

Seeking My King & His King Kingdom

Lesson #17 Israel's Rejection of The King & His Kingdom

Matthew's gospel began with the proofs that Jesus was indeed the promised Son who would reign on the throne of David. This was supported by the visit of the magi and the early ministry of John the Baptist. After His temptation, Jesus began to preach, "Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He emphasized the spiritual and moral principles that would govern His coming Messianic kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. [Matt. 5-7]
Some of the truths were immediately applicable to Christ's day on earth, but some truths would have their fulfillment in His Millennial Kingdom.

Matthew 8-10 tells of the miracles He performed which served as the prophesied credentials of the King. It becomes apparent the Jews were increasing in their rejection of these prophesied miracles that Jesus was indeed their Messiah and prophesied King.

A. The ministry of Christ and His message of the Kingdom Met With Opposition from the very beginning.

1. There was never any question as to the attitude of the religious and political rulers of Israel.
a. Lines of the battle were drawn early. In His initial cleansing of the temple, Jesus made the first great public assertion of His Messianic rights. [John 2:13-25]

2:16b "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

b. Apparently there was no attempt on the part of the officials to resist forcibly an astounding action which publicly humiliated these religious traffickers as they were scourged out of the temple along with their own sheep and oxen.

c. Although no restraining hand was laid upon the angry Lord of the temple, its officials did have the cunning foresight to demand of Him a "sign" of authority to do what He had done.

His answer was never forgotten. It was later brought up at his trial.

Matt. 26:61 and stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the sanctuary of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

d. In the very beginning, the stage was set for the vindictive opposition of the Jewish rulers which pursued His steps until He came to His death on the Cross.

2. Jesus deliberately precipitated the battle by driving them out of the Temple precincts.

Later He publicly opposed their legalistic traditions by healing an impotent man on the Sabbath. John 5:16 So the Jewish leaders began persecuting Jesus, because he kept doing such things on the Sabbath.

a. He defended His compassionate act:

John 5:17 My Father has been working until now, and I, too, am working."

b. His enemies renewed their efforts to destroy Him.

- Guilty of Blasphemy - His answer claimed He was equal with God. [John 5:18]

3. Jesus' characterization of the ruling classes deepened the chasm between them and Himself.

- a. Hypocrites, a wicked and adulterous generation Matt. 16:3-4
- b. Publicans & harlots will enter the Kingdom ahead of them Matt. 21:31
- c. Children of "hell," "blind guides" who strain at gnats, swallow camels Matt. 23:15, 24
- d. Full of extortion and excess, a generation of vipers Matt. 23: 25, 33
- e. "whited sepulchers" filled with dead men's bones Matt. 23:27
- f. Of your "father the devil" John 8:39-44

4. Early in His ministry, Mark indicates Christ's ministry attracted a tremendous interest and following. Mark 1:37 "All men seek for thee."

- a. Mainly due to the great physical benefits; Christ was fully aware of why
- b. John 2:23-25 As a result of His first great sign, "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men."

5. Fickle attitude of the people is unmistakable in His great Galilean ministry. [Luke 4:16-30]

- a. 1st reaction = auspicious Luke 4:22 All the people began to speak well of him and to wonder at the gracious words that flowed from his mouth.
- b. Immediate question about His origin - "Is not this Joseph's son?"
- c. His reply: "I tell all of you with certainty, a prophet is not accepted in his hometown."
- d. Their swift and shocking reaction: All the people in the synagogue became furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, forced Jesus out of the city, and led him to the edge of the hill on which their city was built, intending to throw him off.

Consider: All accounts of the tremendous enthusiasm shown at times must be read in the light of our Lord's own words:

John 6:26 "Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate the loaves and were completely satisfied.

John 6:36 I told you that you have seen me, yet you don't believe.

Consider: The common people were no more ready for the Kingdom of Christ than their rulers. They thought they had nothing much to lose in any event.

Consider: All of the evidence of The King & His Kingdom had been presented. John the Baptist had introduced the King to the nation. Jesus had revealed His person, principles and power. It was now up to the leaders to make their decision.

B. This Tide Of Opposition Toward Our Lord's Good News Of The Kingdom Grew Steadily To A Definite Crisis

Historical crisis: Matthew 11 & 12 with parallel passages in Mark 3:19-35 and Luke 7:18-8:39.

- a. The central event is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit & Christ's reaction.
- b. The opposition which forms the immediate background of this crisis arose from 3 widely different sources.

1. Reference is made to those who were NEAREST to Him:

- a. Mark 3:21 refers to the group as "his friends." Members of His immediate family "They went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."
- b. John 7:1-5 which concludes, "For neither did his brethren believe in him."

2. The attitude of the People In General is described in Matt. 11.

a. The multitudes, "this generation": Jesus likens them to "children sitting in the markets" who can be pleased by nothing.

b. They were Unwilling To Repent in preparation for the Kingdom at hand.

- In spite of the fact they had witnessed the "mighty works," foretold by OT prophets
- Mighty works identified Him as the Messianic King & authenticated His Kingdom
- Judgment would be worse because they rejected God's King in the face of unparalleled light. [Matt. 11:20-24]

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had taken place, because they didn't repent. "How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible it will be for you, Bethsaida! Because if the miracles that happened in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Indeed I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgment Day than for you! And you, Capernaum! You won't be lifted up to heaven, will you? You'll go down to Hell! Because if the miracles that happened in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ Indeed I tell you, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you!"

Note: Greater privileges bring greater responsibility and greater judgment.

Five of the ten miracles recorded in Matt. 8-9 were performed in Capernaum.

- Although the nation is moving toward divine judgment, the King in His final word throws open wide the door of personal salvation.

c. Matt. 11:28-30 Come to me, all of you who are weary and loaded down with burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Place my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest for your souls, ³⁰ because my yoke is pleasant, and my burden is light." [God of grace on the threshold of judgment]

3. A definite crisis of opposition on the part of the religious leaders of Israel

a. Matt. 23:2 These men sat in "Moses' seat." [place of authority & responsibility]

b. Crisis: Jesus cast a demon out of a man who was dumb and blind. [Matt. 12:23-33]

The Pharisees ascribed His miraculous ability to devilish power.

Lev. 20:6, 27 Anyone who consorts with evil spirits was to be stoned to death.

C. The Charge By The Rulers Involved Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit

1. His works were the prophetic credentials of His regal authority. Works are genuine!

Then they charge that His works are done by the powers of Hell.

They have ascribed wickedness to their own incarnate Messiah.

a. They have only 2 alternatives:

Accept Him as their King & Messiah or charge that His works were not of God.

b. Their charge was open blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

c. This instance of blasphemy was definitely related to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

d. This blasphemy questioned the regal credentials of Christ. Jesus had already pointed to His own mighty works as the prophetic credentials of His regal authority. [Matt. 11:2-5]

2. To oppose Jesus as the Messianic King climaxed in open blasphemy against the Spirit of God.

a. When Jesus was on earth in flesh, He was the perfect Servant of God, always speaking and acting under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit.

b. Fulfilled prophecy from Isa. 42:1, 4 "Here is my servant, whom I support, my chosen one, in whom I delight. I've Placed My Spirit Upon Him; and he'll deliver his justice throughout the world. And he won't grow faint or be crushed until he establishes justice on the mainland, and the coastlands take ownership of his Law."

c. Since Jesus knew He was this Spirit-anointed regal Servant of the Father, He could speak the words of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the Messianic King.

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me;

Luke 4:16-22 Then Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been raised. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. When he stood up to read, ¹⁷ the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me to tell the good news to the poor. He has sent me to announce release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set oppressed people free, ¹⁹ and to announce the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

While the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him, ²¹ he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled, as you've heard it read aloud."

Conclude: 1. The great miracles of our Lord, which attested to His person and Messiahship, were actually the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit.

2. So ascribing His works to the kingdom of evil meant that the speakers had identified the Third Person of the Godhead with Satan, the prince of demons!

d. Right after ascribing His works to Satan, the scribes and Pharisees say in Matt. 12:38: "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

a. To ask for a sign is evidence of unbelief. For Jesus to give them a sign would have been wrong. He would have catered to their unbelief and allowed them to set the standards for faith. But he replied to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign."

Consider: They just pronounced His previous miracles to be satanic in origin!

Now they ask for another sign!

D. The fickle populace was not much better than the arrogant leaders they resented and despised.

a. Their selfish interest in the mere physical benefits of the impending Kingdom

b. Their apathy to the great moral and spiritual issues of the day

c. Their fluctuating and unpredictable attitudes

1. If the people had believed their own prophets, they would have known that the Messiah at the establishment of His Kingdom would visit judgment upon the false shepherds who fed themselves instead of caring for the sheep. [Ezek. 34:1-10]

2. Four times in His discourse immediately following the blasphemy, Christ uses the term "generation" in assessing the responsibility for His rejection. [Matt. 12:39, 41-42, 45]

3. Jesus tells His disciples in Matt. 13:14-15 these people fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. "With them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says: 'You will listen and listen but never understand. You will look and look but never comprehend'¹⁵ for this people's heart has become dull, and their ears are hard of hearing. They have shut their eyes so that they might not see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

4. An ominous sign is given as to the generation involved. "The sign of the prophet Jonah" Matt. 12:39-40 "An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign. Yet no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah,⁴⁰ because just as Jonah was in the stomach of the sea creature for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

Consider: This sign speaks of the death of the Messianic King by the determination and consent of His own nation.

a. Jonah experienced "death, burial and resurrection" in the great fish.

b. The only sign Jesus would give to His nation was death, burial and resurrection.

- The 1st seven chapters of Acts focus on the resurrection of Christ, not His death.
- The Jews of the day believed He had died for this was the main topic of conversation. [Luke 24:18]
- But they did not believe He was alive. [Matt. 28:11-15]
- In Acts 2-7, the Holy Spirit gave the nation of Israel abundant witness that Jesus was alive. This was the ONLY sign they needed.

Matt. 12:41-42 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment and condemn the people living today, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. But look—something greater than Jonah is here!⁴² The queen of the south will stand up and condemn the people living today, because she came from so far away to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

But look! Something greater than Solomon is here!"

Consider: The Queen of Sheba traveled a long distance to hear Solomon's wisdom.

The Jewish leaders rejected the wisdom of Christ, who was in their very midst!

5. Jesus then draws a picture of the current generation in Matt. 12:43-45 It is like a man out of whom an unclean spirit has gone. The unclean spirit wanders about seeking rest but finds none. Returning to the former dwelling place, he finds the place swept and garnished, but empty. Then, joining with 7 other spirits, more evil than himself, they enter the man; and his last state is worse than the first. "Even so," Christ declares, "shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

a. Verse 46 confirms Jesus was speaking to the people as well as the religious leaders.

6. The nation had been purged of the demon of idolatry which had plagued them in the OT.

7. The nation had experienced a genuine and widespread moral cleansing through the great preparatory ministry of John the Baptist.

Note: Reformation is not enough! Reformation can cleanse, but it could not FILL.

a. They were proud of their "clean houses," but their hearts were empty.

Mere religion or reformation will not save. There must be REGENERATION.

They should have received the Savior and been filled with spiritual life.

b. The house of Israel remained empty. There was no national reception of its King.

The climactic rejection of the Messiah took place when the Jews said to Pilate, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:21-23).

c. The people of that generation accepted the responsibility for His crucifixion [Matt. 27:25]. God indeed held them responsible for what they had done:

Acts 2:23 After he was arrested according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified this very man and killed him using the hands of lawless men.

d. Within their lifetime, the people of Israel became the most bitter among all the enemies of the Gospel of salvation through the Cross of Christ.

e. The last state would be worse than the first.

f. Acts covers the years of a single generation.

Ellicott: "We must turn to the picture drawn by the Jewish historian of the crimes, frenzies, insanities of the final struggle that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is an adequate measure of the 'last state' of that 'wicked generation.'"

1. 70 A.D. - Within the time span of a single generation, judgment fell in the destruction of Jerusalem and the world-wide dispersion of the nation.

2. An entire generation lost its historical opportunity for their King & His Kingdom. However, the nation could not irrevocably lose those ancient rights guaranteed by the God of Israel.

Note: This "Kingdom At Hand," the Messianic Kingdom, will be re-offered to the Jewish generation of the Tribulation period.

That generation will accept it and the Messianic Kingdom will be established.

Matthew 13 marks a new division in the gospel and faces the question:

What will happen when the rejected king goes back to heaven and the promised Messianic Kingdom is postponed until His Second Coming?

Matt. 11:28-30 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and loaded down with burdens, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Place my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest for your souls,³⁰ because my yoke is pleasant, and my burden is light."

Come: The Pharisees said "Do."

People felt exhausted and burdened down under the yoke of pharisaical legalism.

Take: Deeper experience - When we come to Christ by faith, He gives us rest. = Peace WITH God

When we take His yoke and learn, we FIND REST, the deeper rest of surrender and obedience = Peace OF God. [Phil. 4:6-8]

To "take a yoke" in that day = to become a disciple. When we submit to Christ, we are yoked to Him.

Easy = well-fitting = He has just the yoke that is tailor-made for our lives and needs.

Learn: The first 2 commands represent a crisis as we come and yield to Christ, but this step is a process.

As we learn more about Him, we find a deeper peace because we trust Him more.

Ps. 34: Taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste doesn't suggest a sip or nibble.

It implies feeding on the Lord through His Word and experiencing ALL He has for us.