

July 9, 2023

“The Kingdom Has Come Upon You”
Lesson 1

Matthew 12:22-32

Intro

Matthew, though a Jew, was a tax collector before following Jesus. This means he worked with the Roman government to collect taxes from the Jews. He would have been hated by other Jews, seen as a traitor to his own people. Tax collectors were often put in the same group as “sinners” and “prostitutes”.

Pharisees, in contrast, were well thought-of because of their strict observance of the Law, for their keeping the law zealously. Though they were well thought-of and influential, they are usually shown in the Gospels as being critical of Jesus, who frequently pointed out the hypocrisy of their words versus their actions. Jesus was showing both the people and the Pharisees that finding God’s favor required a different way.

Read Matthew 12:22-32

1. vs. 22: Jesus heals the man brought to Him in three ways
 - He cast out the demon, healing the man so he could now talk and see
 - He does this in front of all the people gathered around Him

2. vs. 23: The people wonder if Jesus could be the “Son of David”
 - Using this term for someone indicated that the person might be the predicted Messiah
 - The Messiah would come from God, and have divine powers, including healing
 - Jesus healed the man physically (talk and see) and spiritually (cast out demon)

3. vs. 24: The Pharisees heard what Jesus did, but did not see it themselves
 - Their explanation is different than the people’s
 - Jesus cast out the demon because He is connected with a greater demon
 - This demon is called Beelzebub, meaning “lord of the dwelling”
 - The Pharisees saw him as the “prince of demons” the ruler of all of them
 - They think Jesus’s power comes from Satan, not from God

4. vs. 25: Jesus “knew their thoughts”
 - He knows they are jealous of Him
 - He knows they wrongly interpret this healing as coming from an evil source
 - When we are attacked, we have one of three choices usually in our reaction:
 1. Don’t react; say nothing
 2. Defend yourself with words of correction
 3. Launch a counterattack
 - Jesus uses the second option, pointing out the faulty thinking of the Pharisees
 - Any person or group that turns against itself will fall

5. vs. 26: Jesus continues his explanation using a concept that both He and the Pharisees agree on
Satan has an organized kingdom
As such, its purpose is to war against the kingdom of God
Satan's kingdom isn't stupid enough to fight against itself to win this "war"
Both Jesus and the Pharisees understand the true nature of Satan's goals / kingdom
6. vs. 27: Jesus now moves to a counterattack against the Pharisees
He agrees with them that Beelzebub is a power, the power, in Satan's kingdom
Most scholars agree that Beelzebub is a synonym for Satan
Apparently there were exorcists driving out demons by authority of the Pharisees
Jesus says "your people drive them out"
If Jesus is driving out demons by Beelzebub's power, how are these exorcists doing it?
They are doing it by God's power/authority, as is Jesus
These local exorcists are the ones Jesus says will judge the Pharisees
7. vs. 28: Jesus announces here the fulfillment of something He had been preaching
Previously He said to repent for the kingdom of God was near (Matt. 4:17)
Now He says "the kingdom of God has come upon you"—it's here!
His ability/authority to cast out demons was proof that the kingdom of God had arrived
8. vs. 29: An analogy is used here, one our text an "everyone knows this" example
If a thief wants to rob a strong man's house, what must he do to succeed?
He must tie up or neutralize the strong man; then he has free reign over the house
Jesus is making the connection that this is what He has done spiritually
He has overcome Satan's house by binding Satan
Jesus' point is that He's not working with Satan, He has overcome him
9. vs. 30: Jesus has a warning here, for the Pharisees but also for anyone doing the same actions
There is no middle ground
One is either working with Jesus, or against Him
One is either helping the kingdom grow or causing people to be scattered from Him
10. vs. 31: This verse contains an explanation of the only unpardonable sin in the Bible
This sin is "blasphemy against the Spirit"
Blasphemy is an insult or slander intended to harm another's reputation
Blasphemy against the Spirit happens when a person refuses to accept the Spirit's work
Jesus connects the Pharisees' lack of accepting his actions to blasphemy
Slandering the Holy Spirit is the same as slandering God, and Jesus is God incarnate
This sin is one that cannot be forgiven, because the person doing it won't repent of it
11. vs. 32: Jesus goes one step further here
He says people can slander Him and be forgiven of it, even though He is God
Jesus is laying out a warning to the Pharisees, and others who think like them
Attributing God's work on earth through Jesus to Satan is a deliberate slander
The Pharisees don't seem to have crossed the line into unrepentance yet
However, Jesus' words/warnings indicate that they were getting close to that place

Application: God and His word constantly call us to repent from anything ungodly in our lives. A wise saying notes that if we are concerned about something we may need to repent of, we still have a conscience that discerns between good and evil.

This lesson about accepting God's work as from Him is still important today. Those who oppose Jesus and Christianity will always try to discredit Jesus and to ruin a believer's faith. Being confronted with the Gospel puts a person in a forced choice: accept Jesus and His claims, or reject Him. Believers must be careful that in practicing our faith we don't work against Jesus by dividing and scattering His followers, and bringing disunity to the body.

Prayer: Father God, we pray that those who don't know You, those who currently work actively against You, will be touched by the power of Your Spirit to see the truth of who You are. Help us to know You intimately, and serve You so that our words and actions draw others to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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