

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Week Fourteen**  
**Matthew 12:22-50**

**Day One**

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." 25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.

v. 22 – There was nothing too hard for Jesus then and there isn't now. He can do anything. Note that the man was blind and mute not due to a physical problem but due to a demonic oppression. **I wonder how many situations I have not been able to help or cure because I had the wrong diagnosis?** The demon actually had the power to take away the man's ability to see and speak. I usually think of demons giving people mental or emotional problems, but not physical ailments. Note too that Matthew said that Jesus "healed" the man by casting out the demon so the man could see and talk. It wasn't that Jesus simply reversed the man's infirmities; He did so by casting out a demon. **I want that kind of effectiveness to touch the source of someone's problems, don't you?**

v. 23 – The people were duly impressed, yet they too had so many preconceived notions of what the "Son of David" would do and be like that they could not see clearly, just like John the Baptist. They asked the right question, but it seems like Jesus' detractors interrupted the process so they could not get an answer. When you seek the Lord for answers, you must really seek Him and not be distracted or give up. Notice the words I have emphasized in the following verses:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you **call out** for insight and **cry aloud** for understanding, and if you **look for it** as for silver and **search for it** as for hidden treasure, **then** you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:1-5, emphasis added).

**Are you seriously or casually seeking the Lord for answers and guidance that you need?** In some sense, Jesus alluded to this when He said that you must violently – actively and aggressively – seek the kingdom of God (see Matthew 11:12). You cannot be passive and receive what you need from God.

v. 24 – The Pharisees had concluded that Jesus was able to cast demons out because He was using some kind of demonic assistance. They accused Jesus of being in league with the devil! They accused the righteous Son of God of being a partner with the prince of darkness, that rebellious angel who was cast from God's presence. This was truly blasphemous, attributing the goodness of God to the evil one.

v. 25 – Jesus knew their thoughts. How? He was the Son of God and knew men’s hearts. Yet once again we see that He did not take their insult personally, but rather turned their insult into a chance to teach those who would hear.

Notice once again that the leaders knew less than the people! Don’t ever think a leader is right just because he or she is the leader. Don’t discount what you know because an “expert” tells you otherwise.

## Day Two

26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

vs. 26&27 – Many Americans think that Abraham Lincoln first used these words in a speech during the American Civil War, but he borrowed them from the Bible. Jesus made a basic argument that if He did perform acts with the help of Satan, then Satan’s kingdom was divided against itself and could not stand. It was illogical to think that Satan, who had bound the man so he could not speak and see, would then turn against himself and his work to heal the man. That makes sense to me today but I’m sure many walked away still not knowing what to think about Jesus because the leaders had sown seeds of doubt.

Jesus had given authority to His disciples and sent them out to cast out demons as well. **Were the leaders insinuating that those people, their peers, were also in league with Satan?** Jesus said that the common people who were doing God’s work would judge the leaders of Israel, who were misjudging God’s work. Once again, we see that the people were wiser and more spiritual than the leaders. A title never makes anyone smarter or more spiritual than anyone else.

v. 28 – Jesus declared that the kingdom of God had come upon the people because of the authority He had over the demonic realm. The Jews were hoping to establish a natural kingdom that would have power and authority over the kingdoms of the earth, just like David and Solomon once had. Jesus came, however, to establish a spiritual Kingdom that would have power and authority over the kingdom of darkness, which in reality ruled the kingdoms of the earth.

If Jesus had this kind of power over evil, then it could only mean that God the Father had given Him this power to establish God’s rule and government. If Jesus was establishing the Kingdom, then every Jew owed allegiance and obedience to that Kingdom! The resistance of the leaders was tantamount to treason and rebellion against the King!

v. 29 – Jesus was able to bind and cast out demonic forces because He had superior power to them. Since man did not (and does not) have this kind of power over evil, then this could only mean that Jesus was God! He also had the capability of giving this same power to His followers, another indication that He was (and is) God. Paul understood this and wrote to the early church about the supremacy of Christ:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:18-23).

**Do you realize that there is a demonic force that inhabits the kingdom of darkness? Do you have this kind of authority over evil?** If you are part of God's kingdom, then authority over evil can be yours. I did not say you have supremacy over evil; only God has that. Yet you should exhibit some measure of power to prove that you are indeed part of God's kingdom.

### Day Three

30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. 33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

v. 30 – One cannot be neutral where Jesus is concerned. To ignore Him is to be against Him. The leaders were not with Him, and they did indeed ultimately scatter, dissipating and wasting their leadership energies on futile priorities. Eventually, God scattered them all when Jerusalem fell to the Romans 40 years later.

vs. 31&32 – The leaders did indeed blaspheme when they attributed the good works of the Holy Spirit, here the healing of the mute and blind man, to the devil. Jesus made an ominous statement when He indicated that this kind of blasphemy would not be forgiven. Why? The sinner who perpetrates such evil cannot be set free because they deny the very work that needs to take place for their own salvation – the work of the Spirit. If they resist the work of the Spirit and attribute it to evil, they cannot possibly come to a knowledge of the truth. They will resist the very Presence that could and would set them free:

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

v. 33 – This analogy supports what Jesus just said: A bad tree cannot produce good fruit; it will always be bad. A person who thinks and says that the Spirit is evil cannot ever think He is good. There are many who have doubted that Jesus was the Son of God, but the work of the Spirit in their life convicted them that this was wrong.

I formerly read these verses and thought it was a bit “hard” on God’s part not to forgive this sin since He forgives all others. I have come to see that it is the person’s fault that this is so, for they reject the assistance that God sends to help them repent! They cannot fulfill the first step of entering the Kingdom (repentance) when they reject the Spirit’s work.

I have had people come to me concerned that they had committed “the unpardonable sin.” I would tell them that the very fact that they were concerned that they had was an indication that they had not. A person who blasphemes the Spirit is so hardened against God that they are not open or sensitive to the fact that they have done anything evil!

#### Day Four

34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

vs. 34&35 – I guess Jesus didn’t read the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People!* He called the Pharisees a bunch of snakes, and that is what they truly were. They were devious, dishonest and underhanded in their approach to the truth and Jesus’ ministry. In the previous verse, Jesus said that a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Since the Pharisees were evil, they could not possibly say anything good.

Jesus said we speak an overflow of what is in the heart. **Did you ever say something and then try to excuse it by explaining, “I didn’t mean to say that!”?** That may be true but you spoke what *was* in your heart but you didn’t plan on making it public. You just couldn’t help it, because the mouth speaks what the heart contains. So the solution to that problem isn’t just watching your words but dealing with your heart! When I say something “evil,” I must immediately go to my heart to check the source of what I said. **Is God dealing with your heart as you stumble over what you say?**

v. 36 – The context here is careless words spoken about the Lord. I doubt if I will have to account for the things I yelled while at a baseball or football game! Remember, one of the rules of biblical interpretation is the context in which the verse or passage is found. Here the context is what the Pharisees said about Jesus’ healing ministry, which they

attributed to the devil. When you judge with your words the work that God is doing, you will be held accountable, unless of course you repent and ask God to forgive you. **Do you need to ask God's forgiveness for what you've said or a verbal judgment you have made?**

v. 37 – Words are important. You will either be acquitted or judged by them. I am not sure we understand this concept of just how powerful words are. Here are a few reminders from other parts of the Word. **Is God talking to you about your words? How so and how can you use them more effectively? At this point in time, will your words acquit or condemn you?**

From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs 18:20-21).

Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:5-8).

### Day Five

38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." 39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

v. 38 – The Pharisees were undaunted by Jesus' assault on their character and spirituality. Next they wanted a sign, something beyond the normal that would confirm in their mind that Jesus was the One. John the Baptist did not ask for a sign; John simply wanted Jesus to reaffirm the truth of who He was. The Pharisees did not believe what Jesus said, so they wanted a sign, promising then at least to consider believing but only after they received a sign.

There were already plenty of signs for the Pharisees to consider but they were mired in unbelief and, contrary to what they thought, no sign at that point would have stimulated their belief in Jesus.

v. 39 – Jesus responded with another scathing attack, referring to those who asked for a sign as a wicked and adulterous generation. The Pharisees asked for the same thing that the devil requested in Matthew 4. He wanted Jesus to put on a show and throw Himself

from the pinnacle of the Temple. Jesus refused to perform on demand for the devil and He refused the same request from the Pharisees.

Jesus performed His signs and wonders to meet the needs of people, not to provide documentation for those who were intent on judging His performance. Jesus told them that there would be a significant sign and called it the sign of the prophet Jonah, veiling what He meant to hide it from unbelieving eyes and hearts. He explained the meaning of this sign in the next few verses.

**Does it make sense that an unbelieving heart requires a sign and that the sign simply allows control to remain with the observer?** By that I mean the one beholding the so-called sign can still accept or reject the sign, still decide whether the sign is “enough” to warrant belief. God is not averse to providing a sign, but it is one of His choosing. Let’s read on.

vs. 40&41 – Of course the sign of Jonah was a reference to Jesus’ impending death and resurrection. That is the sign that the unbelieving generation would receive and, true to form, they would reject that sign. Jesus offers the same sign to our generation and has to every generation since He came, the sign of His resurrection.

God raised Jesus from the dead. If God raises the dead, He can do whatever He promises. If you are looking for a sign to confirm God’s power and authority, that is the sign that God provides. If you are looking for a sign that God is with you, then that is the sign. If you are looking for a sign that God can do what He promised He would do for you, then that is the sign. There is no other, and you should require no other.

If God can raise the dead, He can do anything. **Do you act like He can do anything?**

### Day Six

42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. 43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

v. 42 – Jesus referred to the people of Nineveh from Jonah’s story and now the Queen of Sheba as though they were actual events in history, which they were. My point is that some would question the reliability of the Bible. Jesus, who was always saying “I tell you the truth,” could not tell us anything but the truth and He endorsed the reliability of the Scriptures. Plus Jesus was referring to events that were well-known and familiar to His Jewish listeners. Remember that Matthew was writing primarily to Jews to prove that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus told the Jews that the Gentile Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba would rise up and condemn the Jews because of how they responded to Jesus and His message. That would have shocked the Jewish listener and reader because of how they felt about Gentiles. Jews felt they “owned” God and had cornered the God market, so to speak. Here Jesus was telling them that the Gentiles would judge them in regards to their treatment of God in the person of Jesus.

v. 43 – Jesus warned the Jews that they were in danger of spiritual calamity because of how they treated and rejected Him. Jesus was doing great and powerful things among them and things seemed to be well for the people of Israel. If they did not repent, however, their latter spiritual condition would be worse than the one they found themselves in when Jesus first started to minister. The problem was that most of Israel didn’t see that they had a spiritual problem in the first place!

I continue to be impressed with how Jesus talked and what He said. He spoke with certainty and authority because He was God. He knew things, both past, present and future, that no prophet could know. He knew because of His divine perspective. He spoke with confidence that the Queen of Sheba would condemn the Jews. That indicated that Jesus knew the Queen and how she would act. Only God could know that!

He spoke with confidence as to the future spiritual condition of the Jews. Yes, there were some prophets who spoke like that, but not concerning eternal judgment, evil spirits and people, like the Queen of Sheba and the residents of Nineveh, who had long been dead and gone.

I formerly believed that the gospels were a bit vague as to who Jesus was, since it became clear only in time that He was the Son of God. That was wrong thinking on my part. Matthew was clear when he wrote the gospel that Jesus was divine and he was writing to communicate this to his fellow Jews.

### Day Seven

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to 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."

v. 46 – Jesus was having an intense confrontation with the Pharisees while His family was nearby, wanting to speak with Him. Perhaps they wanted to ask Him to tone down His rhetoric. In Mark 3, we see that they had come because they thought He had lost His senses! First, John the Baptist questioned Jesus, then He was accused of being a partner of Satan and finally His family sought an audience to take Him home. If this all happened in the same day, that would make it a very tough day indeed. Yet Jesus

indicated that persecution is part of following God's will at times. **How do you handle persecution? Have you ever had it worse than Jesus did on this particular day?**

vs. 47-50 – Someone informed Jesus that He had company and perhaps He knew why they had come, which was to discourage His work. So He asked a question as to who His true family was. The family and heritage was everything to a Jew, but first Jesus confronted the Jews' attachment to the Old Testament system and then He confronted a Jew's loyalty to family, which at times took precedent over loyalty to God.

Jesus was not denying that the people who came to see Him were truly His family. He was indicting that His highest loyalty and commitment was to God and those who were doing God's will. **How are you doing where your family is concerned? Are you free from your family ties, able to do what God has put in your heart to do? Are you putting pressure on your own family, demanding loyalty that only belongs to God?**

In many cultures, families expect their children to care for them and their extended family, which puts pressure on the children. I have never understood this pressure in light of what Paul wrote about parents saving for children and not the other way around. At the same time, many cultures do not have a government that can provide social services for those in need, so people must turn to family for help.

Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children (2 Corinthians 12:14).

The issue here is that you cannot put your family, or anything else for that matter, ahead of service to God. The Jews thought they had God's will all figured out, but Jesus came to show them that they did not. When He did, they got angry and plotted to kill Him. This was a classic case of killing the messenger when you don't like the message.