

Matthew 12:31–50 — The Son of Man and the New Spiritual Family

Moral vs. Formal Rejection, The Son of Man as Universal Title, The Kingdom in Mystery Ending at the Rapture, The Transfiguration as Pledge, and The Open Door of ‘Whosoever’

Scripture Reading: Matthew 12:31–50; 13:1–3; 16:18; 17:1–2; 2 Peter 1:16–18

“But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” (Matthew 12:32)

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:50)

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit Distinguished from a Lie to the Spirit

There is a difference between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12 and the lie to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit — a serious sin, and a characterizing one at the opening of the new thing God was doing in forming the church. God marked his mind about that sort of thing by striking them dead. But their sin was not the unpardonable sin. The blasphemy here was a special sin requiring the actual presence of Christ: calling the Holy Spirit, as he worked in Christ’s person, by the name of Beelzebub. Every word and work of the Lord Jesus was by the power of the Holy Spirit. To attribute that power to the prince of demons was not merely an error of judgment but a willful perversion of what they saw. And it was irrevocable. Neither in this

age nor in the age to come. There is no millennium in which it becomes forgivable. The age to come is the millennium, and forgiveness for this sin is excluded even from that.

The Son of Man: A Title Connected with Rejection and Universal Dominion

The Lord calls himself here the Son of Man — a title he took with particular frequency in connection with his rejection. It is a more encompassing title than Son of David. As Son of David, he will reign over Israel; as Son of Man, everything in heaven and everything on earth comes under that title. It is universal dominion flowing from and through his rejection. By going into death in rejection, by rising and being exalted as the rejected one, he has become the Son of Man to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given. The greater title subsumes the lesser: he will be Son of David in the millennium, but as Son of Man his authority is without limit and without boundary.

Theologians have written extensively on the origin and meaning of this expression, producing much that does not amount to anything, when the simple observation that the Lord took it consistently in connection with his rejection gives the key. Through rejection, through the cross, through rising in that rejection, everything falls under him who rendered himself to the will of God and glorified him at every point.

Moral Rejection and Formal Rejection: Two Breaks

Chapter 12 is a dividing point in Matthew between two great sections: everything up to chapter 12, and everything from chapter 13 onward, which is marked by a radical change. Up to chapter 12, the Lord and his heralds were coming to Israel and looking for fruit. After chapter 12, the Lord takes the position of a sower — scattering seed broadly, not coming to an established field expecting a harvest.

This change of posture is the mark of the moral rejection.

The moral rejection here is the rejection in Israel's hearts, made explicit in the blasphemy. The formal rejection is the crucifixion, where they executed what was already fully in their hearts. The two are distinct but belong together: the moral reality was already complete at Matthew 12; Calvary made it visible and official. Between them, in Luke, we have the three-year parable — the owner coming to the fig tree for three years, finding no fruit, the servant asking for one more year to dig and dung it. That one year is the early preaching in Acts, ending with Stephen. Then the final parable of the nobleman who went into a far country, and whose citizens sent after him saying we will not have this man to reign over us: that embassy is Stephen, and when they stoned him the last offer closed.

The Kingdom in Mystery: From Chapter 13 to the Rapture

In chapter 13, the Lord begins speaking of the kingdom of the heavens as a mystery — meaning something not disclosed to or spoken of by the prophets in the Old Testament, a new and unpredicted phase. He gives a complete view of this kingdom in its mystery form through the parables of the chapter. The question is where the mystery form of the kingdom ends. Many have assumed it runs up to the full glory of the kingdom's display. J.N. Darby, however, pressed forcibly in his writings that the parables themselves must determine the time, and that the Lord's explanations of two of the parables contain features that go beyond what the parables themselves describe. That is, the explanation exceeds the parable.

This is consistent with a principle in Scripture: explanations of prophecy sometimes contain added features not found in the prophecy itself, and it is the prophecy, not the explanation, that determines the scope of the thing. When this is applied to Matthew 13, the mystery kingdom ends at the rapture, not at the full

display of the kingdom in glory. This is confirmed by the larger structure: the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom as at hand ceased after Matthew 12 and will be taken up again by the godly Jewish remnant after the rapture. The epoch in which it is suspended is the epoch of the kingdom in mystery. When it resumes after the rapture, the mystery phase is over. What J.N. Darby sought to bring out is exactly right, and it makes the whole picture consistent.

The Transfiguration as Pledge: Chapters 13, 16, and 17 in Sequence

After chapter 12 and its rejection, we get in chapter 13 the kingdom in mystery form, and in chapter 16 the introduction of the church — the new body to which the administration of God's authority on earth is being transferred as Israel loses her place. These are the two things that will fill the epoch between the moral break and the glory: the mystery kingdom and the church. And what follows in chapter 17? The Transfiguration. The sequence is deliberate: rejection in chapter 12, the mystery epoch described in chapters 13 and 16, and then the pledge of the coming kingdom in glory in chapter 17.

Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:16–18 that they were eyewitnesses of his majesty on the holy mount — they saw him coming in his kingdom. And the Lord had said, some of you standing here shall not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Six days later he took three of them up and was transfigured before them. That is the straightforward explanation. Those who cannot see it try to stretch the fulfillment to A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem, but Peter's own words settle it: they saw him coming in his kingdom on the mount. The Transfiguration was the pledge — a preview, a guarantee — of the coming glory that will follow the rejection.

Whosoever: The Open Door for Gentiles

The final word of chapter 12 is one of the broadest in all the gospels. He stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. This statement does not limit itself to Israel or to any particular group. It is whosoever — as wide as the human race. The moral break with the nation of Israel opened, in the same breath, an entirely new ground of relationship with him: not national, not genealogical, not covenantal, but spiritual. Those who do the will of his Father in heaven are his family.

This is the door through which Gentiles enter. We were without God, without hope, strangers from the covenants of promise — not a single covenant of mercy exists for a Gentile in the Old Testament. There is not one. If God was going to bless us, it had to be entirely outside of covenant, on entirely new ground. And here that new ground opens. Whosoever. The rejected Son of Man stretches his hand toward us and says, those who do the will of my Father are my own. We have been the recipients of mercy that exceeds all the covenant blessings, brought so near that we can say with truth: nearer we cannot be. Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ himself.

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.