

Lesson Twelve—Matthew 12

Follow Me—And Let Nothing Harden You against My Message

Introduction

This chapter is the second in which we see Jesus train his disciples to accept him for who he is and not for what they may think the Messiah should be like.

The Pharisees hated Jesus. Their religion was steeped in man-made laws, work-righteousness, and a cold demand for proof before they would believe anything.

The disciples needed to learn that they would receive the same treatment from many in the world. And they also needed to hear Jesus boldly and clearly rebuff the wicked accusations of the Pharisees and expose them for what they were.

12:1-13 Jesus rebuffs the Pharisees when they attempt to accuse him of breaking God's law

The key to understanding this section is to note that the Sabbath laws the Pharisees were forcing on Jesus and his disciples were man-made.

Verses 1,2 For what did the Pharisees fault Jesus and the disciples?

Verses 3-7 How do Jesus' three arguments put the whole matter of the Sabbath laws into the right perspective?

- David and the showbread
- The priests serving in the temple
- Mercy, not sacrifice

Verse 8 Note Jesus' final argument: If the priests are innocent when they work in the temple on the Sabbath, how much more Jesus' disciples are when they accompany the Son of Man on the Sabbath as he carries out his Father's work.

Verses 9,10 To what depths did the Pharisees stoop in their petty adherence to man-made laws?

Verses 11-14 How did Jesus put them to shame?

Instead of walking away in shame, with hardened hearts, they followed their only recourse—kill Jesus!

12:15-21 Isaiah prophesies the how and the what of Jesus' ministry

According to Isaiah, how would the Messiah carry out his work?

What was the ultimate goal of Jesus' ministry?

12:22-29 Jesus is accused of being a devil

Verse 23 What impression did Jesus' miracle have on the crowds?

Verse 24 What impression did Jesus' miracle have on the Pharisees?

Verses 25-29 What basic point does Jesus make to refute the Pharisees' claim that he was in league with the devil?

12:30-37 The danger of calling Jesus a devil

Verse 32 Why were the Pharisees actually sinning against the Holy Spirit when they spoke their blasphemy against the Son of Man? Compare them to Paul prior to his conversion (1 Timothy 1:13,14).

Verses 33-35 Why could the Pharisees do nothing other than utter their blasphemies?

Verse 36 In this context what does Jesus mean by "careless word"?

12:38-45 Jesus gives the Pharisees a sign

Verse 38 The Pharisees had seen Jesus perform many miracles. What was behind their demand for a sign?

Verses 39,40 Contrast the kind of sign the Pharisees were looking for and the sign Jesus gave them. How did Jesus' sign both give the Pharisees what they were looking for (but not what they expected), as well as help the disciples focus on the real meaning of the kingdom of God?

What does Jesus' answer have to say to many in modern America who want Jesus to prove himself?

Verses 41,42 Why are the people of Nineveh and the queen of the South (Sheba) more righteous than these leaders of God's people?

Verses 43-45 Evaluate the following statement in the light of Jesus' words: "Man is never so vulnerable, never so wide open to the powers of evil, as when he has been touched by the divine without submitting to it" (Franzmann, *Matthew*, p. 106).

12:46-50 Jesus' true family

After all the opposition Jesus faced, he still has his faithful following. They are more important to him than his earthly family. Who are his mother and brothers and sisters?

Summary

The Pharisees were looking for another kind of Messiah. Their hard hearts were only made harder the more they were in Jesus' company. They were close to sinning against the Holy Spirit. Yet many others followed him, accepted him for who he was, and served him.

For next time

Use The People's Bible commentary on Matthew to review this chapter. Read through Matthew chapter 13 several times.