

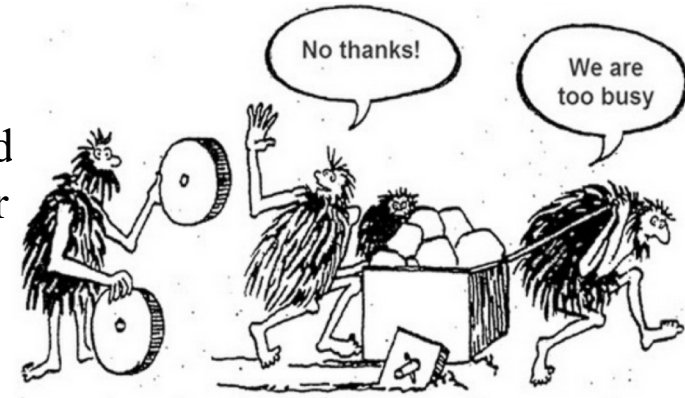
# Gospel of Matthew

12:38-45

## Seven... More Wicked



There are two basic types of people that ask questions about Jesus. People who ask questions because they want to prove that Jesus is false, a fantasy, a bad idea. There are other people who ask exactly the same question because they genuinely want an answer! I have noticed this phenomenon most of my life. Answering the very same questions for people and getting polar opposite results. If I give an excellent answer to a genuine seeker, their unbelief melts away and they are drawn ever closer with each answer I give. \*One time I answered questions from a couple for over eight hours.



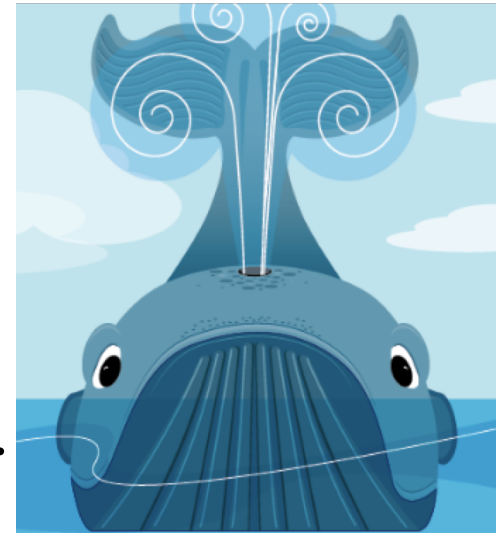
It was an absolutely wonderful conversation! Afterward, I was both exhausted and energized at the same time! A few weeks later, first the husband accepted Christ as His Savior (on his own), and then a month later, the wife (on her own). But then I've had conversations with hardened skeptics that took hours, where I provided the same answers to their questions, and although they admitted my answers made sense, they just asked more questions they thought would stump me. They weren't even listening to my answers! As I was looking into their eyes and answering their questions, I could see their minds racing ahead to how they were going to phrase the next question that was sure to trip me up – like the one I've never heard before! Good luck with that! I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I have a lot of them, and they are good enough to satisfy my natural curiosity and skepticism. But I also don't think I have heard an original question in probably 25 years! Actually, I think I've heard them all – long ago! What bothers me about these skeptics is that they think they are so smart! Their smugness – their arrogance – that bothers me! I know they CAN believe because I provide them the evidence that brought me to belief! But they won't believe!

**Vs. 38** - “*We want to see a sign*” – ***another*** sign, of course! They had been watching Jesus recreate atrophied limbs, success-splicing severed spinal chords for the paralyzed – not with surgery but with command! They had seen him recreating eyes for the blind, casting out demons that were plaguing people with various illnesses and disabilities. But now they ask Jesus to show them something new! And guess what? He says “*No, I won’t do it! You people are always asking for a sign. You are part of a wicked and unfaithful culture. You know who God is but you are using Him for your own purposes!*” Jesus would give them nothing! He knew their hearts and He knew He was wasting His time! He could not do enough to prove Himself to them, so He would not perform for them at all!

\*It’s like trying to prove the earth is round to the flat earth society. It cannot be done! All the proof in the world would not be enough to convince them because their minds are made up! Likewise, there is no cure for a hard and selfish heart!



Then Jesus told them that the only sign which was specifically for them would be His resurrection . But He used code. He used the analogy of Jonah and his three days in the belly of a whale to forecast His own death and resurrection to these skeptics. But we know that not even *that* would convince these skeptics, and skeptics like them down through the centuries. proclaimed messiah has ever come back from the dead? Not the Buddha, not Mohammed, not Joseph Smith, not David Koresh who proclaimed he'd be back. But he didn't come back. But Jesus would! He did!! He showed Himself to about 500 people, but His haters broke their Mosaic Law and lied, saying that his disciples stole His body. They knew nothing of the kind. Many of the disciples died martyr's deaths proclaiming to their last breath they'd seen the risen Jesus and asking their tormentors to believe them. They would not deny Him. They started a movement that would change the world!





Those that should have recognized the Chosen One, those that should have welcomed Him, would be the ones that rejected and accused Him and killed Him! Jesus proclaimed judgment upon them saying that even Nineveh would sit in judgment upon them and even the Queen of Sheba – a total pagan in her day and head of a pagan nation would sit in judgment upon them. Nineveh was the complete enemy of God and of Israel - God's people. But even they responded to the word of the Lord (without any miraculous signs that we know of), while these men would not relinquish their hard hearts no matter the evidence! The queen of the South did not even know God until King Solomon introduced her to her Creator! And she recognized the truth when she heard it! But these men knew about the Lord, knew all the prophecies about Him, had all the evidence that God Himself had provided, and now had the Lord right in front of their eyes proving who He was! And when He did, they started plotting to kill Him! I'm telling you – I wouldn't want to be them! They had made Jesus angry! They were investigating, prosecuting, and condemning God's Son! You don't mess with someone's son or you will know the special wrath of his father! And you especially do not want to make the Father of Jesus angry at you!



**Vs. 43-45** – Let’s think for a minute how these verses are connected with the previous thoughts. They seem disconnected but they are not. Chapters 11-13 have to do with examples of those that could believe, and those that wouldn’t. After pointing out the particular type of hard heart these religious skeptics carried in their core being – that they were much more impervious to the influence of God than God’s avowed enemies, and people with no knowledge of Him. These guys knew their Old Testament like you wouldn’t believe. Many of them had the Old Testament memorized as a child! They also memorized the writings of those considered the great rabbis/teachers who had written commentary called the oral Torah - mainly the Midrash which had been passed down meticulously from father to son for hundreds of years! The rabbis explained and fleshed out the Law of Moses with what they thought was the implied Torah. It provided the details that were not in the text or the written Torah (Old Testament) – in some cases, the *minutia* of the Mosaic Law. It was given equal footing and respect as the written Law itself! It was considered inspired of God. Only problem was that it wasn’t – not if you asked Jesus! Jesus obviously thought the “spoken Torah” contained much dangerous foolishness, and was counter-productive to the intent of God.



They had given themselves to the teaching of those considered great men, considered insightful men, considered godly men who could channel God - and these students had become much lesser for it, not better! So Jesus uses this illustration about a man who gets rid of a demon inside of him. He is delivered from his miserable and tormented life and *finally* clean and right. And the demon is pictured wandering about with no place to go – cannot find a host. So it decides it will go back to its original host, but this time the demon invited his friends, seven of them! He somehow finds entrance again and brings along his colleagues who manifest themselves in worst ways than the original, and in the end the man is far worse off than he was before he got clean!



sloth, lust, envy, greed, wrath,  
pride, gluttony

This is a comparison! The man in the story represents these skeptics to whom God gave the Torah (Old Testament”. This was a great gift to their lives! They were a privileged society! The Old Testament showed them goodness, justice, compassion, kindness, mercy! It gave them a chance to combat their fallen human natures by telling them who God was, and what truth is, and giving many good examples of God’s love and compassion and many bad examples of human behavior and God’s reaction to it. It explicitly explained God’s expectations of justice and compassion – His hatred of human pride and duplicity, and His love of humility and pure motives in a person. They had far more of a chance than most to walk before God in a God honoring manner, *but instead, had become the haunt of demons* – useful to Satan – destructive, unjust, stingy, self-centered, disgusting forces of evil in society!

How often have I seen this in the church of Jesus Christ! People have been given EVERY opportunity to live well – to bring God glory – to shine in the midst of a dark generation! But instead they have become the darkness! They are like bad jokes – caricatures, cartoon figures – bombastic, judgmental, insufferably self-righteous, uncooperative,



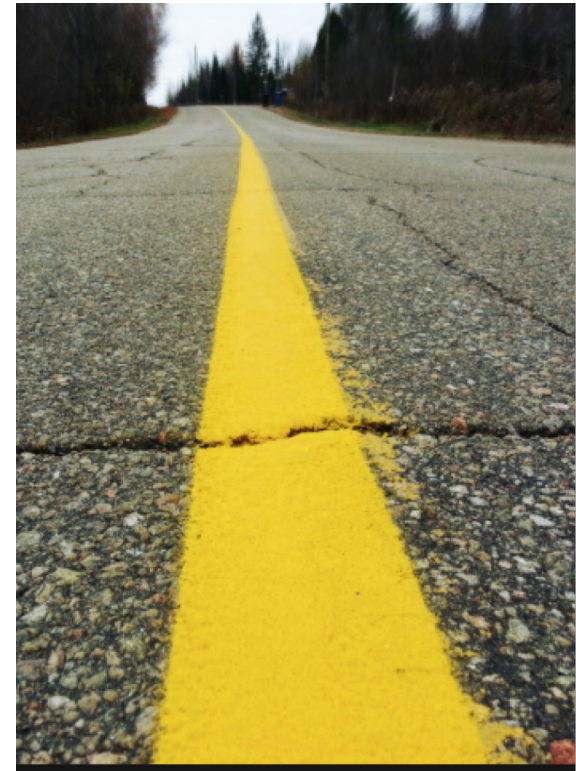
combative, opinionated - the stereotypical “ugly Christian”! The ugly Christian causes wreckage and mayhem in the church. It’s not that they don’t do anything good – they usually do – they’re kind to some but not to all! To some they are unkind! They can be the church’s hardest workers or most prominent leaders! That is not uncommon at all! But the damage they can do with impatience, unkindness, an uncontrolled tongue, a harsh or condemning spirit, is *also* their legacy to Jesus and to His church. In their minds it is always justified – end justifies the means; it’s necessary; that’s just me! But not only in the church – but wherever their lives touch the world. They can do the same damage, but different. In church they can be a great discouragement to others. In the world they are steering people into hell because they have painted a unlovely picture of Jesus!

It would have been better if they had never claimed to have known Him – never have been a part of any church! How sad that is!

Some do their dirty work more subtly – like fanning the flames of division by whispering gossip, slander, insinuations in the ears of others. Other’s are right up front – in your face with insults, threats, intimidation.



How is this even possible? Can a person “fall away” even while still involved in the local church? Well, they can certainly look like it. But fortunately we leave that issue up to the Lord. But we still have to deal with the fallout of some of these wolves among the sheep. But make no mistake! If Jesus is the exact representation of God, it is obvious that when a person has the opportunity to participate in the new creation, and keeps one foot in the old creation - this makes God angry! They are worse off in the end than if they had never known about Jesus.



So be warned – don’t dabble at being a Christian! You should know that your commitment to Christ should be extreme! An avowed Christ-follower needs to be all in – following Jesus with all their being, or I’m afraid it just doesn’t work! It doesn’t work for Jesus, doesn’t work for the church, doesn’t work for the purposes of God to reveal Himself to the world and bring sinners to Himself in surrender, faith, and repentance! We have to decide which side we are on!!