

Lesson 11: Chapter 12 “Lord of the Sabbath”

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_12.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Chapter 11 starts with some of John the Baptist's disciples coming to Jesus to ask Him if He was the promised Messiah, or if they should wait for someone else. Jesus doesn't give a direct answer. Instead, He tells these disciples to go back to John and report to him all the miracles they have seen Jesus do and compare them to what the prophets said the Messiah would do. Jesus went on to condemn three cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Jesus thanks God for making His will known to His children.

Memory Verse:

12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Lesson Opener:

[For older kids, change the scenario to apply on a little kid not themselves as it is childish]

What are some rules you have in your house? Are you ever allowed to break those rules?

What if one of the rules in your house is that you're not allowed to run in the house, but then a fire starts in your house; are you allowed to run away from the fire even if that means you must break the rule? (Yes.)

Your parents don't want you to run in the house usually because you might bump into something or fall and hurt yourself. But if there's a fire, then they would want you to break the rule so that you could get away and be safe. It's the choice between doing the right thing of not running and the best choice of running in that situation. This is similar to the way Jesus explained how God asks His people not to do work on the Sabbath.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus asserts His own authority as "Lord of the Sabbath," demonstrating His power to reinterpret and fulfill the law.

Lesson Body:

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-8)

Were the Pharisees accurate in saying that the disciples were breaking the Sabbath?

The Pharisees accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath law. The question is, did they? OT law prohibits them from working at their occupation for the sake of personal gain. People already spend 6 days a week on themselves. The seventh is to be a holy day for God. That doesn't mean that a person cannot lift any objects, but it does mean that a person must not labor at their job. What the disciples were doing did not break the Old Testament law. In fact, Deuteronomy 23:24-25 makes it clear that a person could pick grain from fields as they passed through as long as it wasn't for personal profit but just to eat. The Pharisees did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, but for doing it on the Sabbath day.

1. Jesus defended them which is the first reason to prove they didn't break the law or else He would have rebuked them.
2. The Lord answers them by citing the case of David, who, under necessity, took, ate, and gave to his followers the show bread from the table in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary which was traditionally only lawful for priests to eat 1 Samuel 21:2-7.
3. In the second example, Jesus points out that the priests at the Temple violate the letter of the Law by working on the Sabbath serving God in the Temple, but the necessity of their ministry outweighs the violation.

The Sabbath was made for man. The purpose of this day was to allow people to rest from their work and spend time learning about and worshipping God as a family and country. They could put aside all their worries of working in the field for one day and enjoy each other and the Lord. God's commands are not burdensome, but ours very well could be.

The Jews esteemed nothing greater than the Temple, except that God who was worshipped in it — Christ, by asserting He was greater than the Temple, asserts that He was God.

The Lord has found the roots of the spiritual concept of worship and rituals in the Old Testament (Hosea 6:6) "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than sacrifices." Sacrifices are of great importance to God's people; and yet God does not want outward appearances. He wants what is behind the sacrifice such as the mystery of love and mercy. Likewise, in keeping the Sabbath in obedience and in sacrifice to God, the core of this obedience, which is the love and the mercy, is presented to Him.

Healing on the Sabbath (12:9-14)

From the very moment Jesus entered the temple, people were watching Him, seeking for a chance to accuse Him. "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath?"

Doing good on the Sabbath is allowed because it fulfills the commandments concerning love of God and love of one's neighbor. The Sabbath is a day to do good to others. It is a day to heal. It is a day to share God's love. It could easily be argued that there is no better day to show God's power and love by healing someone than on the Sabbath day. The sick people do not take a break from getting sick on the Sabbath, why not heal them? The Jewish leaders could find nothing to say to refute Jesus. His

logic was undeniable. But were their hearts changed? No. They never say, “Oh, we never thought of it from that angle before. You are right.”

After Jesus healed this man, they angrily left the synagogue and began conspiring how to destroy Jesus. This was the best day in the healed man’s life. Everyone should be happy and excited and filled with awe. But the Pharisees were primarily concerned with the logistics of the Sabbath day.

Behold, My Servant (12:15-21)

When Jesus read the wicked hearts and thoughts of the Pharisees, He left the Synagogue and perhaps the town, but He continued to heal many people. He avoided unnecessary danger until His earthly ministry was accomplished.

St Matthew in verses 18-21 quotes a passage from Isaiah 42:1-4 that has been fulfilled in the person of the Messiah.

He confirms to us that:

- A. Jesus is the Chosen One to fulfill the Salvation.
- B. In Him, the Father is pleased with us.
- C. He is the desire and hope of the Gentiles.
- D. With Humility, He grants Victory.
- E. He is patient with the Weak.

I will put My Spirit on Him – The third member of the Trinity was also working. He will declare justice to the Gentiles – Salvation of the Gentiles was prophesied from OT.

Verse 19 means He was gentle and not violent. In Verse 20, He cares for the weak and needy. Jesus is patient, kind and long-suffering. He doesn’t quickly snuff out or judge the spiritually immature but instead seeks to rekindle the flame again.

A House Divided Cannot Stand (12:22-30)

Jesus uses three arguments to refute the Pharisees’ claim that He exorcises demons by the power of Beelzebul/Satan:

1. The first argument: Most kingdoms fall, not by the power of foreign enemies, but by weakness due to divisions. Satan’s kingdom has to be ruled in peace; he cannot be in agreement with Jesus who opposes his authority and casts his demons out.
2. The second argument: Christ showed them that it might as well be applied to them as to Him, if their argument be true that a man who casts out devils must be in league with the devil, then "your disciples" have made a covenant with Satan also because they cast out demons. Thus, they should admit that casting out demons has to be with the assistance of God.
3. *Who is the one entering the strong man’s house in Jesus’ example?*

The third argument: No one can enter a man's house and take his goods unless he has first conquered him. If He is not the Messiah, stronger than Satan, how could He spoil him? The strong man is Satan ("the prince/ruler of this world"), his house is the earth, and his property consists of those who are not the children of God. By casting out demons, Jesus is tying up the "strong man's (Satan) power and plundering his "house. “

The two kingdoms of Satan and of Christ are opposed. Those who are with Jesus belong to God and proclaim His Kingdom by gathering the lost sheep of Israel while the some of the Pharisees who stand in opposition to Him are the wicked shepherds who scatter the sheep.

The Unpardonable Sin and A tree known by its fruit (12:31-37)

God places no limits upon His mercy in the offer of His gift of salvation by the Holy Spirit through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

The Church teaches that every human sin can be repented and forgiven with one exception: anyone who deliberately and repeatedly refuses to accept God's mercy and the gift of eternal life offered by the Holy Spirit up to the moment he takes his last breath in death commits the final sin that is past pardoning, and that person condemns himself to the loss of eternal life.

The effect will be always similar to the cause: a bad tree will produce bad fruit, and a good tree, good fruit. The malicious accusations of some of the Pharisees reveal the malice and evil in their hearts. A person may be able to fake his spirituality for a while. But sooner or later his true heart and spiritual condition will be revealed by his actions. The fruit will show whether or not the tree is a good tree. In this context Jesus is saying that the religious leaders are bad trees. Their words are ugly lies, spoken out of stubborn pride and hate. Rather than welcome the Messiah, they oppose God's own Son at every turn. They are not neutral, but rather actively oppose Jesus.

Verses 34-35 – Jesus calls them a brood of vipers. It is the same thing that John the Baptist once called them. Jesus boldly denounces them and their hateful opposition to God's work. He calls their words evil. He calls their hearts evil. He proclaims that they are wholly and completely evil inside and out. It is a strong statement. And in the end, it made little impact on them. Jesus didn't want the crowds to blindly follow their blind guides anymore.

The Scribes and Pharisees Ask for a Sign (12:38-42)

Jesus refuses to give a sign on demand. He is not a parlor magician. He doesn't do miracles just to appease their appetites or draw attention to Himself. But He does tell them He will give them one sign. It is the greatest sign of all. It is His death and resurrection. He uses the analogy of Jonah who is in the belly of the fish.

An Unclean Spirit Returns (12:43-50)

If a person is possessed by a demon, and the demon is driven out without a new Master (Jesus) being invited into the person, the demon will just come back again and bring more with him the second time. If a person's heart is not changed, surface changes will not last.

The lesson is simple: the only lasting remedy for peoples' problems is Jesus. Anything short of accepting Jesus will result in only surface changes.

In verse 48, Jesus is not disrespecting His family. Later while hanging on the cross, He told John to take care of His mother and showed respect to her in many other occasions like Cana's wedding. Jesus often used situations He and the people around Him were part of as object lessons. And this is one of those examples. The issue of "family" came up and Jesus taught them that anyone who obeyed God could be part of His spiritual family just like St. Mary was obedient. Also, His brothers are not siblings because St Mary is a virgin. Jesus' point is that He has a large spiritual family that anyone can be part of by obeying His father.

Takeaways and Lesson Delivery Ideas:

From Verse 30: ³⁰“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

Jesus showed that there is no such thing as neutrality. He didn't want anyone to sit on the fence. At times some of the people refused to publicly support or oppose Jesus for various reasons. They did the same when they told Jesus that they did not know whether John the Baptist's preaching was from God or man.

Today there are many agnostics in the world. These are people who say they don't care whether or not God exists. It is not important to them or their lives. They say that they are neutral. Jesus eliminates neutrality as a possibility. You are either with Him or against Him. There is no middle. So, make up your mind. If you cast your lot with Jesus, go all the way and sell out to follow Him with everything you have.



From Verses 36-37:

We will have to give an answer for every careless word. Words are important. Once they are spoken, they cannot be taken back [toothpaste illustration=> A common illustration about hurtful words uses a tube of toothpaste to demonstrate how once words are spoken, they cannot be taken back, just as toothpaste cannot be squeezed back into the tube after being dispensed]. We will have to give an account for each one. There is a record with all your words inside.

How would you feel if Jesus opened that book in front of all of us and started reading out all the words that you said? What kind of words will be in that book? Proudful words? Hurtful words? Angry words? Gossip? Deceitful? Flattering? Lies? Disrespectful and rude? Curses? Or perhaps there is not many of the above categories. But perhaps the words recorded in your book are largely empty. Perhaps your “book of words” is filled with meaningless words. Talk of social media, sports and movies, etc.

Let us hope rather that our “book of words” is filled with meaningful words. What kind of words do you think are more meaningful? Words of encouragement. Praise. Worship. Complimenting others. Testimonies. Sharing what we have learned from God. Let's be intentional to guide conversations in a more meaningful direction.

