

Prove it!

Matthew Chapter 12

PROVE IT!, Two little words that spark a myriad of emotions. They are used to challenge someone to demonstrate or establish that something is true or show certain abilities or defend a hypothesis. From showing you identification to prove you are authorized to drive or the person authorized to use the credit card you present to pay for your groceries, each is a non-confrontational example of “prove it”. Some employers are having potential employees take a “Prove It” test before an interview. The aim of the test is to prove that you have the skills and ability to use Microsoft Office at your new job without the need of guidance, giving them a sense that you will be able to hit the ground running immediately after you are hired. People like Ludwig van Beethoven, Albert Einstein, Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) and many others faced significant challenges, attacks from without and within, overcame each and achieved success in life. They proved what was possible by focusing on what they could do vice what they could not do.

As we come to chapter 12, the scribes and Pharisees say to Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” It is a rather interesting request. They had just seen Jesus heal the “demon-possessed man who was blind and mute”. The crowd is amazed and wonder if Jesus is the Messiah foretold in Scripture. Hearing the response of the crowd, the Pharisees say, ‘this man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of demons.’ Once again we see a glimpse of Jesus omniscience, Jesus knows their thoughts and for the next 25 verses, He teaches them the ridiculous nature of their accusation, the one sin which shall not be forgiven and tells them “...a tree is known by its fruit.” Jesus immediately applies the parable to the Pharisees calling them a “brood of vipers” (or offspring of vipers), the same thing John the Baptist called them in Matthew 3:7. Vipers were seen as deadly evil creatures whose venom was often lethal. The Pharisee’s own words not only reflected their heart but also caused them to demonize the miracle they had just witnessed. They spoke according to their nature. Being more concerned with the letter of the law, they failed to see manifestations of the Messiah standing before them and tell Jesus, “we want to see a sign from You”. Prove it! Show us a sign. Why? Like many today they want some type of confirmation that Jesus is Who He says He is.; or they want new ones because they do not believe the old ones; or the old ones weren’t that impressive so they wanted to see something truly amazing; or they want to justify their unbelief; or they are just curious thrill seekers; or they want to get something for themselves. It is reminiscent of Jesus temptation in the wilderness where Satan repeatedly said, “if You are the Son of God ...”. Jesus answer is direct, curt and clear, “An evil and adulterous generation craves after a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet”. Jesus had given a sign which they refused to see or acknowledge, another will not be given but “the sign of Jonah the prophet”. He is saying the story of Jonah is a prophecy, a picture of the things to come. “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish” for three days and people would have assumed his death, so Jesus “will be three nights in the heart of the earth” and many will assume His death is a permanent condition. After taking his submerged voyage, Jonah was spewed onto the beach. Similarly, Jesus will raise from the grave, alive forever. The Ninevites were outside the promises and covenants, they were alienated and lost. Jonah’s message was one of condemnation, devastation and destruction. “And word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, laid his robe from him and covered himself with sackcloth and sat on ashes”. The king decreed a national fast and petitioned God to relent and God relented. Jesus then tells them something greater than Jonah is here. Next, Jesus presents “the Queen of the South” known to us as the Queen of Sheba who came a great distance to “hear the wisdom of Solomon”. Jesus then tells them something greater than Solomon is here. The typology attached to the sign of Jonah would prove to be the ultimate sign, resurrection! No sign will be given except the resurrection of Jesus. Now that’s a sign! Not only that but Jesus says Jonah and the queen will rise up and condemn the Jews of His day who did not believe or repent.

The leaders of Jesus day along with many of those who heard Jesus preach will forget the words Jesus speaks about “the sign of Jonah”. They were immoral, self-righteous, hypocritical, and deceived into believing what they wanted to believe. No sign or miracle would have changed their mind. As we read Jesus words, do we believe or are we asking for a sign. Are we looking at the ample evidence surrounding His resurrection, the growth of the Gospel, the changed lives of those who have repented of their sin or are we so in love with sin we refuse to see what is before our very eyes? Are you among the jury or the judged? Prove it!

1. What were the disciples doing that irritated the Pharisees? Who did the Pharisees confront and why did Jesus reference 1 Samuel 21:1-9 in His response to them? What did Jesus accuse the priests of doing? Why? What is Jesus saying in verses 6 and 7? Why did Jesus quote Hosea 6:6?

2. From the field, where did Jesus go and what question of the Pharisee's ask? Why? How does Jesus answer their question and what does He do? What is the difference between Jesus and the Pharisee's view of healing? How did the Pharisee's respond to Jesus healing the man's withered hand? What does Jesus do because of their response?

3. What do we learn about Jesus, the Messiah, from verses 18-21? How did the demon affect the man brought to Jesus? What happened when Jesus healed him and how did the multitude respond? How did the Pharisees respond? Does Satan have the power to heal? Why or why not?

4. Read verses 30-32, What sins can be forgiven and what sins can not be forgiven? How can someone blaspheme the Holy Spirit? How would you explain Jesus comment on the trees and vipers in verses 33-37? How should verse 37 cause us to guard our words? What kind of words justify or condemn us?

5. Why did the Pharisees and scribes desire "a sign". What was Jesus answer to their request? (38-42) What signs Jesus use and what do they mean? Read and explain verses 43-45 and 46-50. What did you learn as you examined this set of verses?