

Chapter 11: Is This Not the Son of David?

Reading Outline:

- Matheu 11-12; 14:1-12;
 - Luke 7:36-50
(Parallel accounts: Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-12, 20-34; 6:14-29; Luke 6:1-11; 7:19-35; 8:19-21; 9:7-9; 11:14-32)
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1. Introduction

During the last two chapters our focus was on the Sermon on the Mount. We sought to increase our understanding of this timeless sermon as it applies to us today. We learned that it outlines the "Process of Sanctification" and as we apply these precepts to our lives, they will put us on the path toward perfection. As noted, our final goal is a change from being a "natural man/woman" to becoming a "man/woman of Christ." As this process occurs, even our very dispositions are changed, with the result that we no longer have a desire to do evil. In truth, the very essence of Christ's Sermon was taught to His disciples during His visit to the Americas as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

B/M, 3 Nephi 27:27

27 ...Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

We now continue to follow Jesus during his Galilean ministry. As we proceed with our study, we will come to a greater understanding of the love Jesus has for John the Baptist; Learn that He is the Lord of the Sabbath; and witness His continued miracles and persecution as the leaders seek to accuse Him so that they may put Him to death. We will also learn of the priority of His earthly ministry even in regard to familial ties.

2. Meeting with Two of John's Disciples

John, the Baptist continued to preach the gospel of repentance and baptized all who brought forth the fruits of repentance. His mission was concurrent with the ministry of Jesus. The Tetrarch of the area where John was preaching was Herod Antipas. He had taken a wife, Herodias, who had been the wife of his brother, Philip.

Mark 6:18-20

**18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not.
20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.**

Despite John calling Herod to repentance for his adulterous actions, Herod continued to recognize him as a just and holy man. John was also popular amongst the people, many whom recognized the truths that he taught even if they did not accept baptism. Herod's wife, Herodias, however continued to despise John for his accusations against her marriage to Herod and wanted him dead. Some who know that they are guilty of the sins of which they are being accused, believe that if they can just dispose of the messenger, they will then be freed from the pangs of guilt for their actions. This was the hope of Herodias in regard to John's death; It will also be true for the religious leaders with the death of Jesus.

Finally, the day came and Herod had John imprisoned.

Matthew 14:3

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

Upon learning of John's imprisonment, Jesus became concerned regarding John's well-being.

JST, Matthew 4:11

11 And now Jesus knew that John was cast into prison, and he sent angels, and, behold, they came and ministered unto him.

We can only imagine the inhumane treatment that John must have received while in the prison--dungeon given the vindictiveness of Herodias' rage. Minimum food, poor living conditions and, possible torture, would not be outside her reach.

John ever aware that he must diminish and Jesus must increase, even before his imprisonment, would have encouraged his most ardent disciples to now follow Jesus. Believing that this would best be accomplished by their actual meeting with the Savior, he sent them to Him.

As John's disciples met with the Savior, they asked Jesus the following question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another" (Matthew 11:3). Jesus replied to them.

Matthew 11:4-5

**4 ...Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.**

These works or miracles of faith had previously been foretold by the prophets of old as being works that would be performed by the Messiah who was to come. Having born His testimony to them by His works served as evidence to them of His divine calling, Jesus then instructed them to return to John. John had previously baptized Jesus. His testimony of Jesus as the Messiah was sure. Jesus' instruction for his disciples to return to John may have been in order to lift John's spirits. He surely would be excited to learn of the success of the Savior's divine mission. John could also add his personal witness to them of Jesus' calling as the Messiah.

Following the departure of the two disciples, Jesus now bears His witness to those present that John was the Elias who had been sent to prepare his way.

Isaiah 40:3	John 1:22-23	JST, Matthew 11:9-10
3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.	22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias [Isaiah] [Isaiah 40:3]	9 But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. 10 For this is the one of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before they face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

How exciting to see the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Prophet Isaiah that was fulfilled by the mission of John the Baptist. John then bears his witness that he is the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Messiah. The second witness to the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy by the mission of John the Baptist is then given by Jesus Himself. He bears His witness that John is the one to whom Isaiah referred who would come to prepare the way for His Messianic mission on earth.

In Luke 7:28/JST, Matthew 11:11, we read the following:

Luke 7:28/Matt. 11:11	JST, Luke 7:28
28 For I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.	28 For I say unto you, Among <u>those who</u> are born of <u>women</u>, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he <u>who</u> is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

We have noted that the mission of John the Baptist was of such great importance that the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied of his calling. Jesus Himself had born witness that “there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist”.

Joseph Smith gives three reasons why John was “the greatest prophet,”

1. “He was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord...
2. He was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man...
3. John, at that time was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth. And holding the keys of power, the Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law...and these three reasons constitute him the greatest of prophet born of a woman.”¹

We might then ask, “If John was the greatest, who then was the least that was greater than he” to whom Jesus was referring?

Joseph Smith continues,

“Jesus was looked upon [by those in his time] as having the least claim in God's kingdom, and [seemingly] least entitled to hear their credulity as a prophet; as though he had said [to them], 'He that is considered the least among you is greater than John--that is I myself.'²

3. The Death of John the Baptist

The clarion call of repentance had been given to all--priests, Levites, Pharisees, and publicans; rich, poor, proud, and humble--also royalty including King Herod himself. The reason for John’s confinement was that he had called Herod to repentance for having unlawfully taken the wife of his own brother Philip, to be his Queen. When Herod had been rebuked by John the Baptist for his adulterous actions, he knew it was justly deserved. This was not the case, however, with his adulterous wife, Herodias. She had a bitter and hateful attitude toward John and finally it was through her persuasive influence that John had been cast into prison.

It was not enough for Herodias to have John confined in prison as her anger became homicidal and she also thirsted for his death. Herod, as noted, in spite of John’s rebuke, knew the condemnation was true, and held John in some esteem. He also feared the outcry of public opinion due to John’s popularity, “because they counted him as prophet” (Matthew 14:5). Confining John in prison was one matter; putting him to death was, yet another. For now, John was in prison and that would have to satisfy his wife.

The scriptures record.

Matthew 14:6-7

6 ...when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

The combination of alcohol and gaiety is a dangerous combination and is often incongruent with rational thinking. In response to his step-daughter's dancing, he had just decreed in front of all the guests that he would give "her whatsoever she would ask, including as Mark adds, "half of my kingdom" (Mark 6:23). She then consults her mother's advice. Herodias, seizing the moment, whispered to her those fateful words.

Matthew 14:8-11

8 And she...said, Give me here John the Baptist's head in a charger [platter].

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

10 and he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

It was not enough to know that finally John had been killed, through her daughter, Herodias requested that his severed head be brought to royal table and so it was. Herodias had the final word.

The reaction of the disciples and Jesus to John's death is recorded.

Matthew 14:12-13

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: ...

During the early hours of the last day of Jesus upon the earth, He will be brought before Herod, the same who did nothing to prevent the death of John the Baptist. He was then referred to Herod by Pilate as he knew that Jesus, "belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction" (Luke 23:7). Luke records,

Luke 23:8-9

8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

To all, Jesus offered words of counsel and admonition. To Herod, however, he had nothing to say.

4. Come Unto Me

Jesus offers two of John's disciples the works that He had performed and they depart. Jesus began teaching the people assembled regarding the works of John the Baptist. He then follows with a rebuke of known cities where He had performed his mighty works including, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, and finally Capernaum. He concluded by stating, "If the mighty works done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (JST, Matthew 11:25). Jesus followed His rebuke by responding, according to the Joseph Smith Translation, to a voice from heaven.

JST, Matthew 11:27

27 And at that time, there came a voice out of heaven, and Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!

What things, we might ask, had been withheld from the wise and prudent? It is those heavenly truths that can only be discerned by the spirit. They cannot be gained only through the means of intellectual pursuit. To the learned and proud, spiritual truths remain a mystery. Spiritual truths come only to those who truly humble themselves and listen to the whisper of the still small voice and then, having heard the voice, obey.

It is to the spiritually immature or babes who know not where to turn for spiritual nourishment and strength though they were humble or teachable, that Jesus bears His testimony. He states.

JST, Matthew 11:29-30

**29 Then spake Jesus, saying, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

To the spiritually thirsty, Jesus' words would have been like droplets of water falling upon parched ground. Upon receiving them with joy and happiness, they would then be anxious to receive even more.

As Our Lord and Savior, only Jesus has the power and ability to lift our burdens and to make them light upon our backs. Only He can provide the comfort and solace when our pain seems so great and unbearable. Others may not know what it feels like to us, but He knows. He has borne all our pain, and sorrow, and heartaches. He truly understands and He is willing to lift us.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"His language was not that of a prophet speaking for Deity; rather, as Deity he was speaking for himself...Come unto me and find salvation, for I am God, the very Messiah in whom salvation centers."³

5. Lord of the Sabbath

It was while the children of Israel were camped near Mount Sinai, the word of God had been given to Moses regarding the Sabbath. Since receiving the Ten Commandments, Israel had endeavored to keep the Sabbath day holy. With the passing of the years, the religious leaders had gone to great lengths to prescribe, in minute detail, the actions that would be considered unlawful activity on the Sabbath day.

On one particular Sabbath, as Jesus and His disciples were passing through a corn field, the disciples, "were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat" (Matthew 12:1). The Pharisees, ever ready to enforce the letter of the law, confronted Him with the actions of His disciples. They told Him that by His disciples plucking the corn, they were breaking the Sabbath. Implicit in their accusation was that if He truly were the Messiah, He would not allow His followers to break the Sabbath.

Jesus did not deny they were breaking the law of the Sabbath, as they strictly interpreted it, but told them there were circumstances when a higher law of mercy was operative. He then reminded them that David had been allowed to eat the shewbread, that was reserved only for the temple priests, when he and his men were hungry and the priests had not penalized them. In an effort to make His position clear that He was the one who had originally pronounced the law to Moses on Sinai, He bore His witness to them.

Matthew 12:6-8

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Their hearts were hardened toward Him. They were not receptive to the spirit nor would they receive His witness and recognize Him as the Lord of the Sabbath. They came only to judge. When He then proceeded to heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, He shared the following:

Matthew 12:11-13

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall in a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth: and it was restored whole, like the other.

Their reaction was consistent with their unwillingness to recognize Him as the Messiah. They cannot hear His humble testimony regarding the importance of mercy in judging the guilty. They reject His healing of the man's withered hand as a manifestation of His power as the Messiah. Instead, they want to put Him to death!

Matthew 12:14

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

6. Woman Anoints Jesus in Simon's House

While in Galilee, Jesus was invited by one of the Pharisees named Simon to come to his house and eat with him. Despite the invitation, Simon did not treat Jesus as a guest in his home. He ignored the basic courtesies of hospitality. A meal was offered with a place at his table. While they are in the process of eating, with their feet “directed outward.” (see Jesus The Christ, 277) toward the center of the room, “a woman in the city, which was a sinner” (Luke 7:38), came through the open door. Unashamed, she begins to minister to Jesus.

Luke 7:38

38 And [she] stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to [then] wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

The reaction of Simon to the actions of this woman was silent repulsion accompanied with severe judgment regarding Jesus.

Luke 7:39

39 Now, when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

Simon judged her and found her unworthy to be in his home and, in all probability, would have sent her away.

Jesus used this occasion to teach Simon the gospel. He poses the question of a creditor who had two debtors, one who owed five hundred and another who owed fifty. The creditor simply forgave both their debt. Then Jesus asked Simon this question.

Luke 7:42-43

42 ...Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave the most. And he [Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Jesus continued.

Luke 7:44-50

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss [greeting]: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Jesus likened the absence of common courtesies usually extended to a guest that Simon had failed to offer but, in turn, were offered profusely by the woman from the outside, as a manifestation of personal sins. This woman had many sins, yet in recognizing the presence of the Savior, did all she could to make Him comfortable. Simon, by the neglect of his hospitality, not only did not treat Him with kindness, but he also did not recognize Him as the Messiah.

Because of her faith in Christ and inner desire to be clean, Jesus offered to her the desire of her heart. Those who “sat at meat with him” because their hearts were not receptive to the witness of the spirit did not understand that His forgiving the woman of her sins was a witness to them that He was the Messiah, for only a God has the power to forgive sins and that based upon the individual’s repentance.

Bruce R. McConkie expresses his belief that rather than this being a woman who was not virtuous who had come off the street seeking forgiveness,

"Her sins were many, but she believed in me, has repented of her sins, was baptized of his disciples and her sins were washed away in the waters of baptism. Now she has sought me out to exhibit the unbounded gratitude of one who was filthy, but is now clean...Jesus reaffirms the forgiveness previously gained through repentance and baptism. He is not forgiving sins contrary to the law which he himself has ordained, which law is that men must believe the gospel, repent, and be baptized for the redemption of sins."⁴

You may view this “woman which was a sinner” as being on at least two paths. On the first path, she comes to Jesus seeking forgiveness from her sins as a step that will lead her to the waters of baptism and full membership in the kingdom of God. You may also see her as a recent convert who having complied with the principles of faith, repentance and baptism, comes to Jesus to express her joy and love for this great blessing in her life. Regardless of your perspective, neither you nor I will soon forget her simple example of humility or her adoration to her Savior.

7. Casting Out Devils by Satan's Power

The extent and variety of miracles which the Savior performed could not be disputed by those who sought the truth. They truly bore witness to the sincere seeker of truth that these miracles could only be performed by the anticipated Messiah!

After witnessing yet another of the miracles of Jesus, the people responded.

Matthew 12:23

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

The meaning to their question, "Is not this the son of David?" Is not this the Messiah?

The immediate response of the Pharisees is in direct opposition to this truth.

Matthew 12:24

24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

The Pharisees were unwilling to accept the explanation of the people that the miracles that Jesus performed were yet further evidence of His being the promised Messiah. Instead, they state that His power and authority came not from heaven as He is not the Messiah, but instead from the depths of hell or from Satan himself!

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Unless [these] miracles are explained away, the priestcrafts of the priests will be replaced by a new order; the scribes and Pharisees must disabuse the public mind or lose their positions of power and influence over the people. He casteth out devils by Beelzebub!...Since the miracles cannot be denied, the alternative is to say it were wrought by Satanic power...How helpful, they reason, if we can get the people arguing about the source rather than the fact of Jesus' power, then no matter whether he raises the dead or calls down manna from heaven, it will all be part of demoniac delusion from which men must feel."⁵

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

"Jesus instead of being recognized as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan; instead of being owned as the Messiah, was denounced and treated as the representative of the Kingdom of Darkness."⁶

Jesus responded to the flawed logic of the Pharisees by noting that no divided kingdom can stand. By His using the power of Satan to cast out devils would be for Satan to use his power against himself!

Matthew 12:25-26

25 ...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Jesus then directs a question toward His accusers.

Matthew 12:27-28

27 And if I, by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

The important question before the Pharisees is, “What is the source of Jesus’ power and authority?” There are only two choices for them and us to consider. The source is either from Satan or from God. If His power and authority is Satan then He is acting against Satan’s kingdom and it will not stand. If it is of God, then He is divine; the kingdom of God is upon the earth; the true Church has been established among them.

So that neither they nor us will claim neutrality regarding this extremely important question regarding our individual salvation, He states the obvious.

Matthew 12:30

30 He that is not with me is against me; ...

Our obedience to His commandments and our commitment to Him and His teachings must be complete and without reservation. To act otherwise would be counterproductive to our building His kingdom, our exercise of His power and authority, and finally, our personal salvation. Our allegiance having been divided would result in the weakening of our commitment, and if we do not act in order to resolve our doubts and questions, we will not have sufficient strength in order to endure to the end in faithfulness. As a result of our lack of commitment to our covenants, the spirit of the Holy Ghost would have withdrawn from us.

A simple test for each of us that we might know if one speaks of God or for Satan is found in the fruit of their actions.

Matthew 12:35

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

The Pharisees also made their choice.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“...in their view, it was really Satan who acted in and through Him; and Jesus, instead of being recognized as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan; instead of being owned as the Messiah, was denounced and treated as the representative of the Kingdom of Darkness. All this, because the Kingdom which He came to open, and which He preached, was precisely the opposite of what they regarded as the Kingdom of God. Thus, it was the essential contrariety of Rabbinism to the Gospel of Christ that lay at the foundation of their conduct towards the Person of Christ. We venture to assert, that this accounts for the whole after history up to the Cross.”⁷

Bruce R. McConkie, quoting Alfred Edersheim, states,

The “guilt [of the Pharisees] lay in treating that as Satanic agency which was of the Holy Ghost; and this, because they were of their father the Devil, and knew not, nor understood, nor yet love the Light, their deeds being evil. They were not children of the light, but of the darkness, which comprehended Him not Who was the Light. And now we can also understand the growth of active opposition to Christ. Once arrived at the conclusion that the miracles which Christ did were due to the power of Satan, and that He was the representative of the evil One, their course was rationally and morally chosen. To regard every fresh manifestation of Christ’s Power as only a fuller development of the power of Satan, and to oppose it with increasing determination and hostility, even to the Cross, such was henceforth the natural progress of this history.”⁸

As noted, the answer to the simple question that was posed, “What is the source of Jesus’ power and authority?” is extremely important. It will determine which side of the line an individual is on, The Lord’s or Satan’s. When one believes that it is Satan, as did the Pharisees and others, that choice will lead to the crucifixion of their awaited Messiah, the Son of God.

8. Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost

Matthew 12:31	JST, Matthew 12:26
31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.	26 Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men <u>who receive me and repent;</u> but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men.

There are some questions that we need to answer. They are: “What does blasphemy involve?”, “What does it mean to ‘blaspheme against the Holy Ghost?’” and, “Why is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost so serious that once committed, the individual cannot receive forgiveness either in this world or the next?

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Blasphemy consists of either or both of the following: 1. Speaking irreverently, evilly, abusively or scurrilously against God or sacred things; or 2. Speaking profanely or *falsely* about Deity.”⁹

This definition is clarified by an example from the scriptures.

JST, Luke 12:10-12

10 Now the disciples knew that he said this, because they had spoken evil against him before the people; for they were afraid to confess him before men.

11 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, He knoweth our hearts, and he speaketh to our condemnation, and we shall not be forgiven. But he answered them, and said unto them,

12 Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, and repenteth, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him who blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.

His disciples “had spoken evil against him before the people” and in doing so had been guilty of blasphemy against the Savior. They did not understand that by confession and repentance they could receive forgiveness from this sin.

We now turn to the unpardonable sin which is “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” and its’ meaning. The seriousness of this sin is magnified because it is against Deity. The Holy Ghost is the third member in the Godhood. Different from both the Father and the Son who each have a perfect body of flesh and bones; He is a personage of spirit. It is His mission to serve as the absolute testifier of truth to those who are sincere seekers.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

“Those in this life who gain a perfect knowledge of the divinity of the gospel cause, [gain that] knowledge [which] comes only by revelation from the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Commission of the unpardonable sin [blasphemy against the Holy Ghost] consists in crucifying unto oneself the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame.”¹¹

Joseph Smith states,

“What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin [blasphemy against the Holy Ghost]? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; He has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time, he begins to be an enemy [to the Church].”¹²

I believe the seriousness of this sin is that an individual after having received a divine witness of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, through the Holy Ghost; accepted the truth of the plan of salvation; repented of their sins and entered into the waters of baptism; received the gift of the Holy Ghost and made sacred covenants; and then turn away from the truth. They deny the witness they had once embraced. They now come out in open rebellion against Jesus Christ and seek to put Him to open shame and become an enemy against His Church. They have left the side of Christ where they once firmly stood and have now moved completely to the side of Satan. The individual has joined the ranks of Satan's followers.

9. Seeking Signs

There now come unto Jesus certain of the scribes, who had joined ranks with the Pharisees. Jointly they make the following inquiry of Jesus as recorded in Matthew and John.

Matthew 12:38

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

John 6:30

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?

While addressing Jesus by the title of Master as Matthew states, shows on their part an outward recognition of His power and authority, while their request, demonstrates a lack of both sincerity and faith. Their request is not motivated by a sincere desire to know the truth, but only to gratify their simple curiosity.

To those who were seeking to know the truth and whose hearts were not fixed upon the things of this world, the miracles which Jesus performed--the lame leaped, the blind saw, the dumb spoke, paralytics walked and carried their beds, all manner of diseases were cured, devils were cast out, the dead raised--served as convincing proof that He was the promised Messiah. To others, it was not sufficient and nothing He said or did additionally would provide them with the proof they were seeking.

Jesus response to them was brief.

Matthew 12:39-40

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas [Jonah]:

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"For the scribes and Pharisees of all generations; for the wicked and ungodly in every age; for those without faith, who walk in worldly paths, there is only one sign of the prophet Jonas [Jonah]. That sign is that Jesus was crucified, died, and rose again the third day in glorious immortality... The resurrection proves that Jesus is the Messiah; it is the sign, given of God to all men of the truth and divinity of his work."¹³

The only sign they would receive would be the sign of His death and resurrection. Their faith merited no other sign.

James E. Talmage clarified "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign,"

"...the covenant between Jehovah and Israel [had earlier been likened unto] a marriage bond (Isa.54:5-7; Jer.3:14; 31:32; Hos.2:19,20), even as the later scriptures typify the Church as a bride, and Christ as the husband (2 Cor.11:2; Rev.21:2). To be spiritually adulterous, as the rabbis construed the utterances of the prophets, was to be false to the covenant by which the Jewish nations claimed distinction... The words "adultery" and "idolatry" are of related origin, each connoting the act of unfaithfulness and the turning away after false objects of affection or worship."¹⁴

Jesus continued to teach them.

Matthew 12:41-42

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Then He taught them that because of the preaching of Jonas (Jonah), the wicked in the city of Nineveh had repented and now there was one greater than Jonas here among them. The Queen of Sheba had travelled a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and one greater than Solomon was in their midst. They did not recognize that the Son of God was in their midst because they were insensitive to things of the spirit.

In conclusion, Bruce R. McConkie offers the following counsel,

"Signs follow those that believe; they are not designed to convert the wicked and the ungodly. Faith precedes the miracle... Those who seek signs--either to create faith or to feed their egos--whether in or out of the Church, shall fail in their search for divine approval... [If however individuals] believe and repent, if they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, if they walk uprightly before the Lord--then signs without end, miracles unceasing, wonders beyond mortal comprehension, all these flow unto them forever and ever. Such is the law that governs signs."¹⁵

10. Who Is My Mother? Who Are My Brethren?

On an occasion while Jesus was teaching indoors, He is informed that “his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with thee” (Matthew 12:47). His response to the information is initially surprising as He inquires.

Matthew 12:48

48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

The meaning is clearly not to be taken literally for no doubt Jesus was knowledgeable regarding the familial relationship He had with His family and especially His mother. What then, we might ask, was the meaning of His response?

One might think that those to whom Jesus was closest, especially family members, might thereby be entitled to preferential consideration regarding entrance into the kingdom of God. This was certainly true among those who were of royal blood of the leaders among the kingdoms of the world. Jesus’ response to those gathered inside, as well as to His family members, is that entrance into the kingdom of God is based upon individual obedience, irrespective of relationship.

Matthew 12:50

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

This is not a denial of the importance of Jesus’ relationship with members of His earthly family or a denial of the importance of family relationships. He is teaching an important truth to all mankind.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The blessings of heaven are available--freely, without money and without price--to all men. All men cannot be born into this world as the sons of God, after the manner of the flesh, but all, through righteousness, can be adopted into the family of the Eternal God and become joint-heirs with Christ of the fullness of the glory and power of the Father...Indeed, the very plan of salvation itself calls for a new birth, a birth of righteousness, by which all disciples, all saints, become the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. They are borne again; they become members of His family. And all these blessings are available because Jesus was the Son of God."¹⁶

How glorious it is there is no other criteria for membership in the Church of Jesus Christ than obedience. Not birth, income, education, national origin, language, color of skin, marital or familial status, age; simply there is no other criteria regarding becoming a member of the Kingdom of God than a simple and humble desire to know the truth combined with a complete willingness to be obedient to the commandments a kind and loving Father in Heaven has prescribed for our happiness here and hereafter. The only remaining question to be answered is, “Are we willing to accept His invitation?”

11. Conclusions

As Jesus continued His ministry in Galilee, people sought Him for diverse reasons. The two disciples whom John the Baptist sent, came to receive a testimony for themselves regarding Jesus being the awaited Messiah. John, as the forerunner, had cried repentance to the people that they might then be prepared to receive the witness of the Messiah. Not all received John's message, but none were so angered by his message as Herodias. Not only did she take offence to the message, she also sought to kill the messenger. In the end, she was successful and John was killed.

Others, like the sinful woman, who came to Simon's house, recognized her sinful state came to Jesus either seeking forgiveness from her sins or to express her profound gratitude to her Messiah. Her humble example of adoration will long be remembered.

Others sought Jesus in Galilee in order to ridicule and scorn Him, seeking to provoke confrontation so they could then condemn Him. Simon, by ignoring the simple courtesies of hospitality toward his guest, passively ridiculed and scorned Him. Others were more open in their rejection. First, they criticized His disciples for their lack of observance of the Sabbath day and then Him. He, in turn, demonstrated His great compassion by healing the man's withered hand and then taught His objectors correct Sabbath principles, declaring that He was the Lord of the Sabbath.

Unfortunately, they could not hear His message or accept His power and authority. Instead they now accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan. Jesus met their objections, and then issued a stern warning for those who denied the Holy Ghost. He also condemned people who were preoccupied with sign seeking.

In conclusion, asking the questions, "Who is my mother? Who are my Brethren?", He taught them the simple criteria for entrance into the Kingdom of God. It was not based upon any worldly criteria, but was open to all with a humble desire for truth and a willingness to be obedient. The invitation to enter God's Kingdom is open to all; none will be denied.

In order to find the Savior, we must prepare ourselves by first being receptive to whisperings of the spirit. Only as we honestly seek the truth, repenting of our sins, will we be able to achieve the humility necessary to receive heavenly truth as revealed by the Holy Ghost. Through the guidance of the spirit of the Holy Ghost, we will find our Savior. As we conform our lives to be like Him and keep His commandments, we will become re-born as members into His eternal family.

Footnotes

¹ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 275-276, numbers added and format altered.

² *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 276.

³ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973, [9th Printing, 1976], 469.

⁴ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973, [9th Printing, 1976], 265.

⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 210.

⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 211.

⁷ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 211.

⁸ Alfred Edersheim. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol. 1, 574-75, in *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 211-212.

⁹ *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 90.

¹⁰ *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1. Compiled by Bruce R. McConkie. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954, [24th Printing, 1980], 47.

¹¹ *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 816.

¹² *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 358; see also D&C 132:27.

¹³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 223-224.

¹⁴ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 279.

¹⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 222-223, 225.

¹⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 227.