

Matthew 12

We have seen in the previous chapters how Jesus had many critics, especially the Scribes and the Pharisees. In this chapter we can see how Jesus deals with the religious leaders of the day. He was at peace in every storm that He encountered. Often, He calmed the sea, but disturbed the Scribes and Pharisees.

We will find the same problems in our lives today, because what we are trying to do in the Charismatic churches cuts across some of the more traditional forms of worship and authority. There are some traditions that are fine, being baptised in water and being born again by the Holy Spirit. Sharing in the Holy Communion, breaking of bread, sharing in the teachings of Jesus and the early disciples, fellowshiping and praying together are all part of real traditions.

The Pharisees were looking to Jesus to comply with the Mosaic law; every time that Jesus did something outside of the law, He was criticised by them. And yet He had come to fulfil the very Law that they were trying to follow.

Matthew 5 v 17-20

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

He came to do perfectly what man had failed to do. We cannot satisfy the requirements of the Law except in and through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught, not only in words, but in His works, that God's Law is actually love at work (LAW). We cannot keep the Ten Commandments however hard we try. Jesus came to fulfil the Law on behalf of His Father and in our place.

Galatians 5 v 22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Paul teaches in the letter to the Galatians that the difference between the Law and God's grace. He says that at all times we are to walk by and be led by the Holy Spirit. As we do this, we also bring the Law to fruition.

Matthew 12 v 1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

God instituted the Sabbath; it means day of rest, firstly for His sake, then for ours. He is the Lord of the Sabbath, it's His day, but then so is every day His day. Jesus then reminds the critics that even the priests were allowed to eat the consecrated bread on the Sabbath. They were working on the Sabbath and God didn't mind! Every day should be a day of rest for us. One day a week is not enough, the spirit of the Sabbath is that we should come together on Sundays to worship Him, but it has a much wider implication. The day of rest has to do with being aware of God every day of our lives.

Matthew 11 v 28

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Hebrews 3 v 12-18

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?"

Hebrews 4 v 1-11

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this passage, "They shall not enter My rest." Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

The previous two scriptures in Hebrews give us a glimpse of the true meaning of a rest day.

Hebrews 6 v 1-3

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.

There is encouragement in the last scripture, to repent from dead works, our own efforts and to have faith towards God. There doesn't seem to be much point in being anxious for six days a week only to try to worship God in Spirit and truth on Sundays!

2 Peter 3 v 8

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

The Sabbath day may well be very practical and I believe, should be Sunday. We should come together as God's family to praise and worship Him as a whole family, but there is more to it than meets the eye!

Matthew 12 v 9-21

Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him. But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to tell who He was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. "He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. "A battered reed He will not break off, And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory. "And in His name the Gentiles will hope."

Jesus has gone from the grain fields into the Synagogue, the home ground of the Pharisees. He answers their questions and heals the man with the withered hand; this was the final straw and so the Pharisees get together to decide how they can destroy Him. Jesus leaves the Synagogue in peace, to allow the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah to be fulfilled.

Isaiah 42 v 1-3

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. "He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. "A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.

The promise is that the Lord will not quarrel or argue with the Pharisees, but that He will bring Justice and hope to the Gentiles.

There are three reflections of the names given to Jesus in Matthew 12:

- 1 The Son of David
- 2 The Servant
- 3 The Son of man

Matthew sees these titles as one and the same person, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 12 v 22-32

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

The preceding passage is a very difficult segment of scripture. We see how that after Jesus heals the blind and dumb man, the crowds suggest that Jesus might be the Son of David. The Pharisees then accuse Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons, another name for Satan. This accusation against the Holy Spirit is called blasphemy. The sin was not so much against Jesus but the Holy Spirit. Verse 32 is clear on this matter. We may speak against Jesus and be forgiven, but we cannot speak against the Holy Spirit and be forgiven. The sin of blasphemy is committed by unbelievers usually out of ignorance or the influence of the evil spirits employed by Satan. Unbelievers may also resist the Holy Spirit. That is not blasphemy; simply refusing to receive the Lord is foolish, but not unforgiveable. Believers can grieve or quench the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and ended up dead! But these things are not blasphemy, neither is swearing. They do bear their own fruit, however.

1 Timothy 1:12-13

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief...

Jesus highlights another Kingdom principle in speaking about a kingdom divided. Disunity is not Kingdom living, we are called to be separate from the world, in it but not of it.

Ephesians 4:3

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

We are entreated to maintain the peace. This principle is an indicator for us as to whether we are living a Kingdom lifestyle or a worldly one!

In Matthew 12 v 30 as quoted earlier Jesus reminds us that if we are not for Him, then we are against Him. We scatter or divide rather than gather with Him. To be for Him is to walk in harmony with the Holy Spirit and with one another.

Matthew 12 v 33-37

"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. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

We read, then about the importance of how we speak and what we say. There is going to be a time when I shall be reminded about the words that I have spoken. That is also the work of the Holy Spirit, to refine my heart and mind. I am to bring forth good fruit if I am filled with the treasure of the Lord's Spirit. I am to pay attention to myself and make the necessary adjustments in my life.

Matthew 12 v 38-42

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

Then there is the question of people looking for signs; it is signs that are in keeping with Gods word that we should be seeking. They are the signs of righteousness. The fruits of the Spirit are the results of being a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. The Lord says in these verses that to crave for the signs without the fruits is to commit adultery. To commit Spiritual adultery is to be faithful to the flesh and to be unfaithful to God's words and ways.

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These Bible notes have been provided as a resource by Peacemakers International. They were produced by Dennis Marshall who founded our organisation, about which you can find more information at http://www.peacemakers-international.com/who_we_are/

*SCF- Stevenage Christian Fellowship where Dennis Marshall was Pastor

Matthew 12 v 43-45

"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

To become a spiritual adulterer is to ignore the commands of God and to dry up inside. Jesus warns that dryness of spirit attracts evil intentions, spirits looking for a dry place to dwell. An adulterous spirit will grieve and quench the Holy Spirit within us.

Matthew 12 v 46-50

While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

He concludes this fascinating chapter with a definition of who His true relatives are. Luke records the same point.

Luke 8 v 19-21

And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Jesus gives priority to those who do His Father's will. Faithfulness is one of the moral characteristics of our heavenly father.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate our hearts and our minds and also stir up the life of god that dwells within us.