

1. Jesus provides evidence for who He is by miracles.

Matthew 12:22-23 (NIV) Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³ All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

Why miracles?

- *To authenticate His identity*
- *To reveal His heart of compassion and empathy*
- *To highlight His teaching*
- *To reveal His power*

John 20:30-31 (NIV) Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

2. Where Jesus is at work, we will find opposition.

Matthew 12:24-28 (NIV) But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." ²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

3. Jesus' reply to their blasphemous accusations.

Matthew 12:26 (NIV) If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

Matthew 12:27 (NIV) And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

Matthew 12:28 (NIV) But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:29 (NIV) "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

- Jesus is saying, 'I'm proving that I am stronger than Satan by casting him out of the man.' Jesus shows He has the power and authority to defeat Satan.
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4. There is no neutral ground.

Matthew 12:30 (NIV) "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters..."

Matthew 12:31 (NIV) And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Matthew 12:32 (NIV) Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come

Summary: What you believe matters.

- If you have a divided or hard heart:

Hebrews 3:7-8 (NIV) So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness."

"Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." Augustine

Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV) The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Romans 10:9-10 (NIV) If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved

- If you are a Believer:

1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Psalms 86:11 (NIV) Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

Application:

1. How do you respond when God is clearly working in your life or those around you? With belief and gratitude, or with skepticism, doubt or bitterness?
2. What do you need to talk to Jesus about, to soften any hardness of heart? Who will you share this with, to hold you accountable to remain pliable in God's hands?
3. What habits do you need to reinforce in your life so you remain true to God's heart and plans, instead of the world's influence?