

**Matthew**

**Chapter 12**

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## MATTHEW CHAPTER 12

Matthew records Jesus' confrontations with the religious leaders over Sabbath issues. The hostility will heat up to the place where they will ascribe His miracles to the power of the devil.

### THE FIRST SABBATH CONTROVERSY: PICKING GRAIN (12:1-8)

Jesus will now have a confrontation with the religious rulers over the Sabbath issue.

**Matt. 12:1** At that time Jesus was going through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and his disciples became hungry and began to pluck and to eat the stalks of grain.

**Note on a variant reading:** After *pluck* a couple of manuscripts have *and rub them with their hands*.

**At that time** This transitional phrase ties this passage with the preceding argument concerning the kind of yoke and light burden of Jesus' teaching. The "rest" of Jesus will be compared with the rest of the Pharisees.

**Jesus was going through the grainfields** The grain is probably wheat.

**on the Sabbath;** Rest on the Sabbath was regarded as greatly important in Judaism (cf. Isaiah 56:4-7). The Sabbath was a time of rest and rejoicing (cf. the emphasis on rest in the preceding sentences, 11:28).

Matthew alternates between using the singular and plural for the Sabbath. The Greek word Sabbath can also mean *week* (see 28:1).

**and his disciples became hungry** This hunger will lead to a confrontation with the Pharisees.

**and began to pluck and to eat the stalks of grain.** Although Jesus did not engage in picking the grain Himself, He condoned their doing it and must be prepared to answer for their conduct.

**Matt. 12:2** But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Behold, your disciples are doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

**Note on variant readings:** Instead of *this* some manuscripts read *them*. A few manuscripts do not have *on the Sabbath*.

**But when the Pharisees saw this,** Pharisees attempted to stop them. They saw this as a violation of commandment not to work on the Sabbath (cf. Deuteronomy 5:14; Exodus 20:10). Plucking grain was technically harvesting, a form of work forbidden in the rabbinical interpretation of the commandment.

**they said to him, "Behold, your disciples are doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."** Jesus and His disciples violated the tradition of the Pharisees and the sanctity of the Sabbath day.

Jesus will now give four distinct arguments to justify their behavior (1). vs. 3 (2). vs. 5. (3). vs. 7 (4). vs. 8.

**Matt. 12:3** But he said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry and those with him?”

**But he said to them, “Have you not read** Jesus, instead of rebuking His disciples, defended them. His first argument appeals to history and necessity.

**what David did, when he became hungry, and those with him?** The Pharisees would know the story well (1 Samuel 21:1-5).

**Matt. 12:4** How he entered into the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence, that which was not lawful for him to eat, nor the ones with him, but only for the priests?

**Note on a variant reading:** Many manuscripts read *he ate* rather than *they ate*.

**How he entered into the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence,** The Pharisees believed David and his companions ate the bread to stay alive though nothing in the context suggests this.

**that which was not lawful for him to eat, nor the ones with him,** Admission that David violated the law.

**but only for the priests?** If David could do it, certainly the greater Son of David could do it.

**Matt. 12:5** Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, and they are innocent?

**Or have you not read in the Law,** Again appealing to Scripture.

**that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, and they are innocent?** His second argument is from the Law (Numbers 28:9, 10, 18, 19). The priests performed work on the Sabbath in that they offered sacrifices.

**Matt. 12:6** But I say to you, that one greater than the temple is here.

**But I say to you,** Here again is the authority of Jesus.

**that one greater than the temple is here.** Some translations have “some *thing* greater” rather than “someone” or “one” greater based upon the Greek text which has the word in the neuter gender. Jesus is greater than David and the temple.

**Matt. 12:7** But if you had known what it means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

**But if you had known what it means,** Obviously they did not know. Jesus' third point draws from the statement of a prophet. Implies that if they knew the meaning of the passage, they would have acted according to it.

**'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'** Hosea 6:6 is where this is found. Though God commanded sacrifices it is not the mere act that pleased Him, it was what was behind the act. This is true in any religious duty.

**you would not have condemned the innocent.** Condemning the innocent: first John the Baptist the messenger then eventually the king Himself will be condemned.

**Matt. 12:8** For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

**For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.** His fourth defense is that they acted under the Master's authority. He is greater than the temple and Lord of the Sabbath. That is He is sovereign to decide what loyalty to the Sabbath means.

The religious restrictions that human beings put on the laws of God ultimately fight the very purpose that these laws were given. Insistence on the letter of the law results in the neglect with the Spirit of the Law. Jesus brings the debate to an entirely new level by proclaiming He is Lord of these matters and He is the final and infallible interpreter of the Law and the commandment about the Sabbath. The rest and rejoicing symbolized by the Sabbath finds its fulfillment brought in by the kingdom of Jesus.

#### **ANOTHER SABBATH CONTROVERSY: THE MAN WITH THE SHRIVELED HAND (12:9-14)**

Jesus has another confrontation on the Sabbath. This one deals with whether or not a person can do good on the Sabbath.

**Matt. 12:9** And after departing from there, he went into their synagogue.

**And after departing from there, he went into their synagogue.** Note it is "their" synagogue. This could indicate that the synagogue was specifically of Pharisees or one in the vicinity of the last event. We are still on the Sabbath day. Luke 6:6 says it is a different Sabbath.

**Note on a variant reading:** A few manuscripts read *Jesus went* instead of *He went*.

**Matt. 12:10** And behold, there was a man having a shriveled hand. And they questioned him saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath"—in order that they might accuse him.

**Note on variant readings:** Many manuscripts read *the man* instead of *a man*. After *man* some manuscripts have *there*. One Syriac manuscript does not have *on the Sabbath*. Instead of *to heal* many manuscripts read *to be healing*.

**And behold, there was a man having a shriveled hand.** Luke 6:6 tells us that it was his right hand. Shriveled has the idea of being paralyzed and atrophied. This was probably a situation that had been set up by the religious rulers.

**And they questioned him saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath,”** The question was to trap Him. It is clear that the Pharisees did not believe that it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. From their point of view, a man who had a shriveled hand for some time could wait one more day to be healed.

—**in order that they might accuse him.**” The accusation would be before the local tribunal.

**Matt. 12:11** But he said to them, “What man will there be among you who will have one sheep, and if this one falls into the ditch on the Sabbath, will he not seize it, and raise it up?”

**Note on variant readings:** Instead of *will there be* some manuscripts read *is*. A few manuscripts do not have *will there be*. A few manuscripts read *has* instead of *will have*. A few manuscripts do not have *this one*.

**But he said to them, “What man will there be among you who will have one sheep, and if this one falls into the ditch on the Sabbath, will he not seize it, and raise it up?”** Jesus will justify the healing by referring to the acceptability of pulling an animal out of a pit it had fallen into on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 14:5). He appeals not to Scripture but to normal human conduct.

**Matt. 12:12** Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

**Note on a variant reading:** After *value* some manuscripts have *then*.

**Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!** The emphasis is that a human being is worth more than a sheep. Again Jesus appeals to common sense.

**So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.** Jesus does not challenge the Sabbath law, just their interpretation of it. It *is* permissible to do good on the Sabbath.

**Matt. 12:13** Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out and it was restored to normal, just as the other one.

**Note on a variant reading:** Two manuscripts including *Sinaiticus*, do not have *just as the other one*.

**Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out and it was restored to normal, just as the other one.** After Jesus indicated the deed was proper to perform, He immediately healed the man. They were silenced by His argument and baffled by His action.

**Matt. 12:14** And the Pharisees went out and formed a plot against him, how that they might destroy him.

**Note on variant readings:** Many manuscripts read *went out from him*. A few manuscripts do not have *went out*.

**And the Pharisees went out and formed a plot against him,** Their obsession with the letter of the law apparently made it impossible for them to think about anything else. Thus the miracle of Jesus that was a sign of the dawning of God's kingdom and of the truth of Jesus message was lost on them. This event probably happened two years before the crucifixion.

**how that they might destroy him.** The breaking of the Sabbath was *the* incident that would eventually lead to His death. The same charge laid against Him in John 5:16-18 with the same result— wanting His death.

What a reproach against human nature, to see men maintaining that it was a mortal sin to heal on the Sabbath day, and yet they foully plotted on that same sacred day how that they might destroy the innocent teacher and healer!

#### **JESUS WITHDRAWS FROM POTENTIAL HOSTILITY (12:15-21)**

With the religious leaders wishing to kill Him, Jesus withdraws from their presence.

**Matt. 12:15** But Jesus knowing this, departed from there. And a great multitude followed after him, and He healed all of them.

**Note on a textual variant:** A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have the word *multitude* after *great*. One manuscript does not have *great*.

**But Jesus knowing this, departed from there.** His time had not yet come (see John 7) He wanted to avoid further contact with them for the time being.

**And a great multitude followed after him, and he healed all of them.** Though rejected by the nation and the religious leaders, He is still healing everyone and multitudes are following Him everywhere.

**Matt. 12:16** And he warned them not to make him known.

**And he warned them not to make him known.** He had not come as the triumphal Messiah who would establish a political kingdom but rather as a servant of the Lord accomplishing His will.

**Matt. 12:17** in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

**in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet** The answer to His demand for their silence is found in the prophecy of Isaiah.

**might be fulfilled, saying,** Another one of Matthew's fulfillment quotations

**Matt. 12:18** "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my Beloved one in whom my soul is well-pleased; I will place my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

**"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen;** Jesus here is the chosen servant. The word can be translated "servant" or "son."

**my Beloved one in whom my soul is well-pleased;** This recalls the words of God the Father at His baptism (3:17;) and the transfiguration (17:5).

**I will place my Spirit upon him,** Again reminiscent of Jesus baptism when the Spirit of God anointed Him for the public ministry.

**and he will proclaim justice to the nations.** That the word translated *justice* should be taken in the positive sense rather than negative judgment seems clear from verse 21.

**Matt. 12:19** He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

**He will not quarrel,** This word, which is not found in the text of Isaiah, could be translated “argue” or “wrangle.” Matthew understands these words to speak of the humility of Jesus the servant Messiah. He does not quarrel with the Pharisees but withdraws from their midst.

**nor cry out;** The word translated cry out can be used for the barking of a dog. This could be contrasting His voice with the hypocrites who stand and pray in a public area (6:5).

**nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.** Those whom He heals will not proclaim Him publicly.

**Matt. 12:20** A bruised reed he will not break off, and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish, until he leads justice to victory.

**Note on variant readings:** One manuscript does not have *a bruised reed*. After *justice* a few manuscripts read *His*.

**A bruised reed he will not break off,** This is some question to the exact meaning of this phrase. It may mean He will not crush His enemies. This could also refer to those who have been worn down by the difficulties of life.

**and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish,** His purpose is not to overwhelm those who disagree with Him.

**until he leads justice to victory.** This means He will be successful. Again we are made aware of the paradoxical ministry of Jesus Messiahship. He is powerful in word and deed and yet the essence of His ministry, is found not in power but rather in servanthood expressed through humility and meekness, and gentleness. The story of Jesus that Matthew narrates is the same portrait that Isaiah gives.

**Matt. 12:21** And in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

**And in his name the Gentiles will hope.”** Note that salvation going to the Gentiles is now stressed after the Jews reject Him. He is the Savior of the entire world.

### **JESUS EXORCISES THE DEMONS (12:22-23)**

Jesus again exorcises the demons.

**Matt. 12:22** Then there was brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

**Note on a variant reading:** Some manuscripts have *the mute and blind man* instead of *the mute man*.

**Then there was brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute,** This episode will be the first public accusation against Jesus and the authority which He possesses. The man is brought to Jesus because they knew that He would heal him. Even in their unbelief they are testifying to His power!

**and he healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.** Jesus obliges and heals the man. This is the only instance recorded in the four gospels of Jesus healing someone who is blind and mute.

**Matt. 12:23** And all the multitude was amazed, and began to say, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”

**And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say,** Again the amazement of Jesus’ healing powers.

**“This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”** The multitudes ask the question in front of the religious rulers. They began to wonder if Jesus is the Messiah.

#### **THE ACCUSATION OF THE PHARISEES AND THE RESPONSE OF JESUS (12:24-37)**

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of driving out the demons by Satan’s power. He answers their accusations.

**Matt. 12:24** But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This one does not drive out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.”

**But the Pharisees after hearing this said,** They feel they have to respond.

**“This one does not drive out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.”** The power of Jesus is attributed to the devil. They feel that the claim of Jesus being the Messiah is impossible so they come to the opposite conclusion of the crowd.

**Matt. 12:25** And knowing their thoughts he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is made desolate; and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

**Note on a textual variant:** Some manuscripts have *Jesus* before *knowing*. Some manuscripts read *Jesus perceiving* instead of *knowing*.

**And knowing their thoughts he said to them,** Jesus supernaturally knows their thoughts.

**“Every kingdom divided against itself is made desolate;** He gives the analogy of a kingdom divided.

**and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.** Same analogy applied to a city or house.



**Matt. 12:26** And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

**And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?** The concept of Satan having a kingdom is found only explicitly here in the New Testament and in the parallel passages in the gospels (but see Revelation 2:13).

**Matt. 12:27** And if I drive out the demons by Beelzebub, by whom are your sons driving them out? Therefore they themselves will be your judges.

**And if I drive out the demons by Beelzebub,** Now a second argument is given. “If” is for sake of argument. Jesus is not saying that He is casting out demons by Beelzebub.

**by whom are your sons driving them out?** *Sons* means those associated with them, not their literal children.

**Therefore they themselves will be your judges.** To condemn Jesus is to condemn their own exorcists.

**Matt. 12:28** But if I drive out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

**But if I drive out the demons by the Spirit of God,** If, on the other hand, He is doing it by God’s Spirit.

**then the kingdom of God has come upon you.** Then the kingdom has arrived. The issue is: Not can He drive out demons, the issue is where does His authority come from?

**Matt. 12:29** Or how is anyone able to enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, except first he binds the strong man? And then he will thoroughly plunder his house.

**Note on a variant reading:** Many manuscripts have *thoroughly plunder his goods* rather than *plunder his goods*. Some manuscripts read *may plunder*.

**Or how is anyone able to enter into the house of the strong man** The strong man stands for Satan.

**and plunder his goods,** The coming of God’s kingdom spells the defeat for Satan and his demons (1 John 3:8).

**except first he binds the strong man?** He first must neutralize him.

**And then he will thoroughly plunder his house.** Then Jesus will destroy his kingdom.

**Matt. 12:30** He who is not with me is against me; and he who is not gathering together with me scatters.

**Note on a variant reading:** A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *me* after *scatters*.

**He who is not with me is against me;** A general truth.

**and he who is not gathering together with me scatters.** People must choose up sides.

**Matt. 12:31** Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

**Note on variant readings:** A few manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) have *to you* before *men*. After *not be forgiven* many manuscripts read *to men*. A couple of manuscripts read *to him* after *not be forgiven*.

**Therefore I say to you,** Now Jesus is going to make a very solemn statement.

**every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.** There is an unpardonable sin.

**Matt. 12:32** And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.

**Note on a variant reading:** *Codex Vaticanus* reads *not* before *forgiven him*. Instead of *not be forgiven*, *Codex Sinaiticus* reads *no, not ever, will be forgiven*. *Codex Vaticanus* reads *no, not ever, might be forgiven* (the strongest way of saying it).

**And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man,** Forgiveness is possible when speaking against Jesus.

**it will be forgiven him** See Peter's denial of Jesus and eventual restoration.

**but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit,** In this context, attributing the work of God to Satan.

**it will not be forgiven him,** No forgiveness for that person.

**either in this age, or in the one to come.** Now or in the future. This does not imply, as some have wrongly concluded, that there will be forgiveness in the age to come for those who have not been forgiven in this age. This is the position of Roman Catholic theology.

From the statements of Jesus we learn the following concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit:

1. The sin was against the Holy Spirit. The accusation made by the Pharisees was not only against Christ; ultimately it was against the Holy Spirit who was performing the miracles through Christ.
2. Those who sin against Jesus can be forgiven. But sinning against the Holy Spirit, who personifies the power of God, is unforgivable. There could be no question that the miracle had been through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who attribute the Holy Spirit's work to Satan cannot expect to be forgiven.
3. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is more than one particular sin; it is a continuous state of being. The religious leaders were constantly attributing the works of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to the devil. This revealed the evil condition of their hearts.

4. The consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit meant eternal damnation. There could be no forgiveness in this life or in eternity.

**Matt. 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 from its fruit.

**Either make the tree good, and its fruit good;** Same point as 7:17.

**or make the tree bad and its fruit bad;** One will automatically produce the other

**for the tree is known from its fruit.** In this context it refers to good and bad speaking.

**Matt. 12:34** You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, say good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is speaking.

**Note on a variant reading:** Two manuscripts read *good things* after *speaking*.

**You brood of vipers,** See 3:7; 23:33 for this same phrase. It is only aimed at the religious leaders.

**how can you, being evil, say good things?** The Pharisees were described as being evil (see 7:11). Therefore their estimate of Jesus was wrong.

**For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is speaking.** The mouth says what is already in the heart.

**Matt. 12:35** The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings out evil things.

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *from his heart* after *good things* and again after *evil things*. A few manuscripts have *the* before *good things*. A few manuscripts have *the* before *evil things*.

**The good man out of his good treasure** That which is contained in the heart (see Luke 6:45).

**brings forth good things,** A natural result of his character.

**and the evil man** Likewise the evil man does the same thing.

**out of his evil treasure** This is the one with an evil heart.

**brings out evil things.** See Romans 8:6,7.

**Matt. 12:36** For I say unto you, that every careless word that men will speak, they will give an account on the day of judgment.

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *will speak* many manuscripts read *if they will speak*. One manuscript reads *they are speaking*.

**For I say unto you, that every careless word that men will speak,** Useless or worthless words are what is in view.

**they will give an account on the day of judgment.** They will have to be answered for what they have done.

**Matt. 12:37** For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

**For by your words you will be justified,** There is a change from second person plural to second person singular.

**and by your words you will be condemned.** Words, like deeds are indications of a person's discipleship.

### THE SIGN OF JONAH (12:38-42)

Jesus predicts His resurrection with the sign of Jonah the prophet.

**Matt. 12:38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

**Note on a variant reading:** Many manuscripts do not have *Him*. *Codex Vaticanus* does not have *and Pharisees*.

**Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him saying,** This is part of the continuing exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders.

**"Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."** They wanted to see another miracle. Presumably a miracle just performed for them. Notice that again they refer to Him as teacher.

**Matt. 12:39** And he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation is seeking after a sign; but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet

**And he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation is seeking after a sign** Not exactly said to win friends, but nevertheless the truth.

**but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet** Notice Jesus believed that Jonah was a prophet.

**Matt. 12:40** for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, in this manner will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**Note on variant readings:** Instead of *was* a couple of manuscripts have another Greek word that means *it happened* or *was*. One manuscript does not have the word *was* in the text. After *in this manner* some

manuscripts read *also*.

**for just as Jonah was** Notice also that Jesus believed the story of Jonah and the sea monster.

**three days and three nights** This is according to Jewish reckoning

**in the belly of the sea monster,** The Greek word, like the Hebrew, means “large sea monster,” not necessarily a whale.

**in this manner will the Son of Man be** Like Jonah, so Jesus.

**three days and three nights** Three days according to their reckoning.

**in the heart of the earth.** This stood for the realm of the dead or *Sheol*. The sign will be His resurrection.

**Matt. 12:41** The men of Nineveh will stand up against this generation at the judgment and they will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here.

**The men of Nineveh will stand up against this generation at the judgment and they will condemn it,** These Gentiles responded where the Jews did not.

**because they repented at the preaching of Jonah,** They repented at the preaching of a Jewish prophet.

**and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here.** One greater than a prophet has come to the Jews and given them signs, yet they, the chosen people, still refuse to believe.

We note the following contrasts between the men of Nineveh and the people of Jesus' day.

1. **The Son of God or a simple human messenger.** Jesus was God's Son who called them to repentance while the people of Nineveh were sent a human prophet—Jonah.
2. **The sinless Savior or a rebellious prophet.** Jesus, the messenger, was the sinless Son of God. Contrast this with the foolish and rebellious Jonah who ran away from God's calling (Jonah 1:3; 4:1-3,9b).
3. **A message of salvation and grace or condemnation and judgment.** Jesus message was one of salvation, grace, and forgiveness while the message of Jonah consisted of judgment with no word about grace or the possibility of repentance.
4. **Signs that confirmed the message or the word of the prophet alone.** Jesus backed up His message by a sufficient number of miracles as well as fulfilling prophecy. Jonah performed no miracles.
5. **People who had spiritual advantages compared to those who had none.** The message of Jesus came to the Jews who were in an advantageous position having the word of God already given to them. Jonah addressed a group of people who had none of the tradition and history of the Jews.

The people of Nineveh received Jonah's prophetic message of doom and repented. Yet with all the advantages the Jews had they rejected Jesus' message of grace and forgiveness. This is why they will condemn the evil generation that rejected Jesus.

**Matt. 12:42** The Queen of the South will rise up against this generation in the judgment and she will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, one greater than Solomon is here.

**The Queen of the South will rise up in judgment against this generation** Another Gentile is highlighted by Matthew.

**and she will condemn it** Like Nineveh the Queen of Sheba will testify against this generation.

**because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,** She came to Solomon rather than Solomon coming to her.

**and behold, one greater than Solomon is here.** One who is greater than the great king.

We can also make a comparison between the Queen of Sheba and the people of Jesus' day.

1. **Truth came to them versus seeking the truth.** Jesus came to His own (John 1:12) as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The word of God was right there in their presence. On the other hand, the Queen of Sheba endured the hardships of a long journey (approximately 1,200 miles) to hear the wisdom of Solomon.
2. **A wise king or the wisest King.** The Queen of Sheba came to listen to a wise man who taught the wisdom of God. The people in Jesus' day had God Himself teach them the truth.
3. **Giving or Taking.** The Queen of Sheba gave a large part of her wealth to Solomon as a reflection of her thankfulness for what she learned. The people of Jesus' day gave Him nothing, rather they took His life.
4. **Spiritual advantages or disadvantages.** Like the people of Nineveh, the Queen of Sheba was in a spiritually disadvantaged state, yet she found her way to Solomon. With all the advantages the Jews had, including the Scripture in front of them, they still refused to accept Jesus and His message.
5. **Invitation versus own initiative.** The people of Jesus' day were invited to come to Him and believe His message. There is no indication that the Queen of Sheba was invited to visit Solomon.
6. **Objective evidence or simple testimony.** He backed up His claims with miracles and fulfilled prophecy.

With all this going for them, the people of Jesus refused to believe in Him while the Queen of Sheba came and listened to the message of Solomon.

#### **THE RETURN OF THE EVIL SPIRIT (12:43-45)**

Jesus gives a parable of an evil spirit returning to where it came from.

**Matt. 12:43** Now when the unclean spirit comes out from the man, it passes through the waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it.

**Now when the unclean spirit comes out from the man,** Refers to a demon spirit that has been exorcised.

**it passes through the waterless places, seeking rest,** What are the waterless places

**and does not find it.** This statement seems to prove that a demon *cannot* enter into anyone he desires.

**Matt. 12:44** Then it says, 'I will return into my house from where I came out.' And when it comes it will find it unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.'

**Note on variant readings:** Some manuscripts read *the house* instead of *it*. A few manuscripts including *Sinaiticus* have *and* before *swept clean*.

**Then it says, 'I will return into my house from where I came out.' And when it comes it will find it unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.'** It is not the same as when it left it.

**Matt. 12:45** Then it goes, and takes along with it seven spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last condition of that man becomes worst than the first. This is the way it will be with this evil generation.

**Then it goes, and takes along with it seven spirits more evil than itself,** More evil spirits join.

**and they go in and live there** They live with the man.

**and the last condition of that man becomes worst than the first. This is the way it will be with this evil generation.** The nation will be worse off because of their rejection of Jesus.

### JESUS AND HIS FAMILY (12:46-50)

The family of Jesus wants to see Him. Jesus responds by telling the multitudes who His true family is.

**Matt. 12:46** While he was still speaking to the crowd, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him.

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *seeking to speak with Him*, a couple of manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *of His disciples*.

**While he was still speaking to the crowd,** This now occurs as He is speaking.

**behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him.** His mother, brothers, and sisters will come up again in 13:56. Notice no father.

**Matt. 12:47** And a certain one said to him, “Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you.”

**Note on a textual variant:** Some manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) do not have this verse.

**And a certain one said to him, “Behold Your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you.”** Now Jesus is told of His family waiting for Him.

**Matt. 12:48** He answered and said to the one speaking to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?”

**Note on a variant reading:** *Codex Vaticanus* reads *brothers* not *My brothers*.

**He answered and said to the one speaking to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?”** Who is His real family?

**Matt. 12:49** And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Behold, my mother and my brothers.

**Note on a variant reading:** A couple of manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) do not have *His*.

**And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Behold, my mother and my brothers.** Believers have closer ties than blood relatives.

**Matt. 12:50** For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he himself is my brother and my sister and my mother.”

**Note on a variant reading:** Instead of *whoever does* or *may do* one manuscript reads *is doing*. Some manuscripts read *will do*.

**For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he himself is my brother and my sister and my mother.”** The family of God is a spiritual family, not based upon physical relationships.

## SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 12

Jesus promised rest to all those who would come to Him (11:28-30). In the first section (vss. 1-14) He reveals that those who receive Him and His teaching will be free of man-made regulations (like those imposed for the Sabbath). On a particular Sabbath His hungry disciples picked a few heads of grains while walking through the grain fields. The Pharisees, who were watching them closely, blamed Jesus for His disciples violation of the Sabbath traditions. Jesus went through a point by point rejection of their argument declaring Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. Indeed, on the Sabbath He heals a man with a shriveled hand. He reasons that if they could rescue a sheep who had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, it is much more important to help a man in need. The reaction of the Pharisees was to form a plot to put Him to death.



Though Jesus performed this and other great miracles, it was not His desire to be known merely as a miracle worker. As the next section of Matthew reveals (15-21) Jesus is the Chosen Servant who is humble in nature.

The next section (22-37) finds another needy person brought to Jesus—a demon-possessed man who could not see or speak. Jesus performed a triple miracle on him causing the people to ask aloud if He indeed was the Messiah. The Pharisees gave their authoritative answer—not only was Jesus not the Messiah, His power to drive out the demons came from the ruler of the demons. Jesus responded by showing the absurdity of their argument and warned them and others of committing the unpardonable sin—the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

We find the Pharisees representing the denunciation of Jesus (vs. 38-45) and in partnership with the scribes, they asked Jesus to show them a sign. Jesus told them the only sign they would receive would be that of the prophet Jonah—Jesus' resurrection from the dead on the third day. Jesus went to say that the people of Nineveh will condemn these religious leaders on the day of judgment seeing that they repented as a result of Jonah's preaching—one who is less in stature than the person they are plotting to kill.

Like the man with the evil spirit who later becomes possessed with seven other spirits, the Jewish people are descending further into condemnation by following the lead of the scribes and Pharisees in renouncing Jesus.

The final part of this chapter deals with the attempt of his mother and brothers to see Him. This gives Jesus the occasion to reveal who His genuine family is—those who do the will of God.