

The Gospel of Matthew
Lesson 8
Matthew 12:22 – Matthew 13:15

By Beelzebul

Matthew 12:²² Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

According to Mark, Jesus is back at home in Capernaum. Peter's house is so full that the family cannot prepare a meal.⁷² Not wanting to disappoint them, Jesus begins healing those in need of His touch. A blind and mute demon-possessed man is brought in and Jesus casts out the demon. Luke tells us that the man speaks and everyone is amazed.⁷³ The scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem are there trying to catch Jesus breaking the law. The religious leaders claim that the miracle has been empowered by the lord of the dung, Beelzebul, the prince of the demons. They cannot bring themselves to give honor and glory to the Lord of lords.

Jesus' Response

Matthew 12:²⁵ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰ "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. ³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come. ³³ "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ "The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil. ³⁶ "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Synoptic Gospels agree on each part of this story. ⁷⁴ Jesus' response with a metaphor focuses on the inability of an organization to function and grow when it is divided and fighting against itself. If Jesus uses the power of Beelzebul to cast out the demon of Beelzebul, then Satan is fighting himself and gaining no foothold or useful ground.

⁷² Mark 3:19-22

⁷³ Luke 11:14-16

⁷⁴ The Synoptic Gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke. John is not included.

Jesus turns the parable on the scribes and Pharisees by saying "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub ... whom do you cast demons out by?" The scribes and Pharisees have never cast out a single demon or performed miracles. So Jesus tells them the demons will be the judges of their own suppositions. With His next words the Lord returns to the metaphor to show the true power of His miraculous works. He says, "If it is by the Spirit of God ... then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." The Pharisees and scribes cannot say a word of rebuttal.

Jesus continues with the story of a strong man protecting his home. He says it is impossible for anyone to plunder the strong man's possessions unless a stronger man first ties him up. If Satan is the strong man possessing the body of a man, the only way to rid the man of the evil one is for someone who is stronger to overthrow Satan. The only one stronger than Satan is God, the Holy Spirit. Satan is not attacking his own home to remove the demon; the Holy Spirit is.

Jesus is not concerned with the Pharisees and scribes who have blasphemed against Him; He will forgive all of their sins against Him because it is His job to do so. But Jesus is concerned that they have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was not forgiven in the Mosaic Age of the Law nor will it be in the coming Age of Grace in the Church. What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? It is denying any of the works of the Holy Spirit. In this case it is denying the fact that the Holy Spirit is granting the Lord power to perform all these miracles. In the first two chapters of the Book of Hebrews, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is denying His call to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Both instances are exactly the same in context because both are denying the work of the Holy Spirit. Denying either of these works will result in an eternal sin that will deny us the reward of eternal salvation. In response to that statement, the Pharisees and scribes reply that Jesus has a demon within Him.

The words of the Pharisees and the scribes are evil. The Lord replies to them with pure logic saying that it is impossible for a bad tree to produce good fruit. An apple tree produces apples. A pear tree produces pears. If they are good apples and pears, they are from good trees. If they are bad apples and pears, then they are from bad trees. People will not continue to cultivate fruit from a bad tree; soon the tree will be cut down and burned. So it is with Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus is producing good fruit and the Pharisees are producing bad. Jesus concludes that the fruit of the Pharisees will stand as the record that determines their eternal future.

Wish for a Sign – Evil Generation

Matthew 12:³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² "The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

How arrogant can the scribes and Pharisees be at this point in the story? They have accused Jesus of casting out demons by using the power of demons and now they are asking Him for a sign as if the other miracles are not enough to convince them of His power

and deity. The scribes and Pharisees long ago broke their marriage relationship with Jehovah.⁷⁵ A sign has already been given in Jonah's story and no other sign will be given. This passage is troublesome to many Bible students. It seems that Jesus is stating that He will be in the grave three days and three nights just as Jonah was in the belly of the creature three days and three nights. We struggle with this because no other Gospel, including Matthew's record of the grave experience, indicates that Jesus was in the grave that length of time. Jesus was placed in the grave before the end of the day on Friday and rose from the grave before the dawn of Sunday morning. His time in the grave was no less than 34 hours and no more than 40 hours. If Jesus had been the grave three full days and nights, His time in the tomb would have been more than 72 hours. So how can the sign of Jonah be the same sign of Jesus? Once again, we must look at the audience that Matthew is addressing, the Jews. In that day, their understanding of the day was completely different from ours. We recognize the daylight hours as the day and the dark period as the night as seen in the chart below.

Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
Night	Day	Night	Day	Night	Day
12:00 AM	11:59:59 PM	12:00 AM	11:59:59 PM	12:00 AM	11:59:59 PM
24 hours		24 hours		24 hours	

The Jews of Jesus' day did not consider the dark hours separately from the daylight hours and they began their day at 6:00 PM the evening before as seen in the following chart.

Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
Night and Day		Night and Day		Night and Day	
Thursday 6:00 PM	Friday 5:59:59 PM	Friday 6:00 PM	Saturday 5:59:59 PM	Saturday 6:00 PM	Sunday 5:59:59 PM
24 hours		24 hours		24 hours	

The Jewish reckoning of night and day is actually more accurate than ours because the first part of the 24 hour period is the night and the last part is the day; whereas, our 24 day begins and ends in the dark. The Jews of Jesus' time spoke of their 24 hour day as "day and night" rather than the way it actually occurred, "night and day."

Additionally, for the Jew, the term "day and night" means any part of the 24 hour day and not necessarily the entire day. Jesus is placed in the tomb at the end of the day on Friday, between 3:00 PM at 6:00 PM. He is there for less than three hours, yet the Jews would say He was in the grave the day and night of Friday which began on Thursday evening at 6:00 PM. It is just the way they would have said He was in the grave on Friday. In the same way, Jesus was not in the grave at daylight on Sunday morning, meaning He did not complete the day by staying in the grave until 6:00 PM. Yet, the Jews would have said He was in the grave the day and night of Sunday if He was in the tomb at 6:00 PM on Saturday evening. The Jews will have no problem reconciling the fact that He was in the tomb only part of the day Friday and Sunday. From any part of the day on Friday to any part of the day on Sunday is considered three days and nights in Jewish thought. In America, even though we begin each new day at midnight, the Jewish population still begins its Sabbath or Saturday at 6:00 PM on Friday night and the day ends at 6:00 PM on Saturday night. Jesus mentions the people and leadership of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba and her people. The men of Nineveh repented when they heard the message of Jonah and the Ethiopians repented when they heard the message of Jehovah presented by Solomon. Yet, the Jewish leadership do not repent with the message of the Lord. Jesus is greater than both Jonah and Solomon and they are foolish not to accept Him. Jesus warns them of their

⁷⁵ Psalms 73:27; Isaiah 57:3; 62:5; Ezekiel 23:27; James 4:4; Revelation 2:20

unbelief at this point, prophesying that at the judgment, both the believers in Nineveh and those in Ethiopia will stand as personal witnesses against them.

This Evil Generation

Matthew 12:⁴³ "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*. ⁴⁴ "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

In this story or parable, it seems that the demon has left the man voluntarily but does not return to the abyss which is his established dwelling. He is roaming through the countryside seeking another place. Not finding a suitable body to possess, the demon returns to the man, entering him with seven other demons. During the time the demon is wandering around seeking another body to possess, the man does everything he can do to clean up his life and put things in order except turn to the Lord who can fill the man and keep all demons out. When the demon returns to the man with seven other friends, the man's life is worse than it was before he tried to clean up his act. So it is with the Pharisees and scribes. They have swept and cleaned their generation to the point that evil has now taken them over, relegating them to a life of sin far worse than ever before in Jewish life. They are truly an evil generation.

Family of the Lord

Matthew 12:⁴⁶ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

When Mary and her sons arrive at Peter's house, the crowds are pouring out the doors and windows. People gather on the outside trying to hear the words of the Lord. Every inch of the house is filled with people who are probably surrounding the apostles who are, in turn, forming a ring around the Lord. Jesus' relatives do not disclose why they want to see the Lord; they just send the word that they want to speak with Him. His reaction to the call seems strange to readers today. Because of the accusations concerning Jesus and Beelzebub, our immediate thought is that the brothers' words are hostile and we interpret the Lord's words with a hostile tone. But at this point in the Lord's earthy ministry, His answer is most likely filled with kindness and inclusion. About a year and a half remains in His earthly work and His words, "For whoever does the will of God" is My family bring great comfort. He does not exclude His own blood family; He just enlarges it to include all His followers.

What happens to His mother and brothers? We do not really know. Perhaps they return to their home. Perhaps they stay to listen to Him speak. Matthew simply does not reveal the events of the rest of this evening; rather, he turns our attention to the Lord's teaching at the Sea of Galilee on another day.

Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:¹ That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ² And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd

was standing on the beach. ³ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶ "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ "And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ "He who has ears, let him hear."

The Lord uses parables because they cause a person to think. They are also used because the stubborn and prejudiced people will fail to get the main point of the stories. With this parable, like each of the Lord's parables, we must be extremely careful not to read something into it that is not intended. Those who are attentive and really want to learn more of His wisdom will glean some insight. Sadly, the disciples and the apostles do not understand the simple truth in this parable, and they have to ask Him about it later when He is finally alone with them.

Reason or the Parable

Matthew 13:¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹² "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; ¹⁵ FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'

Those who are asking Him to explain the meaning of the parable are insiders who have every right to understand its message. Bystanders could not have grasped the meaning of the parable because it is spiritual; it is for those who have allowed the Holy Spirit to open their ears. The Lord is taking His followers into the secrets of His eternal kingdom. They will understand only a little of the message for now, but as they grow, they will understand more. The Lord's main point is to explain to His followers that there are four different reactions to the gospel message.

Satan has stolen the hearts of the people in this first group, possibly through the distraction of others trying to leave a service when the call is being presented, possibly by an untruthful report about a believer who is sharing the message, or even by someone's attempt to keep a person from going to the place where the message is shared.

The second group consists of people who are hardened by the world and worldly needs who act as if they will accept the gospel message as long as things are going well, but when things go awry, they return to their old ways.

The third group of people attempts to live in both worlds, the religious and the worldly, never attempting to leave the world, never changing their life styles, never seeking purity but always choking out God's gospel by living according to the rules of the world.

The fourth group soaks in all that the gospel holds for them, benefiting greatly from its message. Of the four kinds of hearers, only this group is truly saved.

Matthew takes his explanation further than the Gospels of Mark and Luke. He includes the words of Jesus quoting directly from Isaiah 6:9-10. This passage shows that the Jews of Jesus' day have completely fulfilled the prophet's prophecy.