

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 8

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees

Matthew 12:22–37



DAY 1

Jesus healed a man • Matthew 12:22

READ

Matthew 12:22–37

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 12:22

Miracles are rare. Almost all the miracles in the Bible occurred during three short periods of time, each lasting about 40 years. So when there was a time of many miracles, there was a special reason. First, God performed miracles through Moses and Joshua when He rescued Israel from Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. Second, God used the miracles of Elijah and Elisha to confront Israel's idolatry. Third, Jesus and His apostles performed miracles at the central moment of God's salvation plan. In all three periods, the miracles were designed to prove that God is the only God and Savior. So when most of the Jews still rejected Jesus, Jesus rightly condemned them. In this case, Jesus miraculously cured a man who was suffering in many ways. Without any fancy ritual or magical words, Jesus simply healed him all at once—the demon was gone, the eyes were opened, and the tongue could speak. This shows us what a real miracle is. A **miracle** is *something amazing that only God can do, an act of power that breaks the laws of nature, a supernatural work that science can never explain.*

ASK

1. What was wrong with the man who came to Jesus?
He was blind (could not see), mute (could not speak), and had a demon in him.
2. Did Jesus heal the man?
Yes. The man was immediately freed of his demon, his eyes were opened, and his tongue loosened.
3. What is a miracle?
A supernatural work that only God can do.
4. What are miracles designed to show?
That God is the only God and Savior.

DISCUSS

1. What are some signs you see along the road? How are miracles like a sign? Where do they point?
2. What is the purpose of miracles in John's Gospel (John 20:30–31)?

DAY 2

Jesus was accused by the Pharisees • Matthew 12:23–24

READ

Matthew 12:22–37

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 12:23–24

Like the miracles of Moses and Elijah, this miracle was undeniable. It made the people wonder if Jesus was the *Son of David*, *the Messiah promised long ago*, but they still didn't believe! Even though the people were astonished, doubts about Jesus still remained. Literally, the people wondered, "This man is not the Son of David, is He?" In other words, they expected that the answer was probably "no." The Pharisees wanted to make sure that no one would believe in Jesus. But since they could not deny the miracle, they claimed that Jesus got His supernatural power only from *Beelzebul*, *a name used for Satan, the prince of demons*. Their answer was based on what they wanted to believe, not on the evidence. After all, this wasn't the first time the Pharisees had said that Jesus' power came from Satan (9:34), and they had already decided to kill Him (12:14). So their argument did not discredit Jesus. Instead, it revealed their own stubborn unbelief, which blinded them to the clear evidence.

ASK

1. What did the people wonder when Jesus healed the man?
They wondered, "He isn't the Son of David, is he?" They wondered, but they did not believe.
2. Whose power did the Pharisees say Jesus was using?
Beelzebul's.
3. What is "Beelzebul"?
A name used for Satan, the prince of demons.
4. Why did the Pharisees say Jesus got His supernatural power from Beelzebul?
They wanted to make sure that no one would believe in Jesus, but they could not deny the miracle.

DISCUSS

1. Does clear evidence always lead to faith (1 Cor 1:18)? Why not (1 Cor 2:6–16)?
2. Why would someone resist what they know to be true about God (John 3:19–20)?

DAY 3

Jesus refuted the Pharisees • Matthew 12:25–29

READ

Matthew 12:22–37

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 12:25–29

How can you disprove falsehood? Jesus shows us how. To refute the Pharisees' argument, Jesus first showed how *illogical* their argument was. Jesus used a proverb to show that it *does not make sense* that Satan would fight against himself. Second, Jesus showed how *inconsistent* their argument was. They were *saying two things that could not both be true*. With Jesus, they acted like the only way to cast out demons was by

Satan's power. But with their own people, they acted like casting out demons was not by Satan's power. After refuting them, Jesus gave His own explanation. First, His argument was *consistent*, because casting out demons by the Spirit of God *agrees with what He was saying* all along. From the beginning He preached that the kingdom of God was close (Matt 4:17). The full reality of God's kingdom is still future, but in one sense it had come upon the Jews, since the chosen King was with them. Second, Jesus' argument is logical. If Jesus really is the promised King, it *makes sense* that He will first defeat Satan before taking the rule of the world away from him (Col 2:15).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. Why was the Pharisees' response illogical?
It doesn't make sense for Satan to fight against his own demons.
2. Why was the Pharisees' response inconsistent?
They said the only way Jesus could cast out demons was by Satan's power. But then they said their own people could do it without Satan's power.
3. Why was Jesus' explanation consistent?
Powerful miracles fit with what Jesus was saying all along: God's kingdom was present with them.
4. Why was Jesus' explanation logical?
Jesus was coming to rescue people from Satan, so it makes sense that He would have power over Satan.

DISCUSS 

1. What can you do to learn how to speak clearly and logically?
2. Why do intelligent people use illogical and inconsistent arguments against Scripture?

DAY 4*Jesus accused the Pharisees • Matthew 12:30, 33–37***READ** 

Matthew 12:22–37

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 12:30, 33–37**

You have to make a decision. As Elijah did long ago (1 Kgs 18:21), Jesus warned the crowd that they could not stay neutral in this debate. This warning is urgent because of how dangerous the Pharisees' claim really was. By claiming that Jesus' power came from Satan, the Pharisees had committed the **unforgivable sin**. To prove His accusation true, Jesus turned the Pharisees' argument against them. The Pharisees had questioned the source of Jesus' power, even though His deeds were good. But Jesus said they should judge His source by His fruit. His fruit was good, so His source was good. Their fruit, however, was rotten, because they were rotten. They could not hide the wickedness that was in their hearts, because it spewed out of their mouths (12:34–35; 15:18–19; Jer 17:9; Prov 4:23). The Pharisees tried to accuse Jesus, but Jesus, using the Pharisees' own argument, accused them. Finally, Jesus stopped speaking to the whole crowd and instead spoke to each person individually: Your words show so clearly what is in your heart that you will be judged according to every thoughtless word you speak (12:36–37).

ASK 

1. What did Jesus warn the crowd?
That had to take a side in this debate.
2. Who really had an evil source, Jesus or the Pharisees?
Jesus' good works and words proved His good source. The Pharisees' evil words proved their evil source.
3. How do we know that the Pharisees had evil hearts?
Because they spoke evil words about Jesus.
4. Why are your words so important?
We will be judged by our words, because they show what we really believe about Jesus.

DISCUSS 

1. What do your unguarded words show about your heart? Do they reveal a heart that truly follows Jesus, or one that defiantly opposes Him?
2. Why is it not possible to stay neutral toward Jesus?

DAY 5

The Pharisees committed the unforgiveable sin • Matthew 12:31–32

READ

Matthew 12:22–37

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 12:31–32

The Pharisees committed two blasphemies. First, **blasphemy against the Son** is rejecting the salvation Jesus provides, but that can be forgiven when a person admits he is wrong. That's why Paul and Jesus' executioners could be forgiven: they did not fully realize just who Jesus was (1 Tim 1:13; Luke 23:34). As soon as Paul knew Jesus, He repented quickly (Acts 9:5, 18). But the Pharisees also committed **blasphemy against the Spirit** by rejecting the gospel while being fully aware of what they were doing. It is the Holy Spirit who gives specific knowledge about Christ, but they had made up their minds not to pay attention to the Spirit. Jesus knew this, because He knew their thoughts (Matt 12:25). The Pharisees had experienced the Spirit's power, the goodness of God's word, and the power of the coming kingdom (Heb 6:4–6). They knew the truth of salvation, but they deliberately went on sinning (10:26). They knew Jesus was the Messiah, but they would rather kill Him than worship Him (10:29). They could not now be forgiven, because they knowingly rejected the only way of being forgiven.

ASK

1. What two blasphemies did the Pharisees commit?
Blasphemy against the Son and blasphemy against the Spirit.
2. What is blasphemy against the Son?
Rejecting the salvation Jesus provides.
3. What is blasphemy against the Spirit?
Rejecting the gospel while being fully aware of what you are doing; making up your mind not to pay attention to the Spirit.
4. Why is blasphemy against the Spirit the unforgiveable sin?
It is the Holy Spirit who gives specific knowledge about Christ, so knowingly rejecting the Spirit is rejecting the only way of being forgiven.

DISCUSS

1. Why is it hard to imagine such a tragic sin (Exod 34:6–7; Ps 86:5; 103:3; 1 John 1:9)?
2. What does God promise to every sinner who calls upon His name (Rom 10:13)?

NEXT WEEK

Jesus teaches the parable of the soil

Mark 4:1–20

