

This chapter begins with Jesus' return to the Galilee region on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus calmed the storm on His previous crossing and was rejected by the people of the Gergesenes after casting a legion of demons out of two men.

In Chapter 9, we will see attitudes about Christ begin to change. The teachings and practices of Jesus come under more scrutiny from observers and the opposition of the Pharisees begins to appear. These hearts that were beginning to harden would be used to great effect by Satan as we move toward the crucifixion.

Forgive, Heal, or Both? (9:1-8)

After Jesus arrived in Galilee, where did He go? Verse 1 states that He came "into His own city." Read Matthew 4:13.

The man brought to Jesus had, "the palsy", meaning he was paralyzed. This was before the days of wheelchairs and he was fortunate to have friends who would carry him on the cot to Jesus. Mark and Luke record more detailed parallel accounts of this event. Read Luke's description in Luke 5:17-26. What additional information do you learn?

It was an act of great courage and determination to bring their friend to Christ, an act borne out of their faith in Christ. Jesus, the One who can see the hearts of men, saw their faith and immediately encouraged the man and forgave his sins. "Son, be of good cheer" refers to a subjective type of courage, one that is deep down. Jesus wasn't saying, "be tough" or "buck up". He was telling the man there was no more reason to be afraid.

We don't read that the paralyzed man verbally asked Jesus for forgiveness. Why would Jesus grant forgiveness to one who didn't ask? Realize that this man's paralysis could have extended to his mouth. It was possible that he couldn't even speak if he wanted to.

1. It was possible that the man's paralysis was the result of his _____ . Read John 5:14, 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, and James 5:14-16.
2. The man could have held the _____ of the Pharisees that any disease or difficulty must be the result of our personal sin, even if it was not. He may have thought he would first need to be forgiven before he could be healed. Read John 9:1-3.

Regardless of the reason, we know that the man came with repentance and faith and Christ forgave him.

The Grumblings Begin

Matthew

9:1-34

As you recall, scribes were the biblical scholars of the day. They were grumbling and whispering amongst each other about what Jesus said and at least inwardly accused Him of blasphemy. This is not a light accusation. What is blasphemy?

The following excerpt comes from the Merriam-Webster dictionary:

blas•phe•my \ *noun*

plural **-mies** 13th century

- 1 **a** : the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God
- b** : the act of claiming the attributes of deity
- 2 : irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable¹

In the context of what Jesus said, why was He accused of blasphemy? Read Luke 5:21 & John 10:29-33.

Jesus described their thoughts as evil. What was wrong with their thought process?

After revealing their thoughts, Jesus poses a crucial question. Which is easier, to forgive sin or to tell the man to get up and walk? Recall Matthew 8; this passage is part of a progression. Jesus healed illness on contact (the leper), from a distance (centurions daughter), without favoritism (Peter's mother-in-law); He cast out demons with a word (mass exorcism), calmed the seas, and cast out a legion of powerful demons (two demoniacs). Now He forgives sin. Which is easier for Him to do? Read Colossians 1:19-22.

How did Jesus' healing of the man demonstrate that He also had power to forgive sin? Consider the logic of the man born blind, to whom Jesus restored sight. Read John 9:31.

Does Jesus teach that mankind, His church, or individuals within the church have power to forgive sins?

The response of the crowd to Christ's miracle was awe and praise for God, as it should be.

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Matthew's Calling (9:9-13)

It has been said that the Bible is not a book a man could write if he would or would write if he could. Regarding the latter part of the phrase, what would possess a man to publicly divulge his past transgressions before the world? This is the fingerprints of God's Spirit, not of man's ego. Matthew's record of his calling to discipleship is short and sweet, but full of God-wrought humility. You see, Matthew was formerly a tax collector.

TAX COLLECTORS

Tax collectors were, "an agent or contract worker who collected taxes for the government during Bible times. The Greek word translated "tax collector" (tax gatherer, NASB) is incorrectly rendered "publican" by the KJV. Publicans were wealthy men, usually non-Jewish, who contracted with the Roman government to be responsible for the taxes of a particular district of the imperial Roman state. These publicans would often be backed by military force.

By contrast, the tax collectors to which the New Testament refers (with the possible exception of Zacchaeus) were employed by publicans to do the actual collecting of monies in the restricted areas where they lived. These men were Jews, usually not very wealthy, who could be seen in the Temple (Luke 18:13). They were probably familiar to the people from whom they collected taxes.

These tax collectors gathered several different types of taxes. Rome levied upon the Jews a land tax, a poll tax, even a tax for the operation of the Temple. The distinctions between the kind of rule a given province received dictated the kinds of taxes its people had to pay. For example, since some provinces, like Galilee, were not under an imperial governor, taxes remained in the province rather than going to the imperial treasury at Rome. These differences within the taxation system prompted the Pharisees in Judea (an imperial province) to ask Jesus, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matt. 22:17).

As a class, the tax collectors were despised by their fellow Jews. They were classified generally as "sinners" (Matt. 9:10-11; Mark 2:15), probably because they were allowed to gather more than the government required and then to pocket the excess amount. John the Baptist addressed this when he urged tax collectors to gather no more money than they should (Luke 3:12-13). But even further, the tax collectors were hated because their fellow countrymen viewed them as mercenaries who worked for a foreign oppressor of the Jewish people."

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1995.

It may have been difficult for Matthew to write about his former life. In our culture it would be akin to a prostitute saying that Jesus called them to follow Him while they were working a corner. Why would God's Spirit want to include this detail of Matthew's life?

Mark and Luke both record Matthew's calling, but call him "Levi" instead of Matthew. It is likely that Matthew had two names, or was a Levite (the tribe from which the name Levi was derived). Having two names was not uncommon in the Bible (Paul/Saul; Simon/Peter). It could have been that Levi was renamed Matthew by Jesus, like Peter. Yet it wasn't recorded.

Read Luke's account in Luke 5:27-32. How did Luke describe Matthew's (Levi's) calling?

What have you surrendered to follow Christ?

Was Matthew already saved when Jesus called him? Read Acts 1:21-22.

What do we learn about the identity of the host of the dinner feast from Luke's record of this event?

This feast may have been a going away party for Matthew, or a way to introduce Him to all of his friends and neighbors. Regardless, it appears that Matthew's guests (besides Jesus) were fellow tax collectors and "sinners". Who were the sinners that ate with the tax collectors?

The Pharisees (it seems these guys were always around) saw Jesus at this feast in the home of a tax collector, eating with the other tax collectors and sinners and were deeply disturbed. How could a so-called holy man associate with such rabble? "The noted Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim reports that a Jewish publican was barred from the synagogue and was forbidden to have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews. He was ranked with the unclean animals, which a devout Jew would not so much as touch. He was in the class of swine, and because he was held to be a traitor and a congenital liar, he was ranked with robbers and murderers and was forbidden to give testimony in any Jewish court."²

Consider again the progression we are seeing from Matthew 8. Jesus heals the leper, the Gentile's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, performs a mass exorcism, calms the seas, casts out a legion of demons, forgives sin, and now calls a tax collector to be His disciple and enjoys a feast with His friends. What is the pattern we see here?

² *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 8-15, p. 60-61.*

Jesus first replies to the Pharisees that it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. Jesus doesn't deny the sin of the tax collectors, yet He doesn't view them as unredeemable like the Pharisees. The Pharisees cast them off; Jesus seeks to mend them. This is why He is called, "The Great Physician".

Is Jesus telling the Pharisees that they are healthy and do not need Him?

No, that would be a misinterpretation of Jesus' proverb. The point is that the sinners they cast off are redeemable and Jesus is just the one to redeem them. Remember that these literary devices usually try to make one point and to use them more broadly is to misinterpret them.

Next, Jesus tells the Pharisees to "go and learn" the meaning of Hosea 6:6, which says, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The Pharisees were known to be experts on God's Word, yet Jesus claims they miss the basic point. There seems to be a bit of sarcasm in Jesus' voice. He is telling the Pharisees to go back to school. Let's follow Jesus' advice and go back to this passage and learn what it means.

Read Hosea 6:1-9 to get a context for verse 6, quoted by Jesus. Note: In the KJV, the "goodness" in verse 4 is the same Hebrew word as "mercy" in verse 6.

Describe verses 1-3. This is the call for repentance, a desire to find mercy with God for sin. It is an acknowledgement of failure but also a declaration of hope that if God is obeyed there will be forgiveness and restoration.

What is God's complaint against Ephraim (another name for the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom), and what has He done about it? See verses 4-5. Their goodness/mercy/love for God and others is transitory, like a cloud that passes through the sky. It doesn't last. God brought judgment upon them as a result.

Let's jump over verse 6 for the moment and look at verses 7-9. God gets really specific here and mentions the transgressions in Gilead (likely Ramoth Gilead, a city East of the Jordan) and Shechem. What is so significant about the wickedness of these cities? See Joshua 20:1-2, 7-8. These cities were designated by Joshua to be cities of refuge for those who accidentally killed someone. These places were designed to promote mercy and prevent bloodshed, now they encourage it.

Now let's look at verse 6. What is the sin of Israel and Judah? Their compassion was fleeting. They had no lasting love for God and others. The root of it all was that they didn't really know the Lord. They went through the motions but there was nothing to it. God desired that their hearts be transformed and that they would be a people that would rightly promote holiness, mercy, and forgiveness. This begins by truly knowing the Lord.

This concept really ties into Jesus' purpose: to reveal the Father to us (see John 1:16-18), by His life and His teachings, but especially by His shed blood which can bring us into an eternal experiential

relationship with Him. Jesus came to reveal the Father. Hosea 6:6 is a Hebrew poetical phrase, in which the second statement is similar in meaning to the first, bringing a different nuance and greater understanding. One who has real compassion (mercy) shows that they have a knowledge of God because God is love (1 John 4:8). God desired the evidence of a true knowledge of Him more than obedience to a form of religion.

Now let's apply this to Matthew 9:13. How does our understanding of Hosea 6:6 enlighten us to why Jesus is eating with the Pharisees and why the Pharisees were wrong for their criticism of Jesus? **The Pharisees were critical of Jesus for eating with the tax collectors and sinners because they didn't understand the character of God nor the mission of Jesus. Hosea 6:1-3 speaks of sinners returning to the Lord in repentance and being spiritually healed. This is exactly what Christ was doing. He was bringing hope of restoration to sinners who were cast off by others. God desires compassion that comes from an experiential knowledge of Him. We love because He first loved us!**

Jesus' message always strikes the right tone. The tax collectors and sinners were given hope (they were given none by the Pharisees). The Pharisees were humbled (their pride was a barrier to salvation). In effect, Jesus calls all of them to salvation.

Torn Garments and Bursting Wineskins (9:14-17)

At this time, John the Baptist was in prison and some of his disciples had not yet started following Christ (see Matthew 11:2-3). Many years later, the Apostle Paul even ran into some of John's disciples who had not followed Christ or were even aware of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-3). It seems that these disciples of John were saved but were trying to adhere to the traditional Old Testament means of worship. Remember, at this point, much of what was really said in the Old Testament was overridden by traditions started by the Pharisees. For example, it appears the Old Testament only prescribed one day of fasting each year on the day of atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31 – afflicting yourself carries the connotation of fasting). Yet, the Pharisees (and apparently the disciples of John) fasted frequently, twice a week to be exact (Luke 18:12).

When the disciples of John came to Jesus they had a specific question: why do we fast so much and your disciples never fast? Read Luke 5:30-33. It sounds as if the Pharisees had this question too, although their motive in asking may have been different. Why would the Pharisees ask this question? Why would it cause concern in John's disciples?

Jesus answers their specific question about fasting but also understands a deeper question that prompted their confusion in the first place. Fasting was just one of many traditions Jesus broke. The bigger question is why were Jesus and His disciples so different? In verses 16-17 of this passage, Jesus addresses the broader issue about the old and the new way.

The Grumblings Begin

Matthew

9:1-34

Let's begin by talking about fasting. Jesus spoke of the "children of the bridechamber" (KJV translation) that could not mourn (fast) while the bridegroom was with them. Who is the bridegroom?

Define "children of the bridechamber" –

Who do the "children of the bridechamber" represent?

Let's not get confused here. Jesus is not making a statement about the church (the bride of Christ). He is using a metaphor for the purpose of answering the question. It is perfectly OK that Jesus' disciples are part of the bride of Christ, and are called His attendants in this illustration. It is just a metaphor.

Jesus goes on to say that when the bridegroom is taken from them, they will fast. Notice that fasting and mourning are related concepts in this passage. Jesus helps us to better understand the purpose of fasting, a practice that He clearly expected among His disciples after His departure.

Let's take a few minutes to better understand fasting. First, it is helpful to understand the nature of our inner warfare. Read Romans 7:14-25 and discuss the battle Christians face between the inner and outer man.

Recognizing that the outer man (flesh) is sinful and the inner man (soul) is clean, how does fasting help us to allow the inner man to have greater success in conquering our outer man? (See also 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Biblical fasting _____ the flesh and _____ the spirit!

Below are some of the effects of fasting upon our spiritual lives:

1. Fasting causes us to _____ (_____) our souls before God (Psalm 35:13, Isaiah 58:5)
2. Fasting helps to break the bondage of _____ in our lives (Isaiah 58:6)
3. Fasting promotes _____ in our lives (Isaiah 58:7)

Fasting is a tool, much like prayer, meditation, or studying God's Word that is designed to bring us closer to God.

While Jesus was with the disciples, they were literally walking with God. They enjoyed unbroken fellowship and complete access to Him. After He was taken, the closeness could still be enjoyed but they had to seek Him. Fasting is a biblical tool we should use as we seek to draw near to the Lord.

The second part of Jesus' response to the disciples of John goes beyond their initial question to the root of their concerns. How did Jesus and His teaching fit in with the Old Testament, its laws, and the traditions of the Pharisees? Jesus' response: they cannot be intermingled.

First let me clarify, Jesus did not come to destroy the law or undermine the Old Testament, but rather to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). With that said, the new and living way ushered in by Christ wasn't meant to be superimposed upon the Old Testament laws and ceremonies. When Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn asunder (Matthew 27:50-51). There was no more need to follow those prescriptions for worship, especially the extra-biblical traditions invented by the Pharisees.

Before we address Jesus' illustrations, let's read about what happens when the Law and the Gospel are intermixed. Read Galatians 2:11-18, which discusses Paul's frustration with the Judaizers and their influence on the early churches. Also read Galatians 3:23-25, which speaks about the right use of the Law. Finally, read Romans 3:31 to provide some final balance. Keep these passages in mind as we discuss the two parables used by Jesus.

The first illustration employed by Christ is of a new piece of cloth sewed as a patch onto a used garment.

Many of the garments in Jesus' day were made of linen or wool, both of which have a tendency to shrink when they are washed. Why won't new cloth work as a patch on an old garment?



What happens to the new cloth and the old garment when they are sewed together?

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The second parable used by Jesus is that of new wine in old bottles (KJV). Actually, the word "bottle" had a broader meaning in English when the KJV was translated. The Greek word underlying "bottle" actually means wineskin. That is exactly what it was.

New Wineskin, Old Wineskin...What's the Difference?

Made from cleaned animal hides (skins -often goat), wineskins were used for carrying wine offerings, for travel and for storing new wine. As the wine inside continued to ferment, the skin would stretch to the point of losing its elasticity. If new wine was stored in an old skin, the skin would often burst from the pressure.

Grapes + Fermentation = Wine

1. Skins of grapes already have yeast growing on them.
2. As grapes are crushed, juice begins fermenting spontaneously.
3. Yeast turns the natural sugars in the grape juice into alcohol and carbon dioxide.
4. Fermentation process often continues after the wine has been stored in the wineskin.
5. The release of the carbon dioxide causes the wineskins to expand.



Newly filled wineskins were often hung and stored in tents from the poles.

Wineskins were sometimes cut and made from patterns for ease of transportation.

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The infographic above explains why new wine cannot be placed into old wineskins. Once a wineskin is used to hold wine during the fermentation process, it is stretched to its max and no longer has enough elasticity to expand further. What happens to both the new wine and the old wineskin when they are used together?

Let's apply these concepts to the Law and the Gospel. What happens to the Gospel when we try to house it in the rules and practices of the Law?

Now let's look at the other side of the coin. What happens to the Law when we try to mix the gospel in with it?

How do the Law and the Gospel harmonize?

Of Faith and Miracles (9:18-31)

The next three miracles tie together the common theme of faith. We will address each miracle separately and then consider the common thread that joins them.

The Resurrection of Jarius' Daughter

Before we begin to dissect this passage, read Mark's account in Mark 5:21-24, 35-43. What additional information or differences do you note?

How do we reconcile Mark's account with Matthew's regarding the state of Jarius' daughter when he comes to Jesus? See also Matthew 8:5-8 and Luke 7:2-7.

SYNAGOGUE OFFICIALS

The ruler who came before Jesus was a synagogue official named Jarius. According to John MacArthur, "He (Jarius) was therefore the highest ranking religious official in Capernaum, responsible for the total administration and operation of the synagogue. He supervised the worship services and oversaw the work of the other elders, which included teaching, adjudicating disputes, and other such leadership duties. As the ranking member of the Jewish religious establishment in Capernaum, which would have included scribes and Pharisees, Jarius may well have been a Pharisee himself."³

Compare the faith of Jarius to the Roman Centurian (Matthew 8:5-13). What is the difference?

JEWISH FUNERALS IN JESUS' DAY

"Flute players (minstrals in v. 23) were employed both on festive occasions (Rev. 18:22) and at funerals. Matthew alone mentions them, not so much because he had special knowledge of Jewish funeral customs 9cf. M Ketuboth 4:4, which required even a poor family to hire two flute players and one professional wailing woman), but out of personal recollection. Jesus was about to reverse funeral symbolism of the finality of death. The "noisy crowd" was made up of friends mourning, not in the hushed whispers characteristic of our Western funerals, but in loud outbursts of grief and wailing augmented by cries of hired mourners."

³ *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 8-15, p. 76.*

The Grumbings Begin

Matthew

9:1-34

Jesus informed the mourners that the girl was not dead but only asleep. We know that Jesus does not lie and that the girl truly was dead. How should we understand what Jesus says and why did He say it? See also 1 Corinthians 15:16-18 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

How did Jesus perform the healing of this girl? What is significant about this? Read Numbers 19:11.

The Woman with the Issue of Blood

Read Mark's account in Mark 5:25-34. What else do we learn about this woman?

The issue of blood was likely a chronic bleeding from her uterus, which would have rendered her unclean according to Leviticus 15:25-33. This uncleanness should have made her avoid the press of the crowd and especially touching Jesus and His garments, which would then render Him unclean.

The "hem" of Jesus garment can mean either the edge of the garment, or one of the four tassels sewn onto four corners of a Jewish man's garment (see Numbers 15:37-41). The Greek word translated as "hem" in Matthew 9:20, was translated as "borders" by Jesus when He described the Pharisee's overzealous approach to this law (see Matthew 23:5). As a law-abiding Jewish male, Jesus would have worn such tassels upon His garments. They bore a religious significance as they were meant to be a reminder to obey the laws of God from the heart.



Describe other occasions in Scripture in which people were healed by touching "holy" objects. Read 2 Kings 13:21, Acts 5:15, and Acts 19:11-12.

What does this imply about the woman's faith who touched Jesus?

We read in Mark's gospel that Jesus confronted the woman who touched Him, sensing that virtue had gone out of Him. What does this teach us about the healing/saving ministry of Jesus Christ?

The Restoration of Sight to the Two Blind Men

The two blind men who found and followed Christ called out, "Son of David, have mercy on us." What is the significance of the title, "Son of David"? Review Matthew 1:1-17 and read 2 Samuel 7:12-18.

What was the scriptural expectation of the Messiah? Read Isaiah 29:17-19 and 35:3-6.

What did Jesus ask these men before healing them? Why?

Jesus responded by saying that they would be healed in accordance with their faith. Jesus wasn't saying that little faith resulted in little sight or that their physical vision would be varied based upon their faith. He was stating that in accordance with their faith, they would be completely healed.

Again, Jesus tries to limit the knowledge of this miracle by performing it in private and commanding the men to remain silent, but this was hard to contain and soon the word spread throughout the land.

Tying it all together

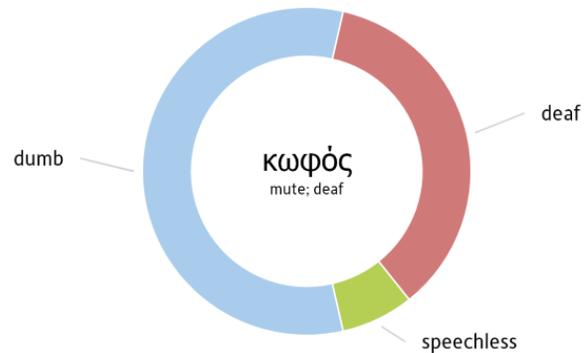
There are two common threads between these three miracles that I would like us to note.

1. _____ draws us to faith in Christ. Consider the implications of this in your life (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
2. Jesus honors true _____ in Him, whether it is _____ or _____. Consider how this applies to various levels of Christian maturity and some testimonies of salvation experiences you have heard (Matt. 17:20).

An Accusation (9:32-34)

As we consider the last individual miracle of Jesus recorded in this chapter, there are a few items of great significance we must address.

The individual who was brought to Christ was afflicted by a demon; the result was that he is described as dumb, meaning that he was unable to speak. The underlying Greek word is, “kōphos”, used 14 times in the New Testament, exclusively in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The graph to the right compares the three ways “kōphos” is translated in the King James Version of the New Testament. What is the significant alternate translation for “kōphos”?



“Kōphos” literally means blunt, or dull and was used by the Jews to describe both deafness and muteness. Why did the translators exclusively choose the word, “dumb” when translating this passage?

Could the man have also been deaf?

Why am I making a big deal out of this? Good question. First, notice the response of the people to this miracle. They stated that they had never seen things done like this before in Israel. Based on scriptural record, Israel witnessed more miracles than any other people in the history of humanity. They witnessed the deliverance from Egypt, the miracles in the desert, the amazing conquest of Canaan, God’s glory inhabiting Solomon’s temple, and from time to time God would manifest Himself in an amazing way. Yet, what Jesus was doing was said to be unique. Read 2 Kings 5:1-8 which recounts Namaan’s letter to the King of Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet. What does the king’s response indicate about the typical Israeli view of miracles?

The exclamation of the people about Christ’s ministry ultimately provokes the negative response of the Pharisees. Before we go there, let’s jump over to the 11th chapter of Matthew. The last few verses in chapter 9 are a preface to Matthew 10, the ordination and commissioning of the 12 apostles. After they are sent out, we see two of John the Baptist’s disciples coming to Jesus on behalf of John, to ask a very important question. Read Matthew 11:1-6 and correlate Jesus’ response with the miracles recorded by Matthew in chapters 8 and 9.

The Grumblings Begin

Matthew

9:1-34

Confirmation of Jesus as “He that should come”

- The _____ receive sight – Matthew ____ : _____
- The _____ walk – Matthew ____ : _____
- The lepers are _____ – Matthew ____ : _____
- The _____ (“kōphos”) hear – Matthew ____ : _____
- The _____ are raised up – Matthew ____ : _____
- The _____ have the gospel preached to them – Matthew ____ : _____

From gaining this perspective, what do you see as one of the primary purposes laid upon Matthew in recording this gospel?

Now put yourself in the Pharisees’ shoes. Miracles are being done with a power and frequency never before witnessed in the history of Israel. In response, you see an accusation formed, specifically that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan. What was the rationale for the Pharisees’ accusation?

Consider Proverbs 1:20-33. How does this speak to the ministry of Jesus Christ and the response of the Pharisees?

It is important to understand that God makes wisdom readily available to all who would seek it (James 1:5-6). When we lack wisdom, it is because we are not seeking it or are refusing to hear and recognize it as God’s truth when it is presented to us. Just like the Pharisees, we have the uncanny ability to explain away truth that we don’t want to hear. Spiritually, the ability to hear is not associated with our eyes but our heart.

If you want wisdom:

- 1) humble yourself before the Lord in submission to whatever His will may be; and then**
- 2) seek His truth and He will provide you with what you need. (Romans 12:1-2)**

The accusation that Jesus was a minister of Satan appears to just be starting but it will flourish among the scribes and Pharisees and will later be directly confronted by Jesus in Matthew 12:22-28.