

## Week 12

### Matthew series: Ministry of Jesus

#### Matthew 12:1-32 **The religious atmosphere part 1**

After reading the beginning of this chapter I decided to do a little research. It's amazing to me that pastors work on Sunday. Isn't that a Sabbath day? I have heard stories of Christian men refusing to work on Sunday for fear of breaking the Sabbath. I have also heard sermons condemning us for not giving God respect by working on Sundays. After reading the first part of chapter 12 I can see history changes nothing. David lived all those years before Jesus. He had a discussion with the head priest about consecrated bread. There were rules to receive that food from the temple. Fast forward and Jesus is having a discussion with religious rulers about working on the Sabbath. They did work but refused to let the people work because it was blasphemy. Have you ever encountered rules and traditions that miss the point?

Matthew 12:3 **"He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"**

1 Samuel 21:6 **"So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away."**

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This chapter has a theme of the religious climate in Jesus day. The rulers lived for the law far more than by the law. David's discussions talked about abstaining from sex while receiving the consecrated bread. I wonder if Jesus was giving the religious rulers a shot across the bow with the mention of David's story. Twice Jesus says that he desires mercy not sacrifice. In many other Gospel verses we have people asking for mercy. Sometimes they call him *Son of David* while asking for mercy. I feel that this theme of mercy should not be taken lightly. Jesus and the story told by Matthew is trying to make a point. Rules, laws, and commands don't define the kingdom of God. Mercy for others does. What is mercy to you?

Matthew 12:7 **"If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent."**

1 Kings 17:14 **"For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'"**

Read Isaiah 42. Then go back and read the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3. Fast forward to chapter 12. Isaiah screams out to the reader in Jesus day. Verses like those in Isaiah 42 told the Israelite people about the coming messiah. They read it but never read it. Sometimes we read the Bible but we put it down without really reading it. I suppose it's not our fault. It's a really big book. Jesus is pointing out to the religious rulers that they need to read their bibles. I feel Matthew is saying the same thing. We lose sight of the real gospel when we take God's word out of context.

I just want to point out that reading the Bible is a monumental task. Maybe you have heard the line "How do you eat an elephant?" One piece at a time, it's too big. This was really hard for me to break up a chapter. Am I taking the whole thing out of context? Realize that the Bible was once a long scroll. There were no chapters. I just felt that verses 1-32 spoke something to me. What are laws, commands, and rules if there is no compassion and love? In a way Jesus was setting the cornerstone of his ministry: love first.

Matthew 12:32 **"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."**

Psalms 18:30 **"As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him."**

The reading for this week is Matthew 12 and Isaiah 42 plus Matthew 3:13-17

1. Leviticus 23:22 says **"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God."** Matthew 12 opens with the beginning of the religious battles. This is not a physical battle but a war of words. God had made laws to help people in need. The religious rules ignored these laws in favor of looking holy. They tried to uphold the Sabbath law at the expense of the people.

1 Samuel 21 had King David asking for bread from the priests. The priests found a way to give the men the consecrated bread from the temple. Matthew 12 has the religious rulers denying a way to help feed the hungry. If you notice till now, the battle between the religious rulers and Jesus ministry has been on the outside. These men talked to people and the disciples but not to Jesus directly. Upon seeing Jesus eat the heads of grain they had enough and engaged him directly for the first time.

In a way, this is a repeating of the temptation of Jesus. He is confronted by the Pharisees instead of Satan. They ask him if it is lawful to eat on the Sabbath. Jesus uses scripture to make them go away. This is so similar to the temptation of Jesus being hungry and using scripture to fend off Satan.

Matthew 12:26 **“If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?”**

Exodus 7:12 **“Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.”**

2. I had a professor that always thought it was funny that the Pharisees would pop out of the woods and point fingers at Jesus. Were they following him at a distance? Did they go with Jesus? Did these religious rulers spend their time spying on Jesus? They always attacked Jesus with the law and not the bible. That is interesting because they were the students of the Bible, but they were clearly students of the law.

Matthew 12:9-14 has Jesus entering the religious ruler's territory. In the Synagogue is a man with a withered hand. I wonder if the man was brought in to trap Jesus. They wanted Jesus to break the law. Jesus turns the tables and says they broke the word of God. In both of these first two instances Jesus says directly that it is ok to eat on the Sabbath and heal on the Sabbath. Jesus insinuates he is God by saying the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. He also directly says it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. I believe Jesus is claiming that he is the Lord.

Matthew 12:12 **“How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”**

2 Chronicles 20:12 **“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”**

3. What is interesting in the first 21 verses of Matthew 12 is what is unsaid in these stories. These verses declare that Jesus is in authority over the Sabbath and the law. No wonder the religious rulers decide to kill him in this chapter. Jesus answers were blasphemy. Jesus was saying he is above the law. The law was everything to these rulers. Jesus told these Bible scholars that they had misses the intent of God's word totally. I think that is why Matthew uses the Bible verses from Isaiah 42 to remind his readers what the messiah really was in God's word. I think many of them were taught the wrong way to look at Gods redeemer.

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

Job 19:25 **“I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.”**

4. Matthew 12:22-32 is a pivotal section in this whole chapter. I will use it next week, but it also fits well with this week's theme. Jesus has declared that he is the Messiah in so many words. He is Lord of the Sabbath. He is above the law. Jesus has been straight forward and confrontational with the religious rulers. In this last section of 22-32 we find Jesus being accused of leading the Satanic kingdom and not the godly one. Jesus again uses the Bible to fight them off. This is so similar to the temptation. Jesus is offered the kingdom but refuses to take it from His father God. If you notice Jesus throws the kingdom argument back in their faces. He proves he has the power over Satan just like in the temptation scene. Then he deflects taking over the kingdom by putting the importance of the Holy spirit above himself. This last verse 32 is usually called the unpardonable sin. If you don't accept the Spirit, then you reject God and his Son.

Matthew 12:32 **“Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”**

Exodus 31:3 **“I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship.”**

### **What does it all mean?**

I struggle with promoting church ministry. I feel that church ministry happens because God draws us into ministry. Do you really think we make it up? If we were seeking the desires of God then he will lead us to his plan. The problem is leading. Who is leading us in our Christianity? The key advice is go where God is already working. Open your eyes to what is already happening. Do you see God? Maybe, it might mean you don't. So, do you make up ministry and invite God in? There is something fundamentally wrong with this logic if God is sovereign.

What does Sovereign mean? Big word Patrick. Many of you reading this are just trying to understand Jesus and this Christian thing. I don't want to lose you. In fact, Matthew and Jesus don't want to lose you either. This is the fork in the road. Matthew is making a case for Jesus. In Matthew 12 that case is asking the question “Who is God to you?” Sovereign means authority. In many ways it means who butters your bread. Do you respect God? It looks like the religious rulers did in Jesus day. They respected the law more than the God who is above the law.

This fork I mention is your relationship with God. To be a Jesus follower is so much more than just saying you believe. The Pharisees said that too. Yet, their actions upheld the Law over the compassion and mercy of God. That is exactly why Jesus said *I desire mercy not sacrifice*. You belong to God first over a church. You belong to God first over your faith. Live for God first and ministry will happen. Live for God first, promote God first, and the rest of your Christianity will happen. That is what faith really is. That is what Matthew 12 is trying to say. Don't put ministry life over your relationship with God. The religious rulers in many churches lose sight of this daily. Don't ever forget who butters your bread: it's God.

Matthew 12:20-21 **“A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. 21 In his name the nations will put their hope.”**

Exodus 33:19 **“And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.”**