

the Kingdom. But before one can fully understand what the basis of His coming will be, one must first comprehend what the issues were at the time of the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus.

a. The Rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus

(1) Matthew 12:22-45

In the layout of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus began His ministry in chapter four. From chapter four until chapter twelve, Jesus went around Israel, city to city and synagogue to synagogue, proclaiming His Messiahship and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He was offering to Israel the Kingdom of the Jewish prophets, but the Kingdom was preconditioned by Israel's acceptance of Him as the Messianic King. He performed many miracles, and the purpose of all His miracles between chapters four and twelve was to authenticate His Person (that He is the Messiah) and His message (the gospel of the Kingdom). These miracles were to serve as signs to the nation of Israel to force them to come to a decision about Him. But the purpose of His miracles and His whole ministry underwent a radical change in chapter twelve. The rejection of His Messiahship occurred in Matthew 12:22-37:

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This man does not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. And knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?

and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters. Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come. Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil things. And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

Among the many miracles that Jesus performed was the casting out of demons. Judaism also had exorcists who would cast out demons (v. 27). But in Jewish exorcism, one first had to establish communication with the demon in order to find out his name. Then, using the demon's name, the exorcist could cast him out. On other occasions Jesus did use the Jewish method, as in Luke 8:30. When demons speak they use the vocal chords of the person under their control. However, in the case of the dumb demon, Jewish exorcism was to no avail, for communication with that kind of a demon was impossible. But Jewish theology taught that the Messiah, when He came, would even be able to cast out that kind of demon. The Jewish observation that dumb demons were different was validated by Jesus in Mark 9:17-29 (particularly vv. 17, 25, 29).

In verse 22, Jesus was able to exorcise a dumb demon. In verse 23, this caused the people to begin asking the question, "Can Jesus really be the Messiah?" This was one of the key purposes of this miracle, to get them to see that He indeed was the *Son of David*. However, the people were not willing to come to a decision by themselves, but were looking to their religious leaders, the Pharisees, to reach a verdict for them. They were waiting for the Pharisees to conclude either that He was the Mes-

siah or that He was not the Messiah. These were the only two options the Pharisees had. But if they were to conclude that He was not the Messiah, the Pharisees would also have to explain how Jesus was able to perform His many miracles, especially the miracles that were supposed to be unique to the Messiah only.

In verse 24, the Pharisees made their choice. They refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah because He did not fit the pharisaic mold of what Messiah was supposed to say and do (Lk. 7:30-35). Their alternative explanation as to how He was able to perform His miracles was to declare that Jesus Himself was demon possessed, not by a common demon, but by the prince of demons, *Beelzebub*. This name is a combination of two Hebrew words which mean "the lord of the flies." This, then, became the official *basis* of the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. This was "the leaven of the Pharisees" against which Jesus would warn His disciples. They were to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees: the teaching that He was not the Messiah but that He was demon possessed. On these grounds, the Pharisees rejected the Messiahship of Jesus.

In verses 25-29, Jesus responded and told them that this could not be true because it would mean a division in Satan's kingdom.

Then, in verses 30-37, He pronounced a judgment on the Jewish generation of that day. That generation had committed the unpardonable sin: the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. One should clearly comprehend exactly what the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is in the context in which it is found, and this is the *only* context in which this sin is found and must be interpreted accordingly. The unpardonable sin was not an individual sin, but a national sin. It was committed by that generation of Israel in Jesus' day and cannot be applied to subsequent Jewish generations. The *content* of the unpardonable sin was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus while He was physically present on the grounds that He was demon possessed. This sin was unpardonable, and judgment was set. The judgment came in the year A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people. It is not a sin that can be committed by individuals today. It was a national sin committed by the generation of Jesus' day, and for that generation the sin was unpardonable. From this point on, a special emphasis is placed on *this generation* in the Gospels, for it was guilty of a very unique sin.

There was no way of alleviating the judgment appointed for that generation because there would be no forgiveness for this sin. This judgment was to be fulfilled forty years later, in the year A.D. 70.

In verses 38-40, Jesus announced His new policy regarding miracles:

Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from you. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (emphasis added)

The Pharisees were stunned by the pronouncement of judgment. They tried to retake the offensive by demanding a sign (v. 38)—as though Jesus had done nothing so far to substantiate His Messiahship! But in verse 39, there is a change of policy regarding His signs. From now on, there would be no more signs for the nation except one. While Jesus continued to perform miracles after this event, the purpose of His miracles had changed. No longer were they for the purpose of authenticating His Person and His message to the nation in order to get the nation to come to a decision. That decision had now been made, and made irrevocably. Rather, His miracles would be for the purpose of training the Twelve Apostles for the new kind of ministry they would need to conduct as a result of the rejection of His Messiahship. It is the ministry the Apostles performed in the Book of Acts. For that generation there would be no sign but one: the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of resurrection. It is a sign that would come for Israel on three occasions: *first*, at the resurrection of Lazarus; *second*, at Jesus' own resurrection; and *third*, at the resurrection of the Two Witnesses in the Tribulation. The first two were rejected. The third will be accepted, for the resurrection of the Two Witnesses will lead to the salvation of the Jews of Jerusalem.⁵

Then, in verses 41-45, Jesus concluded with more words of judgment

⁵ See Chapter 11, The Events of the Middle of the Tribulation.

for that generation. It should be noted how often the phrase *this generation* appears:

The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and finds it not. Then he says, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation. (emphasis added)

In verse 41, He compared them with Nineveh and explained why Nineveh will stand in judgment of that generation. The same is true with the Queen of Sheba (v. 42). The people in both cases were Gentiles. With much less revelation than Israel had, they responded even without miracles. But that generation did not.

Then, in verses 43-45, the words of judgment conclude with a story about a demon to illustrate what the final outcome of that generation would be. Jesus related the account of a demon who left on his own volition a man that he had possessed. But when he was unable to find a new body to indwell and control, he returned to his original abode. Although he found it *swept* and *garnished*, he also found it still *empty*. The individual never took the opportunity to fill his life with the Holy Spirit. Nor had another demon entered him. So the demon re-entered the man he originally possessed and then invited seven other demons to join him. The outcome was that the last state of that man had become worse than the first. Originally he was possessed by only one demon. He had the opportunity after the demon left to fill his life with the Spirit of God and failed to do so. Now, the last state of that man was worse because now he was possessed by eight demons.

The point of this story is often missed. Jesus closed the story with the point that what was true of the man was also true of that particular *evil*

generation. When that generation began, it began with the preaching of John the Baptist. John's ministry was to prepare the people for the reception of the Messiah. By means of the preaching of John, that generation was swept and garnished. But now that Messiah had come, they rejected Him on the basis of demon possession. The nation that was swept and garnished now remained empty on account of the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. And because it remained empty, the last state of that generation was to be worse than the first.

When that generation began, it was under Roman domination. Nevertheless, it had a national entity. It had a semi-autonomous form of government in the Sanhedrin. Jerusalem stood in all its Herodian glory, and the religious worship system in the Temple remained intact. But later as a result of the rejection and the judgment in the year A.D. 70, the national entity of Israel ceased to exist. In the place of bondage they were dispersed by the Roman armies. The Temple, the center of Judaism, was completely destroyed so that not one stone stood upon another. Eventually, the Jews were dispersed all over the world. So, indeed, the last state of that generation became worse than the first. They went from bondage to worldwide dispersion.

(2) John 11:1-57

Even after the events of Matthew twelve, the Pharisees approached Jesus demanding a sign to authenticate His Person and His message (Mat. 16:1-4). But again He refused to give them any more signs and promised them only *the sign of Jonah*, which is the sign of resurrection.

The resurrection of Lazarus, recorded in John 11:1-44, is the presentation of the first sign of Jonah. Jesus raised others from the dead previously, yet all of the other resurrections are covered in just a few verses. But here John uses 44 verses to give great detail about the resurrection of Lazarus. Why? This is the sign of Jonah that Jesus had promised. In verse 42, Jesus made it very clear for whom Lazarus was raised, namely, the Jewish multitudes:

And I knew that you heard me always: but because of the multitude that stands around I said it, that they may believe that you did send me.

3. Righteousness, Holiness, Peace, Security, Joy, and Gladness

Another feature of Israel's final restoration combines the various characteristics of righteousness, holiness, peace, security, joy, and gladness. Righteousness and peace are the primary characteristics in Isaiah 32:16-20:

Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever. And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting-places. But it shall hail in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.

Holiness, peace, security, and joy are emphasized in Isaiah 35:5-10. Things that will earmark the time of Israel's regathering:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Joy and gladness are stressed in Isaiah 51:3:

For Jehovah has comforted Zion; he has comforted all her waste places, and has made her wilderness like Eden, and

her desert like the garden of Jehovah; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Joy and peace in nature and man are highlighted in Isaiah 55:12-13:

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

In Isaiah 61:10-11, the emphasis is on the righteousness aspect:

I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

C. The Millennial Mountain of Jehovah's House

At the time of the Second Coming of the Messiah, the Land will undergo some tremendous geographical and topographical changes. One of the key changes in the Land of Israel will be the rise of a very high mountain that will become the highest mountain of the world. On top of this mountain the Millennial Temple and the Millennial Jerusalem will stand.

There are several passages that speak of this Millennial Mountain of Jehovah's House. One such place is Isaiah 2:2-4:

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above

the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

This clearly states that the mountain upon which Jehovah's House will stand will be the highest of all the mountains, and by far the most exalted (v. 2a). All the nations will move toward it in pilgrimage in order to learn the ways of God because the Law of the Millennial Kingdom will emanate from this mountain (vv. 2b-3). This will result in worldwide peace because differences among the nations will be settled by the Word of the Lord that will come from the Mountain of Jehovah's House (vv. 3b-4).

Later, in Isaiah 27:13, the prophet pointed out that this high mountain will become the center of Jewish worship:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

But not the Jews only, for Isaiah 56:6-8 points out the fact that this great Mountain of Jehovah's House will become a place of prayer for all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike:

Also the foreigners that join themselves to Jehovah, to minister unto him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be his servants, every one that keeps the sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

The Lord Jehovah, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own that are gathered.

By means of the Gentile nations, the people of Israel will be brought and regathered to the Mountain of Jehovah's House, according to Isaiah 66:20:

And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto Jehovah, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring their oblation in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah.

Isaiah's contemporary, the Prophet Micah, also spoke of this great Mountain in Micah 4:1-2 with words that are similar to, or quoting, Isaiah's:

But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; . . .

The Mountain of Jehovah's House will be exalted above every mountain and hill (v. 1), and the law of God will proceed from this mountain (v. 2).

The prophet who received the most revelation regarding the Mountain of Jehovah's House was Ezekiel, who first introduced it in Ezekiel 17:22-24, which describes *the mountain of the height of Israel* as a place of lush greenery and vegetation:

Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain: in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and

bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing: in the shade of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.

Later, in Ezekiel 20:40-41, the prophet declared that the mountain will serve as the center of Jewish worship in the Kingdom. After Israel's regeneration and regathering, she will worship the Lord in this high, lofty, and holy mountain:

For in my holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them, serve me in the land: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. As a sweet savor will I accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you in the sight of the nations.

Only in the closing chapters of his book does Ezekiel give the details of what this very high Mountain of Jehovah's House will be like, in three different places. The first is in Ezekiel 40:1-4:

In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day, the hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither; and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you; for, to the intent that I may show them unto you, are you brought hither: declare all that you see to the house of Israel.

In the twenty-fifth year of the seventy years of Babylonian Captivity, Ezekiel was given a final, special revelation of Israel's future in the Messianic Kingdom (v. 1). As Isaiah and Micah before him, he saw a very high mountain which had the skyline of a city on its southern side (v. 2). As will be seen later, this city is the Millennial Jerusalem. Then a message is spoken to the prophet that he is about to be given certain revelations which he is to declare to the House of Israel (vv. 3-4).

The second passage, Ezekiel 45:1-8, describes in great detail the Mountain of Jehovah's house:

Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto Jehovah, a holy portion of the land; the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand: it shall be holy in all the border thereof round about. Of this there shall be for the holy place five hundred in length by five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits for the suburbs thereof round about. And of this measure shall you measure a length of five and twenty thousand, and a breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary, which is most holy. It is a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, that come near to minister unto Jehovah; and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. And five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth, shall be unto the Levites, the ministers of the house, for a possession unto themselves, for twenty chambers. And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, side by side with the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. And whatsoever is for the prince shall be on the one side and on the other side of the holy oblation and of the possession of the city, in front of the holy oblation and in front of the possession of the city, on the west side westward, and on the east side eastward; and in length answerable unto one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. In the land it shall be to him for a possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; but they shall give the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.