"CHARACTERISTICS OF A WICKED GENERATION"

Matthew 12:38-45
1/28/2018

INTRODUCTION:

***What are the characteristics of a wicked generation?**

I. **They are <u>SIGN-SEEKERS</u>** (v. 38-40)
(Rather than believing Christ's Word, <u>they want signs</u>)

II. **They are <u>SAVIOR-HARDENED</u>** (v. 41-42)
(Rather than responding to Christ's greatness, <u>they ignore Him</u>)

III. **They are <u>SELF-RIGHTEOUS</u>** (v. 43-45)
(Rather than inviting Christ into their life, <u>they vainly clean house and leave Him out</u>

"CHARACTERISTICS OF A WICKED GENERATION"

Matthew 12:38-45
1/28/2018

INTRODUCTION:

What are the characteristics of a wicked generation?

I. **They are <u>SIGN-SEEKERS</u>** (v. 38-40)
(Rather than believing Christ's Word, _____)

II. **They are <u>SAVIOR-HARDENED</u>** (v. 41-42)
(Rather than responding to Christ's greatness, _____)

III. **They are <u>SELF-RIGHTEOUS</u>** (v. 43-45)
(Rather than inviting Christ into their life, <u>they vainly house and</u>
_____

"CHARACTERISTICS OF A WICKED GENERATION"

Matthew 12:38-45
1/28/2018

INTRODUCTION: The wickedness of this generation:

The Prayer that really got some attention-Paul Harvey Radio Broadcast

When Pastor Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual politically correct generalities. But on Jan. 23, 96, what they heard instead was a stirring prayer, passionately calling our country to repentance and righteousness. The response was immediate with a number of legislators walking out during the prayer. In six short weeks Central Christian Church logged more than 5,000 phone calls, with only 47 of those calls responding negatively.

Commentator Paul Harvey aired Pastor Joe Wright's prayer on the radio and received a larger response to this program than any other program Paul Harvey has ever aired. In addition, Central Christian Church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa, and Korea.

Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and seek Your direction and guidance, We know Your Word says, "Woe on those who call evil good," but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism;

We have worshipped other gods and called it multi-culturalism;

We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle;

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery;

We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation;

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare;

We have killed our unborn and called it choice;

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable;

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem;

We have abused power and called it political savvy;

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression;

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment;

Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas, and who have been ordained by You, to govern this great state. Grant them Your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your will. I ask it in the name of Your Son, the Living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reprinted by permission of Senior Pastor Joe Wright of Central Christian Church, Wichita, Kansas.

What God says about society in the "last days"

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Proverbs 30: 11-14
There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.
There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.
There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.
There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

In this context Jesus makes frequent reference to *"this generation"* and points out the wickedness of the generation in which He lived (NOTE: the word *"generation"* occurs in v. 39, 41, 42, 45).

That generation had the most privileges, the greatest opportunities. They saw Christ, heard Him, witnessed His miracles, talked to Him face to face, heard Him preach and teach in person. Yet, they denied His miracles and rejected His message.

***What are the characteristics of a wicked generation?**

I. They are <u>SIGN-SEEKERS</u> (v. 38-40)

(Rather than believing Christ's Word, <u>they want signs</u>)

V. 38

"Master" - This name came from the lips of people who did not believe that Jesus was truly "Master." In hypocrisy they call Him "Master"; the fact that they request a "sign" from Christ proves that they didn't really view Him as "Master."

"A sign" -

A sign is basically a miracle that can be experienced by the senses. It is an objective way to validate someone or something.

Gideon showed his lack of faith (his unbelief in God's will) by throwing out a fleece of wool (Jud. 6:36-40).

The Jews sought signs (I Cor. 1:22), and Jesus gave them in abundance.

The scribes and Pharisees had on numerous occasions seen and heard about the signs Christ performed. They saw the Lord heal a palsied man (Mt. 9:1-8), they saw Him restore a dumb man possessed by a demon (9:32-34); they witnessed Him curing a man with a withered arm on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:9-13); and now recently they had heard that He cast a demon out of a man that was blind and speechless. Yet rather than believing the evidence already displayed, they demand more!

Rather than simply letting His spotless life, unselfish ministry, soul-stirring message, and indisputable miracles speak for themselves, they demand more proof, more valid evidence.

Jesus could have easily performed any sign He wanted. However, the fact that He didn't proves two things:

1) God does <u>not</u> have to <u>prove Himself</u> to anybody.

Ingersoll Gives God Five Minutes

Robert Ingersoll, after delivering one of his addresses, pulled his watch from his pocket and said, “According to the Bible, God has struck men to death for blasphemy. I will blaspheme Him and give Him five minutes to strike me dead and damn my soul.”

There was a period of perfect silence while one minute went by; two minutes passed, and people began to get nervous; three minutes, and a woman fainted; four minutes, and Ingersoll curled his lip.

At five minutes, he snapped shut his watch, put it in his pocket, and said: “You see, there is no God, or He would have taken me at my word.”

The story was told later to Joseph Parker, who said, “And did the American gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of God in five minutes?” —H. A. Ironside

2) God does not stoop to reveal His power (by miraculous signs) to men at <u>their choosing</u>. (When He chooses to perform signs, He does so according to His will, not to satisfy the curiosity of agnostic men).

V. 39

"Evil" - sinful, wicked

"Adulterous" – speaking of spiritual adultery against God. A worldly-minded people who forsake God and embrace the philosophies and humanistic thinking of the world. They have affection for the matters and methods of the world (Ja. 4:4).

To be worldly is to live not by faith but by sight. It is to be carnally-minded. To live life based on the 5 senses. Such a mentality reasons: "If I can't touch it, taste it, see it, smell it, or hear it, I won't believe it. It must be "sensational" for it to impact me.

Many have a "Show me" attitude! Prove it to me! Convince me with the evidence I demand. (Illust. Missouri calls itself "the show me state")

The wicked always demand signs because to them "Seeing is believing."

The evil mob that surrounded the cross of Christ again chided Him for a sign. They demanded, *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross"* (Mt. 27:40; Mk. 15:30).

Note: The rich man who went to hell wrongly believed that a sign from dead Lazarus would convince his 5 brothers of their need of salvation (Luke 16:27-31).

If it is evil and spiritually adulteress people who seek after signs, should we be seeking after signs today?

Do we need authenticating signs from God for Him to prove to us that He is real, or that His Spirit is real, or that His Word is true? NO!

To demand God to prove Himself by giving a sign is "Satanic theology." Satan demanded that Christ prove His Messiahship by two spectacular signs (Mt. 4:5-7 – turn stones into bread; jump off of the pinnacle of the Temple).

If it is an *"evil and adulterous generation"* that seeks after a sign, what does this tell you about people who seek after tongues? Tongues are for a *"<u>sign</u>"* (I Cor. 14:22). Should Christians be seeking signs?

NOTE: Signs and sign gifts were given by God's sovereign discretion, at the Holy Spirit's will (I Cor. 12:11). Such sign gifts came upon God's people without the recipient seeking such; it wa automatic, uninvited, unsolicited.

If tongues were a legitimate gift today, why is it limited to "Christians" of certain Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and not given to fundamental Baptists? The fact that this "sign gift" does not come to those who are ignorant of it tells me it has ceased.

It is interesting to note that as this age draws toward a close, people will demonstrate how wicked they are by an increased desire to see "signs and wonders." Such a thirst will play right into the hands of Satan who will (via the Antichrist) performs powerful *"signs and lying wonders"* (II Thes. 2:9). These Satanic eschatological miracles will seem so real (since they are called *"great signs and wonders")* that they will deceive everyone except the elect (Mt. 24:24).

The only sign that the Scribes and Pharisees could look for was that Christ would die and then rise again on the third day.

V. 40

"The only sign Jesus would give to His nation was death, burial, and resurrection" (Wiersbe, p. 43).

He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (Jn. 2:19).

"Jonas was three days and three nights" - Jesus validates the historicity of Jonah and the "whale." To deny the fact of Jonah and the whale is to call Jesus a liar.

"Three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" - Since Jesus qualifies the word for "days" with the phrase "three nights", this is an indication that He did <u>not</u> die on Friday, but on Thursday.

The Lamb was sacrificed on the 14th of Abib (Nisan) (Exod.12:6a);
Christ was sacrificed on the 14th of Abib (Passover) (Mt. 26:2; Mk.14:1)

Exod.12:6 – "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and…kill it in the evening (Lit. between the evenings; twilight – as one day was ending and another beginning)."

Matthew 26:2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Mark 14:1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

Matthew 12:40 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.

The 14th of Abib would correspond to Thursday, April 6th 30 AD

(See: U.S. Navy Astronomical Department Calculations of the Lunar Calendar)

13th of Abib	14th of Abib		15th of Abib		16th of Abib		17th of Abib
WEDNESDAY	**THURSDAY**		**FRIDAY**		**SATURDAY**		**SUNDAY**
Preparation for the Passover	**THE PASSOVER**		**"High Day" (Sabbath)**		**Normal Sabbath**		**First Day of the Week**
	After 6:00 pm Wednesday (the Jewish start of Thursday): 1) The Last Supper Meal 2) The Arrest/Mocking	6:00 a.m. Roman Time-Jesus brought to Pilate 9:00 am– Crucifixion 12:00 pm -Dark 3:00 – Death Burial (before 6:00 sundown)	*John 19:31*				*1 Cor. 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again <u>the third day</u> according to the Scriptures:*
		Night 1	**Day 1**	**Night 2**	**Day 2**	**Night 3**	**Day 3**

It is interesting that:

The Passover Sacrifice was preceded by three days of darkness (Ex. 10:21-23) Whereas Christ's sacrificial death was preceded by three hours of dark darkness (Mark 15:33)

Christ died at just the right TIME (at Passover)

Daniel 9:26 - "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself…"

This final sign given to the Jews of Jesus' day was rejected, as they came up with the "false story that His disciples had stolen His body to create the illusion of a resurrection (Mt. 28:11-15)." (MacArthur, p. 330).

The Word of God is sufficient! Faith cometh not by "seeing signs" but by hearing the Word of God (Ro. 10:17).

II. They are <u>SAVIOR-HARDENED</u> (v. 41-42)

(Rather than responding to Christ's greatness, <u>they ignore Him</u>)

By saying “they are Savior-Hardened” I do not mean hardened by the Savior but hardened to or towards the Savior.

EX: The Gospel-hardened South. They hear it, see it, know it so well that they don't!

This land of liberty has had the greatest opportunity and privilege (with freedom, Bibles, churches, seminaries, Bible colleges, Christian literature, etc.). Yet we have abused our privileges. "If God does not judge the USA, He would have to make an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah."

V. 41

"Shall rise" = to rise again, to be resurrected. The Ninevites will be resurrected along with that evil generation of Jesus' day at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Though the Ninevites did repent at Jonah's preaching, it does not necessarily mean that they obtained salvation or eternal life.

"A greater than Jonas is here" - the Great One is referring to Jesus Christ.

The word *"greater"* being <u>neuter</u> may also specifically refer to Christ's "<u>preaching</u>" being great than that of Jonah.

--Jonah <u>only used 8 words</u> in his preaching (5 words in the Hebrew) - *"Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown"* (Jon. 3:4)
and yet they repented!

--Jonah was a <u>foreigner</u> to Ninevah
and yet they repented!

--Jonah preached <u>without love and compassion</u>
and yet they repented!

If the barbaric, bloodthirsty, brutal Ninevites repented at Jonah's preaching and Jesus is greater than Jonah, what does this tell you about the scribes and Pharisees? They were more wicked than the Ninevites.

"Behold" - look, see, observe, open your eyes; notice who is here!

V. 42

The Queen of Sheba was so impressed with Solomon's wisdom and house (I Ki. 10:4), His servants, attendants, and temple (10:5), that *"there was no more spirit in her"* (v. 5) [it shocked the wind out of her]. She testified: *"The half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard"* (10:7)

Yet to sit at Solomon's table and learn from Him did not compare with the privilege the Pharisees had to listen to Jesus. Do you "sit at his table and learn from Him"?

Jesus' wisdom is greater than Solomon's.

Jesus is saying: The queen heard Solomon, but you do not hear Me (and yet I am greater than Solomon). She listened to Solomon (and traveled a great distance to do so), yet you do not listen to Me.

Jesus is <u>more</u> than a <u>prophet</u>, He is greater than the prophet Jonah, and He is <u>more</u> than a king, He is greater than King Solomon.

III. They are <u>SELF-RIGHTEOUS</u> (v. 43-45)

(Rather than inviting Christ into their life, <u>they vainly clean house and leave Him out</u>)

Jesus by way of illustration (parable) depicts the religious generation of His day as having much external purity, but no internal purity (inwardly they were empty (mt. 23:27-28).

Many things on the surface may look good, but then suddenly collapse and meet a tragic end.

ILLUS:

- **sink holes** (cave in)
- **trees that fall** in a storm (when it falls, it was probably not due to the storm, wind, and rain, but to an inner rottenness that was revealed when trouble came)

We must not have an external that is false advertising (false packaging). We can't afford to be hollow, empty, void, in our lives.

V. 43

"Unclean spirit" **-** a reference to a filthy evil demon

"Is gone out of a man" **-**Perhaps due to an exorcism in the name of Jesus;

"He walketh through dry places, seeking rest" **-** Demons travel (or go) through waterless places looking for a place of momentary rest in vain.

NOTE: Jesus is implicitly teaching a little insight into demons. The reason they possess a person is to have an abode wherein they can rest. They perhaps find a feeling of security living in the life of a human being, assuming that as long as they live in this person they are safe from God's wrath, at least temporarily (Note how afraid of leaving the demoniac of Gadora they were - Luke 8:30-32).

V. 44

"Empty" **-** to be unoccupied; to have a vacancy.

This man ignored the spiritual principle that: Removed bad internals need to be replaced (ILLUS: wine is to be replaced by the Spirit - Eph. 5:18).

It is just as critical that the demon left him, as it is that someone else took up residence in his life.

"Swept" - to sweep clean every bit of dirt (badness) in the house.

The Pharisees did this - They sought with all their might not to let anything bad into their lives.

We tend to measure our righteousness by what we don't allow into our lives, rather than by what we do allow.

We wrongly base our spirituality merely on what we don't do, rather than by what we do do.

To clean house is only half the answer; it needs to be lived in.

To repent of sin is not the full answer; to receive Christ is the answer. (both repentance and faith are necessary)

The Thessalonians turned from idols to the living God (I Th. 1:9).

NOTE: An attempt to clean up America by confronting social issues, by combatting abortion, by enforcing moral standards etc., without presenting the life-changing Gospel of their need for Christ is futility!

"Garnished" - we derive our word "cosmetics" from the Greek word. It means to arrange, put in order, decorate.

ILLUS: A beauty salon - is a place to set your face in order. To make it look like it did not originally look. We tend to just want to "look good" in front of others.

A beautiful house is great! But it is no good if nobody lives there! Is anyone at home? Is Jesus living in your life?

You will never receive fullness until you admit your emptiness!

"It is much easier to reach someone who is overwhelmed with a true sense of his sin than someone who is overwhelmed with a false sense of his righteousness" (MacArthur, p. 337).

V. 45

Wickedness will always return to the empty life, and it will always come back more!

"the last state of the man is worse than the first" - SEE: II Peter 2:20-22

NOTE: *"I will return into my house"* (v. 44). The house never was turned over to anyone else; it was still the devil's property. Note: the House was still under the same ownership.

Whose house are you?

Had this man invited Christ into his life, had he surrendered to Christ to take charge of his life, the evil spirit and his evil companions could not have entered the man. A man indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (Ro. 8:9) cannot also be indwelt by a demon.

"It is not enough to clean house; we must also invite in the right tenant" (Wiersbe, p. 44).

Jesus Christ is knocking! (Rev. 3:20).

Christ desires to *"dwell in your hearts through faith"* (Eph. 3:17)

CONCLUSION:

What are the characteristics of a wicked generation?

- **They are <u>SIGN-SEEKERS</u>** (v. 38-40)
  (Rather than believing Christ's Word, <u>they want signs</u>)
- **They are <u>SAVIOR-HARDENED</u>** (v. 41-42)
  (Rather than responding to Christ's greatness, <u>they ignore Him</u>)
- **They are <u>SELF-RIGHTEOUS</u>** (v. 43-45)
  (Rather than inviting Christ into their life, <u>they vainly clean house and leave Him out</u>)

People don't need signs; they need faith in God's Word.

People don't need religion; they need a relationship.

People don't need external self-reformation; they need the Savior's internal transformation.