CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 12 — Lord of the Sabbath, Power Over Demons, and True Family

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 11 ended with one of the most beautiful invitations in the Bible.

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew Chapter 12 begins with a conflict over **rest**.

It begins with the **Sabbath**, the day of rest God gave to Israel.

The Pharisees had turned the Sabbath into a heavy burden.

They had added hundreds of rules about what could and could not be done.

When Jesus' hungry disciples picked grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees accused them.

When Jesus healed a man's hand on the Sabbath, they began to plot His death.

Jesus answered with a bold claim:

“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Then Matthew shows Jesus as the gentle Servant Isaiah promised.

He does not break a bruised reed.

He does not snuff out a smoldering wick.

Then the conflict grows sharper.

Jesus heals a man who is blind and mute.

The crowds wonder, **“Could this be the Son of David?”**

But the Pharisees say His power comes from the devil.

Jesus answers them with a serious warning about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

He tells them that words reveal the heart.

He refuses to give them a sign, except the sign of Jonah, which points to His death and resurrection.

He warns that an empty life, cleaned up but not filled with God, is in great danger.

Finally, Jesus' family comes looking for Him.

And Jesus points to His disciples and says:

“Here are My mother and My brothers.”

Matthew 12 is a turning point in the Gospel.

The opposition of the religious leaders becomes open and deadly.

From this point on, they are determined to destroy Him.

Matthew 12 therefore shows two great truths:

Jesus is greater than the Sabbath, the temple, Jonah, and Solomon.

And:

Everyone must decide whether they are with Him or against Him.

The central truth of Matthew 12 is:

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and the Spirit-filled Servant of God, greater than every institution and prophet, and every person must decide whether they will reject Him or join His true family by doing the Father's will.

I. THROUGH THE GRAINFIELDS

Matthew 12:1 — The Disciples Were Hungry

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.”

“At that time” connects this story to Jesus' invitation to rest.

Jesus and His disciples were walking through **grainfields** on the **Sabbath.**

The Sabbath was the seventh day, Saturday.

God commanded Israel to rest from work on that day.

The disciples were **hungry.**

They picked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate.

The Law of Moses allowed this.

A person could pick grain by hand from a neighbor's field to satisfy hunger.

They just could not use a sickle to harvest it.

Cross References

Mark 2:23

> One Sabbath day, Jesus was walking through some fields of grain. His followers began to pick some grain as they walked.

Luke 6:1

> One Sabbath day Jesus was walking through some fields of grain. His followers picked the heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them.

Deuteronomy 23:25

> When you go into your neighbor's field of grain, you may pick the heads of grain with your hands. But you must not use a sickle to cut your neighbor's grain.

Spiritual Principle

God's law made room for human need.

II. THE PHARISEES ACCUSE THE DISCIPLES

Matthew 12:2 — “What Is Unlawful”

“When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.’”

The Pharisees were watching.

They accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath.

God's law did not forbid picking a few heads of grain.

But the Pharisees had added their own rules.

They listed thirty-nine kinds of forbidden work.

In their eyes, picking grain was harvesting.

Rubbing it in the hands was threshing.

They had turned a day of rest into a day of rules.

Cross References

Exodus 20:10

> But the seventh day is a day of rest to honor the LORD your God. On that day no one may do any work.

Mark 2:24

> The Pharisees said to Jesus, “Why are Your followers doing what is not allowed on the Sabbath day?”

Exodus 34:21

> You must work for six days, but on the seventh day you must rest. Even during plowing time and harvest time you must rest.

Spiritual Warning

Man-made rules can bury the true meaning of God's commands.

III. WHAT DAVID DID

Matthew 12:3 — When He Was Hungry

“Jesus replied, ‘Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?’”

Jesus answered the Pharisees from Scripture.

“Haven't you read?”

This was a sharp question.

The Pharisees prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures.

Jesus reminded them of David.

David was running from King Saul.

He and his men were hungry.

Cross References

Mark 2:25

> Jesus answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and those with him were hungry and needed food?”

Luke 6:3

> Jesus answered, “Have you not read what David did when he and those with him were hungry?”

1 Samuel 21:1

> David went to Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech was afraid when he met David.

Spiritual Principle

Scripture must be read as a whole, not twisted to support our rules.

IV. THE CONSECRATED BREAD

Matthew 12:4 — Lawful Only for the Priests

“He entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread—which was lawful only for the priests to eat.”

In the tabernacle, twelve loaves of consecrated bread were placed before the LORD each week.

When they were replaced, only the priests were allowed to eat the old loaves.

But when David and his men were hungry, the priest gave them this holy bread.

God did not condemn David.

Human need was more important than the ceremony.

If David, Israel's king, could do this, how much more could the Son of David allow His disciples to eat grain?

Cross References

1 Samuel 21:6

> So the priest gave David the holy bread, because there was no other bread there. It was the bread that had been placed before the LORD.

Leviticus 24:9

> The bread will belong to Aaron and his sons. They must eat it in a holy place, because it is a very holy part of the offerings to the LORD.

Mark 2:26

> He went into God's house when Abiathar was high priest and ate the holy bread, which only priests are allowed to eat. And he gave some to those who were with him.

Spiritual Principle

God's laws were given to serve people, not to harm them.

V. THE PRIESTS WORK ON THE SABBATH

Matthew 12:5 — Yet They Are Innocent

“Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are innocent?”

Jesus gave a second example.

The priests worked every Sabbath.

They offered sacrifices.

They replaced the holy bread.

They did more work on the Sabbath than on other days.

Yet they were innocent.

Why?

Because their work was done in service to God in the temple.

The temple's work was more important than the Sabbath rest.

Cross References

Numbers 28:9

> On the Sabbath day you must offer two male lambs a year old that have nothing wrong with them.

John 7:22

> Moses gave you circumcision... and you circumcise a child even on the Sabbath day.

Leviticus 24:8

> Every Sabbath day Aaron will put the bread in order before the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

Serving God and meeting real needs honor the Sabbath rather than break it.

VI. SOMETHING GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE

Matthew 12:6 — Here

“I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.”

This was an astonishing claim.

The temple was the holiest place in Israel.

It was the place where God's presence dwelled.

But Jesus said something greater was here.

If the priests could serve in the temple on the Sabbath, then the disciples could serve the One who is greater than the temple.

Jesus Himself is the true dwelling place of God.

Cross References

Matthew 12:41

> On the Judgment Day the people from Nineveh will stand up with the people who live now, and they will show that you are guilty. When Jonah preached to them, they changed their hearts and lives. And look, someone greater than Jonah is here.

John 2:19

> Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again.”

Haggai 2:9

> “The glory of this new temple will be greater than the glory of the first one,” says the LORD who commands armies. “And in this place I will give peace.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is greater than every holy place.

Key Truth

In Jesus, God came to dwell with people in a way the temple only pictured.

VII. MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE

Matthew 12:7 — Condemning the Innocent

“If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”

For the second time in Matthew, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6.

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

The Pharisees knew the words.

But they did not know what they meant.

If they had understood God's heart, they would have shown mercy to hungry men.

Instead, they condemned the innocent.

Their rules had made them harsh.

Cross References

Hosea 6:6

> I want your faithful love more than your sacrifices. I want you to know Me more than I want your burnt offerings.

Matthew 9:13

> Go and learn what this means: “I want faithful love more than I want animal sacrifices.” I did not come to call good people, but sinners.

1 Samuel 15:22

> Obeying is better than offering sacrifices. Listening to the LORD is better than offering the fat of rams.

Spiritual Principle

Knowing Scripture without knowing God's heart leads to harshness.

VIII. LORD OF THE SABBATH

Matthew 12:8 — The Son of Man

“For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

This is the climax of the argument.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

God made the Sabbath.

Only God is Lord of it.

Jesus was claiming to be that Lord.

He has the authority to say what the Sabbath means and how it should be kept.

And the Sabbath points to Him.

He is the true rest God promised.

Cross References

Mark 2:28

> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.

Luke 6:5

> Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath day.”

Exodus 20:8

> Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is Lord over everything, including the day of rest.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Sabbath was a picture of rest; Jesus is the rest it pictured.

IX. INTO THE SYNAGOGUE

Matthew 12:9 — Going On from There

“Going on from there, He entered their synagogue,”

Jesus went into their synagogue.

Notice the word their.

This was the place where the Pharisees had influence.

Jesus did not avoid conflict.

He went where people gathered to worship.

Cross References

Mark 3:1

> Another time when Jesus went into a synagogue, a man with a crippled hand was there.

Luke 6:6

> On another Sabbath day Jesus went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man with a crippled right hand was there.

Luke 4:16

> Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had grown up. On the Sabbath day He went to the synagogue, as He always did.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus faithfully worshiped with God's people, even among His critics.

X. A MAN WITH A SHRIVELED HAND

Matthew 12:10 — Looking for a Reason to Accuse

“and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked Him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’”

A man with a shriveled hand was there.

Luke tells us it was his right hand.

This may have kept him from working.

The Pharisees were not concerned about the man.

They were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus.

They asked a trap question.

“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

Their rules allowed healing on the Sabbath only if a life was in danger.

This man's hand was not an emergency.

So they expected Jesus to break their rule.

Cross References

Mark 3:2

> Some people watched Jesus closely to see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath day. They wanted to accuse Him.

Luke 6:7

> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were watching closely to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath day so they could accuse Him.

Luke 13:14

> The synagogue leader was angry because Jesus healed on the Sabbath day. He said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come to be healed on one of those days, and not on the Sabbath day.”

Spiritual Warning

Religion without love uses people's suffering as a weapon.

XI. A SHEEP IN A PIT

Matthew 12:11 — Would You Not Lift It Out?

“He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not lift it out?’”

Jesus answered with a question.

If a sheep fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn't you lift it out?

Of course they would.

Even their own rules allowed helping an animal in trouble.

The Law of Moses told Israel to help an animal that had fallen, even one that belonged to an enemy.

Cross References

Luke 14:5

> Jesus said to them, “If your son or your ox falls into a well on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you pull him out right away?”

Deuteronomy 22:4

> If you see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen on the road, don't ignore it. Help him lift it up.

Exodus 23:5

> If you see the donkey of someone who hates you lying under its load, don't leave it there. You must help him with it.

Spiritual Principle

Common sense and compassion should guide how we apply God's commands.

XII. MORE VALUABLE THAN A SHEEP

Matthew 12:12 — Lawful to Do Good

“How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Jesus made His point.

If they would help a sheep, how much more should they help a person?

People are made in God's image.

They are worth far more than animals.

Then Jesus gave a clear principle.

“It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

The Sabbath was never meant to stop people from doing good.

It was made to bring life, rest, and blessing.

Cross References

Luke 14:5

> Jesus said to them, “If your son or your ox falls into a well on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you pull him out right away?”

Mark 3:4

> Then Jesus asked them, “Which is right on the Sabbath day: to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?” But they said nothing.

Matthew 6:26

> Look at the birds in the air. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, but your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are worth much more than they are.

Spiritual Principle

It is always right to do good.

Key Truth

The Pharisees valued their rules more than people.

Jesus valued people more than rules.

XIII. STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND

Matthew 12:13 — Completely Restored

“Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ So he stretched it out, and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.”

Jesus spoke to the man.

“Stretch out your hand.”

This was a command the man could not obey on his own.

His hand was shriveled.

But when he obeyed in faith, the power came.

His hand was completely restored.

Just as sound as the other.

Notice that Jesus did not do any “work.”

He did not touch the man.

He did not use any medicine.

He only spoke.

The Pharisees could not even accuse Him of breaking their own rules.

Cross References

Mark 3:5

> Jesus was angry as He looked at the people, and He felt very sad because they were stubborn. Then He said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” The man held out his hand, and it was healed.

Luke 6:10

> Jesus looked around at all of them and said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” The man held out his hand, and it was healed.

1 Kings 13:6

> So the man of God prayed to the LORD, and the king's hand was healed. It became as it was before.

Spiritual Principle

When Jesus commands, He gives the power to obey.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Obey Jesus' word, even when it seems impossible, and His power will meet you there.

XIV. THEY PLOTTED TO KILL HIM

Matthew 12:14 — The Pharisees Went Out

“But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.”

This is a turning point in Matthew.

A man had just been healed.

The Pharisees should have rejoiced.

Instead, they plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Think about the irony.

They were angry that Jesus did good on the Sabbath.

So on the same Sabbath they planned murder.

Their hearts were hard and full of hatred.

Cross References

Mark 3:6

> Then the Pharisees left and began making plans with the Herodians about a way to kill Jesus.

John 5:18

> This made the Jews try even harder to kill Him. He was not only breaking the Sabbath day law, but He was also saying that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 11:53

> So from that day they started planning to kill Jesus.

Spiritual Warning

A hard heart can see God's goodness and respond with hatred.

XV. JESUS WITHDREW

Matthew 12:15 — He Healed Them All

“Aware of this, Jesus withdrew. Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them all.”

Jesus knew about their plot.

He withdrew.

This was not fear.

His time to die had not yet come.

He would go to the cross at the right time, the Father's time.

But even as He withdrew, large crowds followed Him.

And He healed them all.

The Pharisees were planning death.

Jesus was giving life.

Cross References

Mark 3:7

> Jesus left with His followers for the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed Him.

Matthew 4:23

> Jesus went everywhere in Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, telling the good news about the kingdom, and healing all the people's diseases and sicknesses.

Isaiah 53:4

> Surely He took our sicknesses and carried our pain.

Spiritual Principle

Opposition cannot stop Jesus' compassion.

XVI. DO NOT TELL OTHERS

Matthew 12:16 — A Warning

“He warned them not to tell others about Him.”

Again, Jesus told people not to spread the news.

He was not seeking fame.

He did not want crowds stirred up with wrong ideas about the Messiah.

He was not coming as a political hero.

He was coming as a humble Servant.

Cross References

Mark 3:12

> But Jesus strongly warned them not to tell who He was.

Matthew 8:4

> Then Jesus said to him, “Don't tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priest.”

Mark 1:44

> “Don't tell anyone about this. But go and show yourself to the priest.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus did not seek attention; He sought to do the Father's will.

XVII. TO FULFILL ISAIAH

Matthew 12:17 — What Was Spoken

“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:”

Matthew explains Jesus' quiet, humble way.

It fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about the Servant of the LORD.

This is the longest Old Testament quotation in Matthew's Gospel.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:1

> Here is My Servant, the One I support. He is My Chosen One, and I am very pleased with Him. I have put My Spirit on Him.

Matthew 1:22

> All this happened to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet.

Matthew 4:14

> Jesus did this to make come true what the prophet Isaiah had said.

Spiritual Principle

Even Jesus' humility was foretold by God.

XVIII. MY SERVANT, MY BELOVED

Matthew 12:18 — My Spirit on Him

“Here is My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved in whom My soul delights. I will put My Spirit on Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations.”

God calls Jesus:

My servant.

Whom I have chosen.

My beloved.

In whom My soul delights.

These words echo what the Father said at Jesus' baptism.

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

“I will put My Spirit on Him.”

The Spirit came on Jesus at His baptism.

“He will proclaim justice to the nations.”

Not only to Israel.

To the nations.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:1

> Here is My Servant, the One I support. He is My Chosen One, and I am very pleased with Him. I have put My Spirit on Him, and He will bring justice to the nations.

Matthew 3:17

> And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with Him.”

Matthew 17:5

> A voice came from the cloud and said, “This is My Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with Him. Listen to Him!”

Spiritual Principle

The Father delights in His Son.

Key Truth

The Pharisees plotted against Him, but the Father delighted in Him.

XIX. HE WILL NOT QUARREL

Matthew 12:19 — No One Will Hear His Voice in the Streets

“He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets.”

Isaiah described the Servant's character.

He will not quarrel.

He does not fight to prove Himself.

He will not cry out.

He does not shout to draw attention.

No one will hear His voice in the streets.

He does not stir up crowds for His own glory.

This is exactly how Jesus responded to the Pharisees.

He withdrew quietly.

He told people not to make Him famous.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:2

> He will not cry out or shout. He will not speak loudly in the streets.

1 Peter 2:23

> When people insulted Him, He did not insult them back. When He suffered, He did not threaten. He trusted Himself to God, who judges fairly.

Isaiah 53:7

> He was treated badly, but He humbled Himself and did not open His mouth. He was like a lamb led to be killed.

Spiritual Principle

True strength does not need to shout.

XX. A BRUISED REED

Matthew 12:20 — A Smoldering Wick

“A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, till He brings justice to victory.”

This is one of the most tender descriptions of Jesus in the Bible.

A bruised reed is a stalk that is bent and damaged.

Most people would snap it and throw it away.

A smoldering wick is a lamp wick that is barely burning.

It smokes more than it shines.

Most people would pinch it out.

But Jesus does not break the bruised.

He does not put out the weak.

He is gentle with people who are hurting and barely holding on.

Yet He is not weak.

He will continue till He brings justice to victory.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:3

> He will not break a bent reed or put out a weak flame. He will faithfully bring justice.

Isaiah 61:1

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me... He has sent Me to heal those with broken hearts.

Ezekiel 34:16

> I will look for the lost, bring back those who wandered away, bandage the injured, and make the weak strong.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is gentle with the broken and the weak.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If you feel like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick, Jesus will not throw you away.

Application

Jesus is gentle with:

- The discouraged.
- The hurting.
- Those whose faith is weak.
- Those who have failed.
- Those who feel they have little left.

XXI. THE NATIONS WILL HOPE

Matthew 12:21 — In His Name

“In His name the nations will put their hope.”

The quotation ends with a wonderful promise.

The nations — the Gentiles — will put their hope in Him.

Israel's leaders were rejecting Jesus.

But people from every nation would find hope in His name.

This is the hope of the gospel for the whole world.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:4

> He will not lose hope or give up until He brings justice to the world. And people far away will trust His teachings.

Genesis 49:10

> The scepter will not leave Judah... until He comes to whom it belongs, and the nations will obey Him.

Romans 15:12

> And Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will come. He will rise up to rule over the nations, and the nations will put their hope in Him.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the hope of the whole world.

XXII. BLIND AND MUTE

Matthew 12:22 — He Could Talk and See

“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.”

A man was brought to Jesus.

He was demon-possessed.

He was blind.

He was mute.

He could not see.

He could not speak.

He was trapped in darkness and silence.

Jesus healed him.

Now he could talk and see.

Cross References

Luke 11:14

> Jesus was forcing out a demon that made a man unable to talk. When the demon came out, the man was able to speak, and the people were amazed.

Matthew 9:32

> As the two men were leaving, some people brought another man to Jesus. This man could not talk because he had a demon in him.

Isaiah 35:5

> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus frees people from every kind of darkness.

XXIII. COULD THIS BE THE SON OF DAVID?

Matthew 12:23 — The People Were Amazed

“All the people were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’”

The crowd was amazed.

They asked an important question.

“Could this be the Son of David?”

Son of David was a title for the Messiah.

The people were beginning to wonder if Jesus was the promised King.

But their question was hesitant.

In Greek, it is worded in a way that expects the answer, “Probably not, but maybe.”

They were close to the truth but not yet sure.

Cross References

Matthew 21:9

> The crowds in front of Him and those behind Him shouted, “Praise to the Son of David! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Matthew 9:27

> As Jesus was leaving there, two blind men followed Him. They cried out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

Isaiah 11:1

> A new branch will grow from the stump of Jesse's family. A Branch will grow from its roots and produce fruit.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' works lead people to ask who He really is.

XXIV. BY BEELZEBUL

Matthew 12:24 — The Pharisees' Accusation

“But the Pharisees said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man drives out demons.’”

The Pharisees heard the crowd.

They had to stop the people from believing.

They could not deny the miracle.

So they gave an evil explanation.

“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.”

Beelzebul was a name for Satan.

They said Jesus was working for the devil.

Notice how they refer to Jesus:

“This man.”

They would not even say His name.

Cross References

Mark 3:22

> The teachers of the law who came from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul in Him! He uses the power of the ruler of demons to force demons out of people.”

Luke 11:15

> But some of them said, “Jesus uses the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, to force demons out of people.”

Matthew 10:25

> If the head of the family is called Beelzebul, then the other members of the family will be called even worse names!

Spiritual Warning

A heart set against Jesus will twist even the clearest evidence.

XXV. A DIVIDED KINGDOM

Matthew 12:25 — Will Not Stand

“Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.’”

Jesus knew their thoughts.

Then He answered with simple logic.

A kingdom divided against itself will be ruined.

A city or household divided against itself will fall.

Everyone knows this is true.

Israel itself had been divided into two kingdoms after Solomon, and both eventually fell.

Cross References

Mark 3:24

> A kingdom that is divided against itself cannot continue.

Luke 11:17

> But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So He said to them, “Every kingdom that is divided against itself will be destroyed. And a family that is divided against itself will fall.”

1 Kings 12:16

> When all the Israelites saw that the new king would not listen to them, they said, “We have no share in David! We have no part in the son of Jesse!”

Spiritual Principle

Division destroys.

XXVI. SATAN AGAINST SATAN?

Matthew 12:26 — How Can His Kingdom Stand?

“If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?”

Jesus applied the principle.

If Satan were driving out his own demons, he would be fighting against himself.

His kingdom would fall apart.

The Pharisees' accusation made no sense.

Satan would not destroy his own work.

Cross References

Mark 3:26

> And if Satan is against himself and is divided, he cannot continue. That is the end of Satan.

Luke 11:18

> So if Satan is fighting against himself, how will his kingdom continue? You say that I use the power of Beelzebul to force out demons.

Revelation 12:9

> The giant dragon was thrown down. He is that old snake called the devil or Satan, who tricks the whole world.

Spiritual Principle

Truth exposes the foolishness of lies.

XXVII. YOUR PEOPLE WILL JUDGE YOU

Matthew 12:27 — By Whom Do They Drive Them Out?

“And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.”

Jesus asked another question.

Some Jewish exorcists also tried to drive out demons.

The Pharisees did not accuse them of working for Satan.

So why accuse Jesus?

They were being unfair.

Their own people would show that they were inconsistent.

Cross References

Luke 11:19

> But if I use the power of Beelzebul to force out demons, what power do your people use to force demons out? So your own people will prove that you are wrong.

Acts 19:13

> But some Jews who traveled around forcing out evil spirits also tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus.

Mark 9:38

> John said, “Teacher, we saw someone using Your name to force demons out of a person, and we told him to stop, because he does not belong to our group.”

Spiritual Principle

Unbelief often uses unfair standards.

XXVIII. THE KINGDOM HAS COME

Matthew 12:28 — By the Spirit of God

“But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Now Jesus gave the true explanation.

He drove out demons by the Spirit of God.

And that meant something wonderful.

The kingdom of God has come upon you.

God's rule was breaking into the world.

Satan's kingdom was being pushed back.

Every demon driven out was proof that the King had arrived.

Cross References

Luke 11:20

> But if I use the power of God to force out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Luke 17:21

> People will not say, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” because the kingdom of God is among you.

John 12:31

> Now is the time for the world to be judged. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' victory over demons proves that God's kingdom has come.

XXIX. TYING UP THE STRONG MAN

Matthew 12:29 — Plundering His House

“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 plunder his house.”

Jesus gave a picture.

A strong man guards his house.

No one can rob his house unless they first tie him up.

Satan is the strong man.

His possessions are the people he holds captive.

Jesus is the One stronger than Satan.

He has come into Satan's house.

He is tying up the strong man.

And He is setting the captives free.

Cross References

Mark 3:27

> No one can go into a strong man's house and steal his things unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can steal everything from the house.

Luke 11:21

> When a strong man with many weapons guards his own house, his possessions are safe.

Isaiah 49:24

> Can the wealth a soldier wins in war be taken away from him? Can a prisoner be rescued from a strong soldier?

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is stronger than Satan.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every person Jesus sets free is one more captive taken out of the enemy's house.

XXX. WITH ME OR AGAINST ME

Matthew 12:30 — Gather or Scatter

“Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters.”

Now Jesus calls for a decision.

There is no neutral ground.

With Me or against Me.

Gather or scatter.

In a war between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom, no one can stand on the sidelines.

Not choosing Jesus is choosing against Him.

Cross References

Luke 11:23

> Anyone who is not with Me is against Me. Anyone who does not work with Me is working against Me.

Mark 9:40

> Whoever is not against us is with us.

John 10:12

> The hired worker sees a wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them.

Spiritual Principle

There is no neutral position toward Jesus.

XXXI. BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT

Matthew 12:31 — Will Not Be Forgiven

“And so I tell you, every kind of sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”

Jesus began with a wonderful promise.

Every kind of sin and blasphemy can be forgiven.

God's grace is great.

No sin is too big for Him to forgive.

But then Jesus gave a serious warning.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

What is this sin?

It is what the Pharisees were doing.

They saw the clear work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus.

And they deliberately called it the work of the devil.

It is a hardened, final rejection of the Spirit's testimony about Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 3:28

> I tell you the truth, all sins that people do and all the things people say against God can be forgiven.

Luke 12:10

> Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

1 John 5:16

> If anyone sees a brother or sister sinning in a way that does not lead to death, he should pray, and God will give that person life... There is a sin that leads to death.

Spiritual Warning

Hardening your heart against the Holy Spirit is the most dangerous thing a person can do.

Key Truth

The sin is not unforgivable because God's grace is too small.

It is unforgivable because the person has rejected the only One who can lead them to forgiveness.

XXXII. IN THIS AGE OR THE AGE TO COME

Matthew 12:32 — Against the Son of Man

“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.”

Jesus explained further.

Speaking against the Son of Man can be forgiven.

Many people misunderstood Jesus at first.

Even His own brothers did not believe in Him for a time.

Paul once persecuted Jesus' followers.

All of them were forgiven when they repented.

But speaking against the Holy Spirit is different.

It means rejecting the Spirit's clear testimony that Jesus is the Son of God.

A person who does this has closed the only door to forgiveness.

A person who is worried that they have committed this sin almost certainly has not.

Their concern shows that the Spirit is still working in their heart.

Cross References

Luke 12:10

> Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Mark 3:29

> But anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. He is guilty of a sin that continues forever.

Hebrews 6:4

> Some people have once understood God's truth. They tasted the gift from heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

There is forgiveness for every sinner who comes to Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If you are afraid you have committed the unforgivable sin, your fear shows the Spirit is still speaking to you — come to Jesus.

XXXIII. A TREE AND ITS FRUIT

Matthew 12:33 — Recognized by Its Fruit

“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.”

Jesus returns to a picture He used in the Sermon on the Mount.

A tree is known by its fruit.

What is inside will come out.

The Pharisees' evil words showed what was in their hearts.

And Jesus' good works showed what was in His.

Cross References

Matthew 7:17

> In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Luke 6:43

> A good tree does not produce bad fruit, and a bad tree does not produce good fruit.

Galatians 5:22

> But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Spiritual Principle

What we are on the inside will show on the outside.

XXXIV. A BROOD OF VIPERS

Matthew 12:34 — The Mouth Speaks What Fills the Heart

“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

Jesus used the same strong words John the Baptist used.

“You brood of vipers.”

Vipers are poisonous snakes.

Their words were poison.

Then Jesus gave an important principle.

“The mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

Words are like a bucket dipped into a well.

Whatever is in the well comes up in the bucket.

Our words show what is inside us.

Cross References

Matthew 3:7

> Many Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized. When John saw them, he said, “You are snakes!”

Luke 6:45

> A good person has good things saved up in his heart, so he brings good things out of his heart... People speak the things that are in their hearts.

Matthew 23:33

> You are snakes! You are a family of poisonous snakes! How will you escape God's judgment?

Spiritual Principle

Our words reveal our hearts.

XXXV. GOOD AND EVIL TREASURE

Matthew 12:35 — Stored Up Inside

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”

The heart is like a storehouse.

What we put in will eventually come out.

A good person has good things stored inside.

So good things come out.

An evil person has evil stored inside.

So evil comes out.

If we want our words to change, our hearts must change.

Cross References

Luke 6:45

> A good person has good things saved up in his heart, so he brings good things out of his heart. But an evil person has evil things saved up in his heart, so he brings bad things out.

Proverbs 4:23

> Be very careful about what you think, because your thoughts control your life.

James 3:11

> Can fresh water and salty water flow from the same spring?

Spiritual Principle

Guard what goes into your heart, because it will come out of your mouth.

Application

To fill your heart with good things:

- Read and memorize God's Word.
- Pray every day.
- Choose what you watch and listen to carefully.
- Spend time with godly people.
- Think about what is true and good.
- Ask the Spirit to change your heart.

XXXVI. EVERY CARELESS WORD

Matthew 12:36 — On the Day of Judgment

“But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”

This is a sobering verse.

Everyone will give account for their words.

Not only the evil words.

Not only the angry words.

Every careless word.

Words spoken without thinking.

Words that hurt.

Words that were empty or useless.

God hears every word we say.

Cross References

Romans 14:12

> So each of us will have to explain to God about the things we have done.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

> God will judge everything people do, even the secret things, both good and bad.

James 3:6

> The tongue is like a fire. It is a world of evil among the parts of our body. The tongue spreads its evil through the whole body.

Spiritual Warning

Words matter to God.

XXXVII. BY YOUR WORDS

Matthew 12:37 — Acquitted or Condemned

“For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Our words show what is in our hearts.

So on the day of judgment, our words will be evidence.

This does not mean we are saved by saying the right things.

We are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

But a heart that has been saved will produce words that show it.

And a heart that rejects Christ will reveal itself through its words.

Cross References

Proverbs 18:21

> What you say can mean life or death. Those who love to talk will eat what they say.

James 3:2

> We all make many mistakes. If people never said anything wrong, they would be perfect and able to control their entire selves too.

Proverbs 13:3

> Those who are careful about what they say protect their lives. But whoever speaks without thinking will be ruined.

Spiritual Principle

Words are evidence of the heart.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your words are a window into your heart — and God sees through the window.

XXXVIII. SHOW US A SIGN

Matthew 12:38 — Teacher, We Want a Sign

“Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to Him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’”

The Pharisees and teachers of the law asked for a sign.

This was incredible.

Jesus had just healed a man who was blind, mute, and demon-possessed.

He had healed a shriveled hand.

He had done many miracles.

And they still wanted a sign.

They were not asking honestly.

They had already decided not to believe.

Cross References

Mark 8:11

> The Pharisees came to Jesus and began to ask Him questions. Hoping to trap Him, they asked Jesus for a sign from heaven.

Luke 11:16

> Others, wanting to test Jesus, asked Him to give them a sign from heaven.

John 6:30

> So the people asked, “What miracle will You do? If we see a miracle, we will believe You. What will You do?”

Spiritual Principle

No amount of evidence will convince a heart that refuses to believe.

XXXIX. THE SIGN OF JONAH

Matthew 12:39 — A Wicked Generation

“He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’”

Jesus called them a wicked and adulterous generation.

Adulterous here means spiritually unfaithful to God.

Like a wife who has turned away from her husband.

They would not receive a sign on demand.

They would receive only one sign:

The sign of the prophet Jonah.

Cross References

Luke 11:29

> As the crowd grew larger, Jesus said, “The people who live today are evil. They want to see a miracle as a sign, but no sign will be given them, except the sign of Jonah.”

Matthew 16:4

> Evil and sinful people are the ones who want to see a miracle as a sign. But no sign will be given to them, except the sign of Jonah.

Jonah 1:1

> The LORD spoke His word to Jonah son of Amittai.

Spiritual Principle

God gives the signs He chooses, not the signs we demand.

XL. THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Matthew 12:40 — In the Heart of the Earth

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jesus explained the sign.

Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish.

Then he came out alive.

Jesus would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

This points to His death and burial.

And then His resurrection.

In Jewish counting, any part of a day was counted as a day.

Jesus was buried Friday, was in the tomb Saturday, and rose on Sunday.

His resurrection would be the greatest sign of all.

Cross References

Jonah 1:17

> The LORD sent a very big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:1

> While Jonah was in the stomach of the fish, he prayed to the LORD his God.

1 Corinthians 15:4

> He was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures say.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection is the greatest proof that Jesus is who He said He is.

Key Truth

Every other sign points to this one: the empty tomb.

XLI. THE MEN OF NINEVEH

Matthew 12:41 — Something Greater Than Jonah

“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at Jonah's preaching, and now something greater than Jonah is here.”

Nineveh was a wicked Gentile city.

Jonah preached a short message of judgment.

And the whole city repented.

On the day of judgment, the people of Nineveh will stand up and condemn Jesus' generation.

Why?

Because they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

And Jesus is greater than Jonah.

Jonah was a reluctant prophet.

Jesus is the willing Savior.

Jonah did no miracles.

Jesus did many.

Jonah preached judgment.

Jesus offered grace.

Yet Nineveh repented, and Jesus' generation did not.

Cross References

Jonah 3:5

> The people of Nineveh believed God. They announced that they would stop eating for a while, and they put on rough cloth to show how sad they were, from the most important to the least important.

Luke 11:32

> On the Judgment Day the people from Nineveh will stand up with the people who live now, and they will show that you are guilty. When Jonah preached to them, they changed their hearts and lives. And look, someone greater than Jonah is here.

Jonah 3:10

> When God saw what the people did, that they stopped doing evil, He changed His mind and did not do what He had warned. He did not punish them.

Spiritual Principle

Those who have heard more will be judged by those who did more with less.

XLII. THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

Matthew 12:42 — Something Greater Than Solomon

“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 hear Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.”

The Queen of the South is the Queen of Sheba.

She traveled a great distance to hear the wisdom of King Solomon.

She was a Gentile.

She made great effort to hear wisdom.

But Jesus' generation had someone greater than Solomon right in front of them.

And they would not listen.

Jesus is greater than the temple.

Greater than Jonah the prophet.

Greater than Solomon the king.

He is Priest, Prophet, and King.

Cross References

1 Kings 10:1

> The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame, so she came to test him with hard questions.

Luke 11:31

> On the Judgment Day the Queen of the South will stand up with the people who live now, and she will show they are guilty. She came from far away to listen to Solomon's wise teaching. And look, someone greater than Solomon is here.

2 Chronicles 9:1

> When the queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions.

Spiritual Principle

The greater the truth that is offered, the greater the responsibility to receive it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is greater than the temple, greater than the prophet, and greater than the king — He is all three and more.

XLIII. AN IMPURE SPIRIT LEAVES

Matthew 12:43 — Seeking Rest

“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.”

Jesus told a short, strange story.

An impure spirit leaves a person.

It wanders through dry places looking for rest.

But it finds none.

Evil spirits are restless.

They cannot find peace.

Cross References

Luke 11:24

> When an evil spirit comes out of a person, it travels through dry places, looking for a place to rest. But when it finds no place, it says, “I will go back to the house I left.”

Isaiah 34:14

> Wild animals of the desert will meet there with wild dogs, and wild goats will call to each other. Night creatures will rest there and find a place to stay.

Job 1:7

> The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered, “I have been wandering around the earth, going back and forth in it.”

Spiritual Principle

Evil has no rest, and those who follow it have no rest either.

XLIV. AN EMPTY HOUSE

Matthew 12:44 — Swept Clean and Put in Order

“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.”

The spirit decides to go back.

It finds the house:

Unoccupied.

Swept clean.

Put in order.

The house looked better.

It was clean and organized.

But it was empty.

No one new had moved in.

This is a picture of reformation without regeneration.

A person may clean up their life.

They may stop doing some bad things.

But if Jesus has not moved in, the house is still empty.

Cross References

Luke 11:25

> When it comes back, it finds that house swept clean and made neat.

2 Peter 2:20

> They were made free from the evil in the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But if they return to evil things and those things control them, then it is worse for them than it was before.

Proverbs 26:11

> A foolish person who repeats his foolish acts is like a dog that goes back to what it has thrown up.

Spiritual Warning

A cleaned-up life without Christ is still an empty life.

Key Truth

Self-improvement is not salvation.

XLV. WORSE THAN THE FIRST

Matthew 12:45 — This Wicked Generation

“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 person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

The spirit brings seven others even more wicked.

They move in.

And the person ends up worse than before.

Then Jesus applied the story.

“That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Israel had been cleaned up in some ways.

Through John the Baptist's preaching, many had turned from some sins.

But they had not received Jesus.

Their religion was clean on the outside, but empty inside.

And their final condition would be worse.

Cross References

Luke 11:26

> Then the evil spirit goes out and brings back seven other spirits more evil than it is, and they go in and live there. So the person has even more trouble than before.

Matthew 27:64

> So give the order for the tomb to be guarded closely until the third day. Otherwise, His followers might come and steal the body... This last lie would be worse than the first.

2 Peter 2:21

> It would have been better for them never to have known the right way than to know it and then turn away from the holy command that was given to them.

Spiritual Principle

The only way to keep evil out is to let Christ in.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not just sweep the house clean — invite the Master to live there.

XLVI. HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS

Matthew 12:46 — Standing Outside

“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to Him.”

Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him.

They stood outside.

Mark tells us they had come because they thought Jesus was out of His mind.

They wanted to take Him home.

At this time, His brothers did not yet believe in Him.

Later, after the resurrection, they would believe.

James, His brother, would become a leader in the church in Jerusalem.

Cross References

Mark 3:31

> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent someone in to tell Him to come out.

Luke 8:19

> Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him, but they could not get near Him because of the crowd.

John 7:5

> Even His own brothers did not believe in Him.

Spiritual Principle

Even those closest to Jesus can misunderstand Him.

XLVII. YOUR MOTHER AND BROTHERS ARE OUTSIDE

Matthew 12:47 — Wanting to Speak to You

“Someone told Him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You.’”

Someone brought the message to Jesus.

In that culture, family was extremely important.

Everyone would have expected Jesus to stop teaching and go to His family.

Cross References

Mark 3:32

> Many people were sitting around Jesus. They said to Him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for You.”

Luke 8:20

> Someone said to Jesus, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, and they want to see You.”

John 2:12

> After this, Jesus went to Capernaum with His mother, brothers, and followers. They stayed there for a few days.

Spiritual Principle

Family is important, but God's family is even more important.

XLVIII. WHO IS MY MOTHER?

Matthew 12:48 — Who Are My Brothers?

“He replied, ‘Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?’”

Jesus asked a surprising question.

“Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?”

Jesus was not rejecting His family.

He loved His mother.

Even while dying on the cross, He made sure she would be cared for.

But He was teaching that there is a family even closer than the family we are born into.

When He was twelve, He told His parents, “Didn't you know I had to be in My Father's house?”

His first loyalty was always to His Father.

Cross References

Mark 3:33

> Jesus asked, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”

Luke 8:21

> Jesus answered them, “My mother and My brothers are those who listen to God's teaching and obey it!”

Luke 2:49

> Jesus said to them, “Why were you looking for Me? Didn't you know that I must be in My Father's house?”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' first loyalty is to His Father's will.

XLIX. HERE ARE MY MOTHER AND BROTHERS

Matthew 12:49 — Pointing to His Disciples

“Pointing to His disciples, He said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers.’”

Jesus pointed to His disciples.

These were the people who had left everything to follow Him.

“Here are My mother and My brothers.”

Those who follow Jesus become His family.

What a privilege.

The Son of God calls His followers His family.

Cross References

Mark 3:34

> Then Jesus looked at those sitting around Him and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!”

Luke 8:21

> Jesus answered them, “My mother and My brothers are those who listen to God's teaching and obey it!”

John 15:14

> You are My friends if you do what I command you.

Spiritual Principle

Followers of Jesus are part of His family.

L. WHOEVER DOES THE FATHER'S WILL

Matthew 12:50 — Brother and Sister and Mother

“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus explained who belongs to His family.

Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven.

Not just those born into His earthly family.

Not just Jews.

Whoever.

Anyone who does the Father's will.

And notice that Jesus added “sister.”

His family includes women and men alike.

This is the end of a chapter full of conflict.

The religious leaders rejected Jesus.

His own family misunderstood Him.

But those who do the Father's will are welcomed into the closest relationship with Jesus.

Cross References

Mark 3:35

> My true brother and sister and mother are those who do what God wants.

Galatians 3:26

> You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 2:11

> Jesus, who makes people holy, and those who are made holy are from the same family. So He is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters.

Spiritual Principle

God's family is made up of those who do His will.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is not ashamed to call those who obey His Father His brothers and sisters.

LI. EIGHT GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 12

1. Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

True rest is found in Him, not in legalistic rules.

Principle:

Rest is not found in rules but in the Lord of rest.

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2. Mercy Is Greater Than Sacrifice

God desires compassion, not rigid ritual.

Principle:

Rules that crush people miss the heart of God.

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3. Jesus Fulfills Prophecy

He is God's chosen Servant who brings hope to the nations.

Principle:

The gentle Servant is the hope of the whole world.

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4. The Spirit's Power Proves God's Kingdom

Miracles confirm the arrival of God's reign, not the work of Satan.

Principle:

Jesus is stronger than every power of darkness.

5. Guard Your Words

Our speech reveals our hearts, and every word matters before God.

Principle:

Change the heart, and the words will follow.

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6. The Only Unforgivable Sin

Rejecting the Holy Spirit's testimony of Christ leads to eternal loss.

Principle:

Do not harden your heart when the Spirit points you to Jesus.

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7. Christ Is Greater Than Jonah and Solomon

He brings a greater message and greater wisdom, yet many reject Him.

Principle:

Greater truth brings greater responsibility.

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8. True Family Is Spiritual

Those who do God's will are part of His household.

Principle:

The deepest family bond is shared obedience to the Father.

LII. GREATER THAN

Matthew 12 shows that Jesus is greater than the most important things in Israel's life.

Greater Than the Sabbath

He is Lord of the Sabbath (verse 8).

Greater Than the Temple

Something greater than the temple is here (verse 6).

Greater Than Jonah

Something greater than Jonah is here (verse 41).

Greater Than Solomon

Something greater than Solomon is here (verse 42).

Greater Than Satan

He ties up the strong man (verse 29).

Key Truth

Jesus is greater than every institution, every prophet, every king, and every enemy.

LIII. THE SABBATH AND THE CHRISTIAN

Matthew 12 helps us understand the Sabbath.

The Sabbath Was a Gift

God gave it for rest and worship.

The Pharisees Made It a Burden

They added rules that crushed people.

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

He has authority over its meaning.

It Is Always Right to Do Good

Mercy fits the purpose of the Sabbath.

Jesus Is Our Rest

The Sabbath pointed forward to the rest Jesus gives.

Spiritual Principle

Christians honor God's pattern of rest and worship, while finding their true rest in Christ.

LIV. UNDERSTANDING THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

Many people have been troubled by Jesus' words about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

What It Is

- Deliberately calling the work of God's Spirit the work of Satan.
- A hardened, final rejection of the Spirit's testimony about Jesus.
- Refusing to believe even when the truth is clear.

What It Is Not

- A single angry or careless word.
- A moment of doubt.
- A sin committed before coming to Christ.
- A past sin a believer regrets.

Why It Cannot Be Forgiven

- The Holy Spirit is the One who leads people to repentance.
- A person who completely rejects Him rejects the only path to forgiveness.

Key Truth

Anyone who wants to be forgiven can be forgiven, because that desire itself is the work of the Holy Spirit.

LV. WHAT MATTHEW 12 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 12 presents Jesus as:

The Lord of the Sabbath

He has authority over God's day of rest.

Greater Than the Temple

God's presence dwells in Him.

The Healer

He restores the shriveled hand and frees the oppressed.

The Chosen Servant

The Father delights in Him.

The Gentle One

He does not break the bruised reed.

The Hope of the Nations

The world will hope in His name.

The Stronger Man

He binds Satan and frees captives.

The Risen One

The sign of Jonah points to His resurrection.

The Head of God's Family

Those who do the Father's will are His brothers and sisters.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Jesus who is greater than all is gentle with the weakest of all.

LVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Were the disciples breaking God's law when they picked grain on the Sabbath?

No.

God's law allowed people to pick grain by hand from a neighbor's field.

They were only breaking the Pharisees' added rules.

Question 2

Why did Jesus mention David and the consecrated bread?

David and his men ate the holy bread when they were hungry, and God did not condemn him.

This showed that human need can be more important than ceremonial rules.

Question 3

What did Jesus mean by “something greater than the temple is here”?

He meant Himself.

The temple was where God's presence dwelled.

In Jesus, God Himself was present with His people.

Question 4

What does it mean that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?

It means He has authority over the Sabbath and its meaning.

God made the Sabbath, so this was a claim to be God.

It also means He is the true rest the Sabbath pointed to.

Question 5

Why did the Pharisees plot to kill Jesus after He healed a man?

Their hearts were hard.

They cared more about their rules and their power than about people.

Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, and they hated Him for it.

Question 6

What does it mean that Jesus will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick?

It means Jesus is gentle with people who are hurting, weak, or barely holding on.

He does not throw them away.

He restores them.

Question 7

How did Jesus answer the charge that He drove out demons by Satan?

He said a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.

Satan would not fight against himself.

Jesus drove out demons by the Spirit of God, proving that God's kingdom had come.

Question 8

What is the meaning of tying up the strong man?

Satan is the strong man who holds people captive.

Jesus is stronger.

He binds Satan and sets the captives free.

Question 9

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

It is deliberately and finally rejecting the Holy Spirit's clear testimony about Jesus, calling God's work the devil's work.

It cannot be forgiven because it rejects the only One who leads people to repentance.

Question 10

What do our words reveal?

Our words reveal what is in our hearts.

The mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Question 11

What is the sign of Jonah?

Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.

Jesus would be three days and three nights in the grave and then rise again.

The resurrection is the greatest sign of all.

Question 12

Why will Nineveh and the Queen of the South condemn Jesus' generation?

Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching.

The Queen of the South traveled far to hear Solomon.

Jesus is greater than both, yet His generation would not listen.

Question 13

What is the lesson of the empty house?

A cleaned-up life without Christ is still empty.

Evil can come back even stronger.

Only Jesus living in a person's life can keep evil out.

Question 14

Was Jesus rejecting His mother and brothers?

No.

He loved His family.

He was teaching that those who do the Father's will belong to an even closer spiritual family.

Question 15

What should Matthew 12 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 12 should cause believers to live:

- Finding their rest in Jesus.
- Showing mercy instead of rigid judgment.
- Doing good at every opportunity.
- Being gentle with the hurting.
- Choosing to stand with Jesus.
- Keeping their hearts soft toward the Holy Spirit.
- Guarding their words.
- Trusting the risen Christ.
- Filling their lives with Christ, not just cleaning them up.
- Doing the Father's will as members of His family.

LVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 12 asks several important questions.

Am I Finding My Rest in Jesus or in Rules?

Do I Care More About Rules or About People?

Am I Looking for Reasons to Criticize Others?

Do I Feel Like a Bruised Reed or a Smoldering Wick?

Jesus will not throw me away.

Am I With Jesus or Against Him?

There is no middle ground.

Is My Heart Soft or Hard Toward the Holy Spirit?

What Do My Words Say About My Heart?

Am I Asking God for More Signs When He Has Already Given Enough?

Have I Cleaned Up My Life Without Letting Jesus Move In?

Am I Doing the Father's Will as a Member of His Family?

LVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Greater Than All, Gentle With All”

Matthew 12 shows Jesus in two ways that seem very different.

On one side, He is greater.

Greater than the Sabbath.

Greater than the temple.

Greater than Jonah.

Greater than Solomon.

Stronger than Satan.

On the other side, He is gentle.

He will not break a bruised reed.

He will not snuff out a smoldering wick.

He heals a man's hand.

He calls His followers His family.

The Pharisees were neither.

They were not great.

And they were not gentle.

They were small and harsh.

This creates a powerful principle.

The greatest One who ever lived is also the gentlest.

His power is never used to crush the weak.

It is used to lift them up.

Principle:

The Jesus who is greater than the temple bends down to lift the bruised reed.

LIX. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 12 is a chapter of conflict.

It begins in a grainfield.

It moves to a synagogue.

It ends in a crowded house.

At every step, the Pharisees oppose Jesus.

They accuse His disciples.

They watch to trap Him.

They plot to kill Him.

They say His power comes from the devil.

They demand a sign.

Even His own family comes to take Him home.

But at every step, Jesus shows who He is.

He is Lord of the Sabbath.

He is greater than the temple.

He is God's chosen Servant.

He is gentle with the bruised and weak.

He is stronger than Satan.

He is greater than Jonah and Solomon.

He is the One who will rise from the dead.

And He welcomes all who do His Father's will into His family.

Matthew 12 therefore reminds us:

Religion without mercy becomes cruelty.

A clean life without Christ is still empty.

Words reveal the heart.

And there is no neutral ground with Jesus.

We are either with Him or against Him.

The story of Matthew 12 does not end with:

The Pharisees' plot.

The demand for a sign.

Or the warning about the unforgivable sin.

It ends with:

Jesus pointing to His followers.

And calling them His family.

The same invitation still stands:

Find your rest in Him.

Show mercy.

Do good.

Keep your heart soft.

Guard your words.

Let Christ fill your life.

Do the will of the Father.

And until He returns:

Keep resting in Him.

Keep doing good.

Keep standing with Him.

Keep living as His family.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

Thank You that our true rest is found in Him.

Keep us from turning our faith into a heavy list of rules.

Teach us that You desire mercy, not sacrifice.

Help us care more about people than about our own opinions and traditions.

Show us opportunities to do good every day.

Thank You that Jesus is greater than the temple.

Thank You that in Him, You have come near to us.

Thank You for Your chosen Servant, in whom Your soul delights.

Thank You that He will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick.

When we feel weak and worn out, remind us of His gentleness.

Thank You that Jesus is stronger than Satan.

Set free those who are held captive by the enemy.

Help us stand with Jesus, not against Him.

Keep our hearts soft toward Your Holy Spirit.

Never let us harden ourselves against Your truth.

Lord, fill our hearts with good things.

Let our words bring life, not harm.

Forgive us for careless words we have spoken.

Thank You for the sign of Jonah.

Thank You that Jesus rose from the dead.

Help us respond to the truth You have given us.

Do not let us simply clean up our lives.

Come and live in us.

Fill every room of our hearts.

Thank You that those who do Your will are part of Jesus' family.

Help us live as true brothers and sisters of Christ.

Teach us to do Your will every day.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” — Matthew 12:50

Central Truth

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and the Spirit-filled Servant of God, greater than every institution and prophet, and every person must decide whether they will reject Him or join His true family by doing the Father's will.

Matthew 12 in One Sentence

Jesus claims to be Lord of the Sabbath and greater than the temple, heals in mercy as God's gentle Servant, defeats Satan by the Spirit, warns against rejecting the Spirit and against careless words, points to His resurrection as the sign of Jonah, and welcomes all who do the Father's will into His family.