

## STUDY SIX | MATTHEW 12:38-50

### WHO ARE MY FAMILY?

#### OVERVIEW

In these closing verses of Matthew 12 we continue Jesus' encounter with his religious opponents. Centred around the request for a sign, Jesus uses the scriptures to once again bring judgment upon the generation unto which he has come (John 1:10-11). As we discovered in the previous chapter (Matt 11:28-30), the Lord's teaching concludes with a note of grace: an invitation to join the family of those who do the will of his Father in heaven.

#### SOMETHING GREATER (VV 38-42)

Contrasting with the previous teaching on the need for authenticity of our words (vv 36-37), the scribes and Pharisees come seeking a sign. Though not explicitly stated in Matthew's narrative, we may assume this was a further attempt at entrapment. Jesus is quick to provide a sign though not in the manner intended. They must see the sign of Jonah's three days inside the sea monster as a precursor to the Son of Man's three days in the earth. Jesus will not provide an immediate sign but will instead point them to the climactic event of his death and resurrection which was still to come. Their hard-heartedness (Matt 11:16, 20) is contrasted with the pagan nation of Nineveh (see the book of Jonah) and the pagan Queen of the South (see 1 Kings 10:1-13) both of whom respond to the word of God in repentance and obedience.

The force of the comparative teaching is found in the 'something greater' references of vv 41 & 42. Both the prophet Jonah and King Solomon in their message and ministries pointed to the greater reality that was to come in the Lord's anointed and appointed. Both testified to the need for repentance (Jonah 3:1-10) and reverence (1 Kings 10:9) when faced with the reality of God's rule, prefiguring the time when the Gentiles would come under the gospel (Matt 12:21). Yet the 'wicked and adulterous' generation into which Jesus came remain unconvinced and seemingly unbridled in their opposition.

#### SOMETHING WORSE (VV 43-45)

## 'COME UNTO ME'

#### JANUARY 31

MATT 10:1-31 WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

#### FEBRUARY 7

MATT 10:32-42 THE UNDIVIDED DISCIPLE

#### FEBRUARY 14

MATT 11:1-30 KNOWN & UNKNOWN

#### FEBRUARY 21

MATT 12:1-14 LORD OF THE SABBATH

#### FEBRUARY 28

MATT 12:15-37 THE TOUGH & TENDER SERVANT

#### MARCH 7

MATT 12:38-50 WHO ARE MY FAMILY?

#### MARCH 14

MATT 13:1-23 THE SOWER & THE SEEDS

#### MARCH 21

MATT 13:24-43 THE WEEDS, THE SEED & THE YEAST

#### MARCH 28

MATT 13:44-58 THE TREASURE, THE PEARL & THE NET

## RESOURCE

#### A GREAT LIGHT DAWNS

PETER BOLT

(READING THE BIBLE TODAY)

This 'parable' comes as both a condemnation to the religious leaders and a warning to the 'generation' witnessing his teaching. Jesus' acts of exorcism were characteristic of his ministry and the new age of the Kingdom he had inaugurated (Matt 11:4-6) and the restorative nature of his rescue (Matt 12:13). He was the one who had conquered the strong man's house (Matt 12:29) and in this light had brought about much needed cleansing amongst the people of God. The house being cleared and put in good order was none the less vulnerable and its occupant facing an even worse occupation of evil if the response to Jesus did not result in a commitment to service for the Kingdom. The account reminds us that there is no neutral territory in a response to Jesus, and failure to recognise him and repent can result in even more dire outcomes when we consider the influence of evil our world. The seven (symbol of completion) spirits may be symbolic of 'complete' opposition to the Lord, signified by the actions of the scribes and Pharisees. While Jesus represents something greater rejection of him leads to something worse.

### **SOMETHING LARGER (VV 46-50)**

At one level these accounts at the end of chapter 12 appear unrelated, but Jesus here is providing an alternative to the wicked and adulterous generation into which he speaks. In the presence of a waiting family who wish to see him (v 47) Jesus redefines membership of his (Kingdom) family as those who are committed to the will of his Father (v 50). The passage is a segue to the teaching in Matthew 13 concerning the parable of the soils and the weeds. The coming of the Messiah to Israel would spark a remnant within the people of God (v 49) who would turn in repentance and faith and be the genesis for renewal in the church.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Do you think churches should be families or denominational groups? What has been your experience?

## INTO THE TEXT

### READ VERSES 38-45

2. What sign did Jesus give the 'wicked and adulterous generation'?
3. In what way did the repentance of Nineveh and the reverence of the Queen of the South in vv 41-42 heighten the hard-heartedness of those listening to Jesus?
4. What was it about Jonah and Solomon's ministries that pointed to something greater? What was it?
5. What is the message of the 'parable' Jesus tells in vv 43-45?
6. What is the danger of a luke-warm response to Jesus?
7. What would Jesus say about our generation today?

### READ VERSES 46-50

8. Do you think Jesus was just not into families?
9. What is the key to doing the will of the Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9-10; 7:24-27)?

## TAKEAWAY

10. Ask question 1 again. What is the key to a family experience of church?
11. Can you think of times where the tension of living for the Kingdom has clashed with family priorities?