and following him.