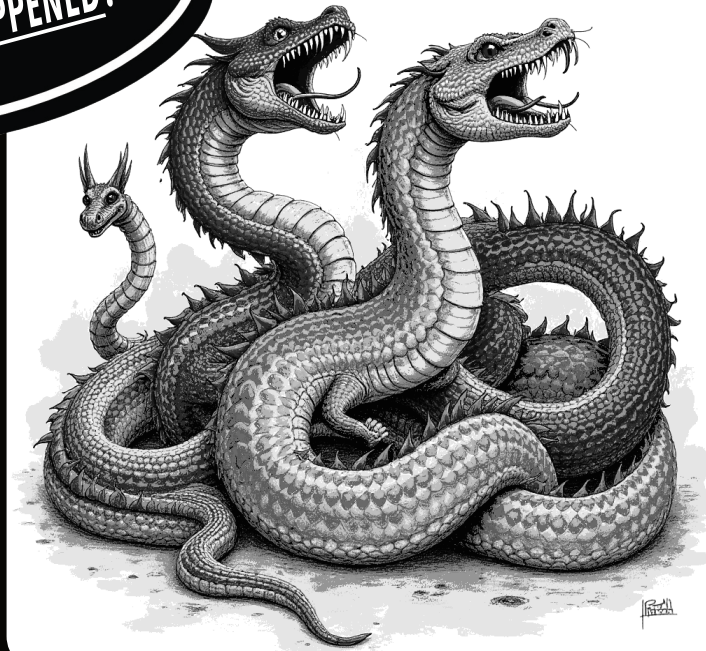


# THE NARROW WAY

OUR WORDS REVEAL OUR HEARTS REVEAL OUR TREASURE

WHAT HAPPENED?



YOU BROOD OF VIPERS! HOW CAN YOU SPEAK GOOD, WHEN YOU ARE EVIL?  
FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKS.

(MATTHEW 12:34 ESV)

WHY DID JESUS CALL THEM VIPERS?

HOW DID THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL FALL SO DEEPLY INTO THE DARKNESS  
THAT THEY ATTRIBUTED THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD THROUGH JESUS THE  
SON OF GOD TO THE WORK OF SATAN THE ARCHENEMY OF GOD?

### **A BAFFLING QUESTION ...**

**How?** How did the Pharisees fall so deeply into the darkness that they attributed the work of the Spirit of God through Jesus the Son of God to the work of Satan the archenemy of God?

**Short answer?** Jesus had threatened what they valued most in life.

### **THE EVENT THAT SET THE STAGE ...**

Jesus, in his providential oversight of what would be written down for the benefit of future generations, chose the healing of a blind and mute man to provide the necessary platform for his instruction and dire warning in this text.

### **A CASE STUDY OF THE HUMAN HEART ...**

In this case study, using the example of the Pharisees, Jesus guides us very clearly and very emphatically to the powerful correlation between a person's words and the condition of his heart. Jesus used this event to demonstrate to us something that we are utterly incapable of understanding left to ourselves, and that is the true condition of our very own hearts in the eyes of God. Our Master Teacher begins with the healing of a blind man to teach us how to discern the condition of a person's heart, whether it be good or evil.

### **A WARNING TO BE HEEDED — A LESSON TO BE LEARNED ...**

The original participants, and all those who have ears to hear, need to take this lesson and warning to heart. There is a coming day of judgment in which people will give a specific accounting for every word they have spoken that revealed what the person truly believed about Jesus the Son of God and the works he performed while on this earth. This accounting will include the careless words to which they had not given proper attention and which at times had led to irrational accusations and ultimately to blasphemy.

### **THE EVENT: JESUS HEALS A BLIND MAN...**

#### **1. A demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus and he healed him, 12:22-23.**

- (Matthew 12:22–23 ESV) Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, **and he healed him**, so that the man spoke and saw. 23 **And all the people were amazed**, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?"

A. This "good fruit" act of Jesus amazed the people.

B. It was obvious to everyone who witnessed the event that this was a supernatural work.

C. The contention was over whether the supernatural source of Jesus' work was the Spirit of God or Satan.

### **A CASE STUDY OF THE HUMAN HEART ...**

#### **2. The Pharisees responded to this righteous act of Jesus with blasphemy, 12:24.**

- (Matthew 12:24 ESV) But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "**It is only by Beelzebul**, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."

A. They reacted in this way because Jesus, by virtue of who he was and what he came to do, threatened the foundations of what they valued most in this world.

B. The Pharisees had stored up much treasure on earth—materially, socially and politically.

- (Matthew 6:19–21 ESV) **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Treasure ... θησαυρός [thēsauros] – the place in which good and precious things are collected and stored. This text speaks of our treasure as what we value most in life, what is good and precious to us.

C. The Pharisees accused Jesus of healing the man by the power of Beelzebul because he was a threat to their treasure—their earthy, "godly" values.

D. The extent to which they defended their values revealed the condition of their hearts which revealed the location of their treasure—that being on earth.

E. In 12:31 Jesus identified this attack as blasphemy—speech that is intended to cause damage or harm.

#### **3. Jesus used this occasion to reveal the irrational thinking and the evil in the heart of the person who would even slander God to preserve his treasure, 12:25-27.**

- (Matthew 12:25–27 ESV) **Knowing their thoughts, he said to them**, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, **and no city or house divided against itself will stand**. 26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. **How then will his kingdom stand?** 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, **by whom do your sons cast them out?** Therefore they will be your judges."

- A. Jesus used these Pharisees as a case study in revealing the damning nature of defending an earthly way of life that is built upon a false system of belief.
- B. In attacking Jesus they revealed that they valued their life on earth more than anything else—even more than Messiah and the coming kingdom of God.
- C. Jesus exposed the depths to which people will descend in their fight to defend their earthly treasure.
- D. Question: What would we defend at all costs?
- E. Jesus knew their thoughts and systematically exposed the illogical, irrational thinking of people who are willing to defend false beliefs no matter the cost.
  - i. A kingdom divided against itself is ruined and will not stand.
  - ii. By their logic Satan was casting out Satan and was divided against himself.
  - iii. So then if he cast out demons by Beelzebul then by whom did their sons cast out demons.

**4. The only logical, rational answer to Jesus' act of healing the man was that he did it by the Spirit of God from the good treasure of his heart, 12:28-32.**

- (Matthew 12:28–32 ESV) But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

- A. Jesus pointed out that if he cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the only logical deduction is that the kingdom of God had come upon them.
  - i. By the Spirit of God he had the power to bind Satan.
  - ii. By the Spirit of God he had the power to plunder Satan's goods.
- B. Jesus draws a "for or against" line in the sand regarding his actions by the Spirit of God—there are no unbiased or disinterested bystanders in the battle over the gospel.

- i. If they did not acknowledge that he healed by the Spirit of God, then they were against him.
- ii. There was no middle ground—they were with Jesus or they were against him.

C. Jesus tells them that the things they spoke with the intent of damaging the name of God in order to promote their agenda was unforgivable.

- (Matthew 12:31 ESV) Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Blasphemy ... βλασφημία [blas·fay·me·ah/] – slander, detraction; speech intended to cause damage or harm to another's good name; abusive words falsely spoken that damage a person's reputation; language expressing disrespect for God or for something sacred.

- (John 15:26 ESV) But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

**A WARNING TO BE HEEDED, A LESSON TO BE LEARNED ...**

**5. Jesus counterattacks and delivers a dire warning and detailed instructions as to how to discern what is in our hearts by our words, 12:33-37.**

- (Matthew 12:33–37 ESV) Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

How could the Pharisees have lost their way to such a degree that they would say such things?

- A. Good trees produce good fruit / Jesus' act of healing the blind man was good fruit / Jesus was good.
- B. The Pharisees were unrighteous men speaking blasphemy (*damaging words*) that came from the abundance of their evil hearts—suppressing truth under the guise of defending truth.
  - (Romans 1:18 ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and

unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

C. **Startling:** They had spiraled down to such a depth into the darkness that blasphemy had become their only solution to suppress the truth of the righteous act of Jesus in healing the blind man.

D. They had become futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- (Romans 1:21 ESV) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

E. **Wow:** They did not honor God but blasphemed him.

F. **Lesson:** You become what you pursue.

In pursuing what was false and worthless, they had become what was false and worthless.

- (Jeremiah 2:5 ESV) Thus says the LORD: “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness [hebel], and became worthless [hebel]?”

Worthless ... hebel – meaninglessness; the quality of having no value or significance; futile to the point of being absurd and incomprehensible.

- (2 Kings 17:15a ESV) They despised his statutes and his covenant ... They went after false idols [hebel] and became false [hebel].

G. There are no exceptions—no one who suppresses the truth survives the darkness.

- (Ephesians 4:17–18 ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

### CONCLUSION: NO EXCEPTIONS ...

**Who do you think you are?** It is a fatal error to ever think that you are an exception to these spiritual principles ... that this cannot apply to you because you are a good person ... if you deny the darkness in your life you will be overcome by that very darkness.

## I. Three necessary prayers ...

A. Pray that God will do the necessary work in our lives in order that our words and the deep thoughts of our hearts will be acceptable before a holy God.

- (Psalm 19:14 ESV) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.
- (Colossians 3:17 ESV) And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

B. Pray to the LORD for the enabling power to guard what we say and to keep our hearts from being receptive to or willing for any evil to enter in.

- (Psalm 141:3–4a ESV) Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips! 4 Do not let my heart incline to any evil.

C. Pray that the LORD will make our hearts receptive to the word of God.

- (Psalm 119:36 ESV) Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

## II. Three necessary commitments ...

A. Commit ourselves to guard the direction of our lives before God by not sinning with what we say.

- (Psalm 39:1 ESV) I said, “I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.”

B. Commit ourselves to be mindful of what we say so that we may love life and have good days.

- (1 Peter 3:10–11 ESV) For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.” [cf. Psalm 34:13–14]

C. Commit ourselves to God and his kingdom.

- (Matthew 6:33 ESV) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- (Matthew 5:6 ESV) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.