

## Matthew 12

### The Other Disciples

**Mat 12:1** At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

- Following chapter 11 (*this was an epistle that was to be read at one sitting*), the twelve still on their limited commission, Jesus' other disciples were here with Him and "were hungry". In Deut 23:25 there was a Mosaic Law that stated they could just "pluck heads of grain" and eat it but were not to "put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain", i.e., they weren't to take any more than was necessary to satisfy their immediate hunger. And it being the Sabbath, they were about to get a lesson on Jesus' authority as Deity.

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The Sabbath

**Mat 12:2** But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

- The Pharisees were half right concerning the Law (# four of the Ten Commandments- Ex 20:8), probably thinking Jesus might not catch their purposed error (*half-truth*) by which He in turn noted their hypocrisy. His disciples hadn't done any preparation, which **would** have been against the Sabbath (Ex 16:5), they only ate it uncooked which was not against the Law.

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**Mat 12:3** He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? 6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. 7 And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- Citing two O.T. examples, Jesus noted the misplaced regards they held for David as being so virtuous (*in 1 Sam 21 he violated the Law [Lev 24:9] where only the priests were to eat the shewbread- Ex 29:33*), and where the priests actually performed work on the Sabbath that any other Israelite would have been stoned for (*Num 15:32-36*). The Pharisees themselves violated the Law through "[leaving] the [commandments] of God [as they held] to the [traditions] of men" (*Mk 7:8*).
- Jesus then, according to their strict interpretation of the Law, quoted from Hos 6:6-7 with regards to their harsh attitude toward those who didn't even break it.

Hos 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. 7 But they like men have transgressed the Covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against Me.

- As Samuel told Saul in 1 Sam 15:22 after Saul disobeyed the Lord when he was commanded to completely annihilate the Amalekites and Saul saved some of the choicest stock to offer as sacrifice, "to obey is better than sacrifice". Sacrifice wasn't necessary for sin if sin is not committed. It would have been so much easier for the Pharisees to offer

sacrifice than to obey having “neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (*Mat 23:23*). And since Jesus was there as “Mediator” (*Gal 3:19*) at the giving of the Law, He, as “something greater than the temple..., is Lord of the Sabbath” knowing the correct interpretation of it (*Jas 2:8*).

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**Mat 12:9** He went on from there and entered their synagogue. **10** And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"--so that they might accuse Him. **11** He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? **12** Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

- Jesus again points out their hypocrisy since they would have more concern for an animal that fell into a ditch than for someone whom “God made in His Own Image” (*Gen 9:6*).

**1Co 9:9** For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

**Mar 2:27** And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

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**Mat 12:13** Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. **14** But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, how to destroy Him. **15** Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed Him, and He healed them all **16** and ordered them not to make Him known.

- The Pharisees were just as guilty as the non-repentant “cities where most of His mighty works had been done” (*11:20*). They were obviously jealous of the “many [who] followed Him” and must have felt that surely the Messiah they had expected was going to hold them to a higher esteem among the average Jew because of their strict adherence of the Law, even when making it more so than it really was. They were making themselves equal to God by adding to His word exposing their hypocrisy by it (*Pro 30:5-6*). After “He healed them all” when Jesus told them “not to make Him known” He was more concerned with His initial goal of spreading the Gospel and such fame as a healer would have hindered Him from fulfilling His purpose.

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**Mat 12:17** This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (*Isa 42*): **18** "Behold, My servant Whom I have chosen, My beloved with Whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. **19** He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets; **20** a bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not quench, until He brings justice to victory; **21** and in His name the Gentiles will hope."

- God publically proclaimed Jesus as His “beloved Son” after His baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit (*Mat 3:16-17*) by which He performed miracles which affirmed His Deity. His first focus was on “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (*10:6; Rom 1:16*) but then sent Paul “to carry [His] name before the Gentiles” (*Act 9:15; 26:23*) thus fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham by whose faith “all families of the earth [would] be blessed” (*Gen 12:3*), Gentiles included.
- Jesus stated in *11:29* that He is “gentle and lowly in heart” thus fulfilling this prophesy. He wasn’t braggadocious, nor did He abuse the miraculous indwelling (*Mat 4:4*) but

employed it in promoting the message of the kingdom and glorifying His Father (*Jn 12:28*). And through the message of freedom from the bondage of sin, He strengthened the weak, teaching His followers to do likewise (*Rom 15:1*). As Moses was the “Lawgiver” of the O.T., here, Jesus is given that recognition under the New. Ultimately, speaking of the Father, “there is only one Lawgiver and Judge, He Who is able to save and destroy” (*Jas 4:12*). Since Jesus (*now having “all authority”- 28:18*) in this prophesy has been given the authority to “[bring] justice to victory” (*which He did via the cross- Col 2:14*) He has also been given the right to judge (*Rom 8:34*) “because He is the Son of Man” (*Jn 5:27*). And the Gentiles also have confidence in Christ’s authority since to them also (*not just the “Jews only”- Rom 3:29*) “God has granted repentance that leads to life” (*Act 11:18*) through the “new commandment” (*Jn 13:34*) that Jesus gave which fulfills the “righteous requirement of the (Mosaic) Law” (*Rom 8:4*). This has become a universal, New Covenant Law which applies to “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (*Rev 7:9*).

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Beelzebul

**Mat 12:22** Then a demon-possessed 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?" **24** But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."

- In chapter 9:33-34 a similar incident occurred. Remember, the purpose of the miracles wasn’t primarily to heal whatever malady but to prove that the message, from the messenger performing them, was from God (*2 Pet 1:21*). In both events “the people were amazed” yet the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by “the prince of demons”. They knew of His ancestry as being a descendant of one of their heroes David, but their combined egos made every attempt to discredit Him from being the prophesied Messiah. The people asking if He was “the Son of David” showed that the miracles He performed evidenced to them in their eyes that He may well have been.

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**Mat 12:25** 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. **28** 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.

- Jesus “knowing their thoughts”, these Pharisees could not escape the fact that He was Deity in the flesh. He began His response with the idea of any institution which governs itself through discord will not succeed. And knowing some of their followers were claiming to do what Jesus was actually doing, He asks by whom they were doing such. Were they inferring that anyone who cast out demons was doing it by the power of Satan? If that were the case then they would have to answer to their own followers. “But if” begins Jesus’ rhetorical response and reason for His casting them out (*note what Zechariah prophesied- 13:2*) then that proved “the kingdom of God [had] come upon [them]”. Only a visit from Deity (*in the form of the Messiah- Isa 9:6-7*) would bring that about thus exposing their hypocrisy and disdain for Jesus as being the promised Messiah.

- Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” (*Eph 2:2*) “bound for eighteen years” the “daughter of Abraham” that Jesus healed of the “disabling spirit” that “she was bent over” by (*Lk 13:11-16*). In this incident concerning entering “a strong man’s house”, Jesus was referencing Satan as the “strong man” and this carnal realm as his *abode*. Once Jesus entered this realm as “the Son of man” he bound Satan through Scripture (*Rev 20:1-4*) stating “it is written” (*Mat 4*) and by freeing the woman of the spirit that enslaved her. At that He challenged those present, after making His Deity obvious, with picking sides; His, because of the miracles He performed or the Pharisees’ after making them out to be the hypocrites they were exposing themselves to be.

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**Mat 12:31** 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.

- In Real Estate there are three things most important when considering a purchase. They are: location, location and location. Such is the case when trying to decipher any passage or teaching in scripture. The three things to consider here are: context, context and context. Jesus is stating that this particular sin has no chance of ever being forgiven even when all others can be. In Mark, Jesus dubs it “an eternal sin” (*3:29*), in Luke He states that it “will never be forgiven” (*12:10*). Blasphemy is a “spoken sin”. It **was** the “unpardonable sin” when spoken against the Holy Spirit by claiming Jesus cast out the demons by Beelzebul. They **witnessed** a miracle but **gave the credit** to Satan and not to God.

*"When the Pharisees saw that Jesus had performed a verifiable miracle, they could not argue the fact that Christ possessed certain powers that others (including themselves) did not have. Therefore, in order to cast suspicion on the ministry of Jesus, they claimed He was casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. The name Beelzebub is simply another name for Satan, as can be seen from Jesus' reference to Satan in Matthew 12:26. Even when faced by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit through Jesus, the Pharisees were, in essence, attributing Jesus' power to Satan, and claiming that Jesus was Satan incarnate instead of God incarnate. It is this, and nothing else, that our Lord calls the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. "*

*"First, the circumstances under which the sin is described cannot prevail today, due to the fact that the age of miracles has ceased. No one today will have the opportunity to witness Jesus performing miracles in person."*

*"Second, there is no other mention of the sin in any biblical passage written after the resurrection of Christ. None of the inspired New Testament writers refers to the sin in any epistle or in the book of Acts, and none offers warnings to new converts about avoiding the sin post-Pentecost."*

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- This is not to be misconstrued as the “sin unto death (*1 Jn 5:16-17*) which is “...any sin for which a person will not take the proper steps demanded by God to receive the forgiveness available.”

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**Mat 12:33** "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."

- From what is read in Rev 22:11 there will be a day when any repentance will be too late and whatever state a person is in (*saved or lost*) their eternal reward will be "according to what they had done" (20:13). Calling them the *offspring* of "vipers" was another way of telling them they "[were] of [their] father the devil" (Jn 8:44) which was first prophesied in Gen 3:15 where God told the serpent (*a.k.a., Satan- Rev 12:9; 20:2*) that his offspring would "bruise" the "heel" of Christ. Fruit is produced by the tree that bears it and from "the abundance" of evil thoughts that came from their hearts it defiled them (Mat 15:18). Jesus spoke in Mat 15:19 of the different sins that originated in *thoughts* and *feelings* (*mind*). He asked how they could be so outwardly pious (*as good trees*) and still have such thinking (*bad fruit*) within. They "[appeared] righteous to others, but within [they were] full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Mat 23:28). Those Pharisees who tried to cast suspicion on Jesus' ministry were doing so by the use of "careless words" by which they "[would] be condemned". Their words exposed their inner determinations.

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**Mat 12:38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

- After already witnessing Jesus perform miracles and being rebuked by Him because of their unbelief, "some of" them were bold enough to ask for Him to perform another one as though for their own entertainment. Calling Him "Teacher" wasn't because they respected Him as such but were only indulging Him for their own evil intentions. Calling these Jews an "adulterous generation" is akin to saying they were wives who left their own husbands for another because of their own evil desires. God, as their "Maker [was their] Husband" (Isa 54:5) and they were committing the act of adultery by denying the miracles Jesus performed, saying they were "by Beelzebul".
- In His rebuke, Jesus invoked as "the sign of prophet [Jonah's]" being "in the belly of the great fish" with the same amount of time that He would later be in the tomb before His resurrection. Then He compared their status at the judgment with those of Nineveh and "the queen of the South (*Sheba*)" since they **did** listen and "repent at the preaching of Jonah" (Jon 3:10) and heard "the wisdom of Solomon" (1 King 10:7), respectively, noting that, as the Messiah, His message of repentance is "greater than" both Jonah's and Solomon's. The responses of the queen of Sheba and the Ninevites would, in a sense by comparison, "condemn" those of the scribes and Pharisees.

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**Mat 12:43** "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I

came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

- At this point, Jesus is now addressing the whole crowd. Using as an example the now formerly possessed man, Jesus compares his situation with "this evil generation". As He told the invalid He healed in Jn 5:14 to "Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you", He tells them here that if they didn't accept His message, but for a short time, they, in a sense, would be like the seed that "endures for a while, [but] when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately [they would fall] away" (Mat 13:21). He lamented in Mat 17:17 calling them a "faithless and twisted generation" asking "how long am I to bear with you?" since once His message had grown cold in their hearts they would be receptive to "deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim 4:1). The return of the "unclean spirit" is akin to a person who was washed but didn't replace the "old self... to be renewed in the spirit of [his] mind" (Eph 4:22-23) with his "inner self... being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). See also 2 Pet 2:22.

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**Mat 12:46** While He was still speaking to the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. 47 [Someone told Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak to You."] 48 But He replied to the man who told Him, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

- Contrary to certain false doctrines concerning Mary's perpetual virginity is the fact that Jesus **did** have half-siblings by blood that were conceived by Mary through Joseph. Even though His half-sisters were not named, Jesus had four half-brothers (Mat 13:55-56) whose names were James (Gal 1:19), Joseph, Simon and Judas (Jude 1). When He was told they were "standing outside, asking to speak to [Him]" His reply was that His physical association with them paled in comparison to the spiritual attachment He had with His disciples through the Covenant relationship He had with them. His family were those who did "the will of [His] Father in Heaven" that "He is not ashamed to call... brothers" (Heb 2:11). He understood that we will have our spiritual family forever. Plus, in the beginning His own half-brothers didn't even believe He was the Messiah (Jn 7:5). Doing the "will" of the Father is what Jesus taught His disciples to pray for in the kingdom that would later (and did on Pentecost) come (Mat 6:10; Rev 21:2; Act 2). To have righteousness dwell on earth as in Heaven is accomplished through the body of Christ, the church. It is the place (woman/bride) He went to prepare (Rev 12:1) and will one day come to reclaim (Jn 14:2-3).

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