

# Matthew 12:15 - 13:23

## Day 1

Jesus Withdraws; Heals Demon-possessed Man. Read Matthew 12:15-29

### **Behold My Servant**

1. Why did Jesus withdraw? 12:14,15 (See 14:13; John 11:53-54)

- From John 6:15, what other reason is given for Jesus withdrawing?

**FYI:** "From this point on, *the* Lord's ministry was characterized by opposition, withdrawal from that opposition, and continued ministry to His followers.  
- The Nelson Study Bible (1595)

2. What continued to happen? 12:15b

- What warning did Jesus give? How do you see Jesus' ministry being hampered by people telling "*who He was*" (12:16)? (What happened? Mark 7:36)

**FYI:** "These commands to be silent [8:4; 9:30]...show that Jesus is not presenting himself as a mere wonder worker... who can be pressured into messiahship by crowds whose messianic views are materialistic and political. Jesus' authority derives from God alone, not the acclaim of men; he came to die, not to trounce the Romans. The people who disobeyed Jesus' injunctions to silence only made his mission more difficult...But the men whose faith brought them to Christ for healing did not stay with him to learn obedience. So the news spread like wildfire throughout the region." (cf. 9:31; Mark 7:36)."  
- Expositor's Bible Commentary

3. From Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 42:1-4) about the coming Messiah, record what you learn about the person of Jesus (His titles and character) and the work of the Lord (what He would and would not do.) 12:18-21

Jesus' titles and character	Jesus' actions and ministry

4. How did the Pharisees' character and actions (12:10,14) contrast with Jesus?

5. What type of person do you think a *battered/bruised reed* is describing? (See Eze. 34:16)

- What image does a *smoldering/smoking wick* convey to you?

**FYI:** "Despite all Matthew has done to show Jesus to be the messianic Son of David and unique Son of God...He knows that the ministry of Jesus Messiah must also be understood as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Suffering Servant...The servant "will not quarrel or cry out" or raise his voice in the streets (v. 19). The picture is not one of utter silence (else how could he "proclaim" justice [v. 18] but of gentleness and humility (11:29), of quiet withdrawal and a presentation of his messiahship that is neither arrogant nor brash." - Expositor's Bible Commentary

"The **reed** is an emblem of feebleness, as well as of fickleness or want of stability, Matt 11:7...[or] of the poor and oppressed...(or) the soul broken...on account of sin. He will not break it...H will heal it, pardon it, and give it strength.

**[Smoking flax]** refers to the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted-the dying, flickering flame and smoke that hang over it...He would not further oppress those who had a little strength; he would not put out hope and life when it seemed to be almost extinct." - Barnes' Notes

"The quotation from **Isaiah 42:1-5** speaks of the gentle character of the Messiah...If He sees even the smallest spark in a man, he will **not quench it**, but gently fan it into flame." - David Guzik

6. Although Jesus came as Israel's Messiah, what else had been prophesied about His ministry?  
12:21

**FYI:** "This quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4 shows that the Messiah's quiet **withdrawal** [12:15] was in keeping with the prophet's portrayal of Him. The most significant aspect of this prophecy is that Jesus' reserve in the face of Jewish opposition would lead to blessings on the Gentiles." - The Nelson Study Bible (1596)

### **Healing a Demon-possessed Man**

7. What kind of isolation and separation would the demon possessed man have been experiencing? 12:22a

- How complete was the healing? 12:22b

8. What reaction did the people have? 12:23 What were they starting to wonder? (What do you think was keeping them from believing Jesus was the promised Messiah?)

9. What reaction did the Pharisees have? 12:24 (Contrast what even demons acknowledged in 8:29.) What do you think motivated this denial and attack?)

- How would you compare the different attitudes between these two groups?

10. Why was the Pharisees' accusation illogical? 12:25,26 (i.e. If Jesus were Satan what would he have been doing to himself?)

- What inconsistency in their arguments did Jesus address? 12:27

***Digging Deeper***

Besides knowing our thoughts, what else does the Lord know? 1 Chronicles 28:9a

Read Psalm 139:1-4,16

11. If the Pharisees recognized the source of Jesus' power, what would they have to conclude about Him? 12:28 (What was Jesus revealing about their hearts?)

***Digging Deeper***

What did Jesus do at the cross? Colossians 2:15

12. What was Jesus' goal in casting out a demon? 12:29 (Who is the *strong man*? Who is *stronger*?)

What will Jesus do to Satan in the end? Revelation 20:1-10

***Applying the Word:*** When have you experienced the Lord's profound gentleness when you were bruised, and broken by the weight of sorrow or sin, or when you were smoldering and struggling at the "end of your rope?"

## Day 2

Jesus Warns His Enemies. Read Matthew 12:30-37

### **Blasphemy against the Spirit**

13. What judgment did Jesus make about those who opposed Him? 12:30 (See also Mark 9:40) What does the word "*scatters*" indicate about their teaching?

- How would you explain why there isn't any middle/neutral ground?

***Scatters*** Strong's NT:4650 *skorpizo*; to dissipate, i.e. (figuratively) put to flight, waste

14. What sin and blasphemy **would be** forgiven?

- 12:31a
- 12:32a (How confusing was the person and ministry of Jesus before the cross?)

15. What is the only blasphemy that is **not** forgiven? 12:31b (What blasphemy had the Pharisees spoken? 12:24)

- How serious is blasphemy *against the Spirit* (i.e. rejection of the work and witness of the Holy Spirit; attributing the works of God to Satan)? 12:32b

**Digging Deeper**

How does the ministry of the Spirit enable belief in Christ? John 14:26; 15:26

**FYI:** "The Pharisees seem to have crossed the line from normal skepticism to hardened refusal to accept incontrovertible evidence."  
- Africa Bible Commentary (1136)

16. Why is this impossible to forgive? What has been rejected? (See the article *Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit at the end of the lesson.*)

**FYI:** "The one unforgivable sin is permanently rejecting Christ (John 3:18; 3:36; etc.)."

- Henry Morris

**Evil Words**

17. What illustration from nature did Jesus use to teach about the source of evil words and conduct? 12:33 (Cf. 7:16)

- What was the source of the bad fruit/evil speech coming out of the Pharisees' mouth? 12:34 (Mark "good" and "bad/evil" in 12:33-35.)
- What does the description "*brood of vipers*" convey? See also John 8:44

18. How did Jesus describe what is inside us? 12:35 Why do you think He calls them both "treasures"? (Cross-reference the teachings about treasures in 6:21-24.

**Digging Deeper**

From Colossians 3:16, what should fill us and what should come out of us?

19. Because of what our words reveal, how important are they? 12:36,37 (See Romans 10:9,10)

- Although Jesus condemned the Pharisees in 12:20-37, how were these rebukes a gracious gift? What was He revealing about the reason for their hostility?

**Careless/idle** *argos* NT:692 denotes "inactive, idle, unfruitful, barren"...b) metaphorically in the sense of "ineffective, worthless," as of a word, Matt 12:36  
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

20 Underline what our words should or shouldn't be:

- Psalm 34:13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. NIV
- Ephesians 4:29,31 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen...31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. NIV
- Ephesians 5:4-5 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving... NIV
- Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. NIV

*Applying the Word: Since God has forgiven all our sins, what does holding onto the guilt of our sins indicate? 2 Peter 1:8,9*

## Day 3

Jesus Confronts Unbelief. Read Matthew 12:38-50

### **Pharisees Ask for a Sign**

[21]. Why do you think the Pharisees asked for a sign, despite that fact that Jesus had been performing countless miracles before their very eyes? 12:38

[22]. How did Jesus label them? What did He understand about their request? 12:39a

- What was the only sign they would be given? 12:39b,40 To what event is Jesus referring? (How is this answer both a refusal and a gracious opportunity/gift?)

23. What phrases describe:

- How Nineveh responded to God's message? 12:41 (See Jonah message and Nineveh's response in Jonah 3:3-9)
- How the Queen of the South responded? 12:42 (See 2 Chronicles 9:1-12)
- Why would that "generation" be held more responsible for their refusal to respond? 12:41b,42b

**FYI:** "These groups responded in repentance to a lesser light - so how will these religious leaders defend their rejection of a greater light?"  
- David Guzik

"The Lord Jesus presents Himself as the One greater than the Temple with its priesthood, greater than the prophet Jonah, and greater than King Solomon and in each of these capacities, Prophet, Priest,, and King He was rejected...The most favored generation since the fall of man deliberately turns away from Him Who is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords'."  
- Stuart Allen (76)

### **Unclean Spirits**

24. What is apparently a desire of unclean spirits (demons)? 12:43,44

25. What words in 12:44 describe the state of the man that allows reentry?

- What had he neglected to do? Ephesians 5:18

26. What state did this lead to? 12:45

- To whom did Jesus apply this teaching? What warning was Jesus giving about their unbelief?

### **Jesus' Family**

27. Who was seeking Jesus 12:46 How did Jesus respond? 12:48  
(Why do you think He did that?)

28. How did Jesus define His family? 12:49-50 (Ephesians 2:19)

- What was Jesus saying about priorities? About His love?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

What do you learn about Jesus' family in:

Matthew 13:55

John 7:5

Mark 3:21

***Applying the Word:*** As you look at the things that Jesus said and did, what do you find most compelling or convicting about Jesus' claims?

When have you asked God for a sign or proof in order to trust Him? How do you already know that He is worthy of your trust and obedience?

## Day 4

Jesus Addresses the Crowds with Parables. Read Matthew 13:1-23

### 3<sup>RD</sup> DISCOURSE 13:1-53

#### The Parable of the Sower

29. From 13:1-3: Where was Jesus? How did He handle the crowds? What teaching style did He use? 13:3a

**FYI: Parable** "A short, simple story designed to communicate a spiritual truth, religious principle, or moral lesson; a figure of speech in which truth is illustrated by a comparison or example drawn from everyday experiences...The Greek word for parable literally means "a laying by the side of" ... thus "a comparison or likeness." In a parable something is placed alongside something else, in order that one may throw light on the other." - Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

"The object of [a parable] is to set forth a spiritual lesson. It is the lesson that is of value...Two dangers are to be avoided in seeking to interpret the "parables" in Scripture, that of ignoring the important features, and that of trying to make all the details mean something." - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

30. From the parable Jesus told in 13:3-8, list where the seed was sown and what the result was.

Where seeds were sown	What happened to the seed
13:4	
13:5,6	
13:7	
13:8	

31. Why do you think Jesus gave a challenge at the end of the parable? 13:9 (Cf. 11:15)

32. What reasons did Jesus give for speaking in parables?

- 13:11 (Psalm 25:14) *What blessing is Jesus talking about?*
- 13:12
- 13:13 (See Mark 4:11)

33. What were many of Jesus listeners “*not*” doing? 13:14

- Why weren’t they able to understand? 13:15a (See 2 Cor. 4:3,4)
- What were they losing? (Note the word “*otherwise/lest*”) 13:15b

**FYI:** “The immediate background to this group of parables was the mounting conflict between Jesus and the authorities and resistance to His message.” - Africa Bible Commentary (1136)

“Like a double-edged sword, the [parables] cut two ways - enlightening those who sought the truth and blinding those who were disobedient.” - Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary

“Jesus knew that many had not come to hear his word but...to see what was going on...In fact, some by their repeated hearing but not believing were becoming hardened to the gospel. So Jesus delivered a brilliant parable that, if understood and applied, would open his hearers to undreamed-of blessing.” - R. Kent Hughes - Luke (294)

34. How did Jesus commend the disciples? How privileged were they in understanding? 13:16,17

35. How did Jesus explain the meaning of the things in the parable?

Seed 13:19	See also Luke 8:11
Birds	
Path/road	See Mark 4:15; Luke 8:5
Rocky places 13:20,21	
Thorns 13:22	
Good Soil/Crops 13:23	

26. What do you think Jesus meant by “crops” (13:8) and “fruit” (13:23)?



**Applying the Word:** *“Like the **wayside**, sometimes we allow the word no room at all in our lives. Like the **stony places**, we sometimes have “hot flashes” of enthusiasm in receiving the word that quickly burn out. Like the soil **among thorns**, the world is constantly threatening to choke out God’s word and our fruitfulness. Like the **good ground**, the word bears fruit in our lives.” - David Guzik*

*How have you seen a change in the “soil” of your heart over time? Can you see any reasons for times you have been resistant?*

## ***Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit***

The word blasphemy (*blasphemia*), "impious and reproachful speech injurious to the divine majesty" (Thayer), in this context denotes an attitude of "defiant irreverence." The scribes who accused Jesus were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit because they defied the truth. They treated his miracles with something worse than indifference; they blasphemously attributed them to Satan. They were like those condemned by Isaiah the prophet (5:20): "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"...By accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan when he was really acting through the power of the Holy Spirit, they had blasphemed the Spirit, hardening their hearts against the Spirit's influence.

### ***Why is This an Unpardonable Sin?***

...To speak evil words against Jesus as a man working among men, though deplorable, was an evil that could be forgiven. The Son of Man in his earthly ministry was as liable to misunderstanding and ill treatment by others as any new messenger. When the source of evil speaking against Christ is ignorance, misconception, or ill-informed prejudice, then that blasphemy is as pardonable as any sin. Men could repent of their careless neglect of his work or their mistaken opposition to it, and when they did repent, they were forgiven. There are many examples in the New Testament of people who first opposed Jesus but later turned to accept him. Peter, perhaps through fear, denied Jesus in his hour of trial (Mark 14:71-72), but he found forgiveness, and when he was restored he was able to strengthen others (Luke 22:31-32). Paul marveled at the mercy extended to him even though he had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" (1 Tim.1: 12-16, emphasis mine). The apostle described himself as the "chief of sinners" to show, in fact, the perfect patience of Christ as the Savior of all.

The person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, however, places himself beyond the reach of forgiveness. This is true because the Holy Spirit is the agent in the revelation of divine truth (2 Sam. 23:2; John 15:26; 16:13; Eph. 6:17; 2 Pet. 1:21). It is only through the work of the Spirit that we come to know of God, our sins, the atonement provided through Christ, and our need for repentance and obedience. Blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable because its source is a heart of malice, selfish preference of wrong over right and evil over good, and a willful refusal to believe. The Pharisees had revealed that their hearts were evil, and Jesus called them a "brood of vipers" (Matt. 12:34). Such a perverse spirit consciously and deliberately rejects the truth and thus the salvation it brings...As long as a person persists in this state, genuine repentance is impossible. There is no room in this person's heart for penitence, which is a prerequisite for forgiveness. His sin is unpardonable simply because he is unwilling to travel the road that leads to pardon. The only sin that God is unable to forgive is the unwillingness to accept forgiveness.