



Matthew 12.

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Matthew 12.

Topics.

- It is lawful to do- good on the Sabbath.
- Jesus heals a man with a withered hand and a blind and mute man.
- The ministry and purpose of Jesus.
- How can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods.
- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.
- Make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad.
- The sign of the prophet Jonah.
- Jesus is the tomb three days and three nights.
- The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment.
- When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter John the Baptist is in prison, Jesus spoke about the one who is least in the Kingdom being greater than John; about the violent taking the Kingdom by force and about Elijah who is to come. He talked of Chorazin and Bethsaida being judged harshly and of Capernaum being exalted to Heaven; of others who have ears to hear and of God hiding things from the wise. He told his disciples that no-one knows the Father unless he reveals Him and said, "Come unto me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MATTHEW 12:1-8

It is Lawful to Do Good on the Sabbath.

- **Matthew 12:1-8:** At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." ³He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane (desecrate) the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Because the Law required that no work be done on the Sabbath Day the legalistic and dogmatic Pharisees therefore believed it was not lawful to pick grain on the Sabbath because they considered it working, but Jesus reminds them David did something they would consider even worse, he helped himself to the Passover Bread which only the Priests were allowed

to do. Under the Law the priests could do all their temple duties on the Sabbath without being held guilty, but secular work or business was forbidden and considered sin with the penalty being death. Fully aware of all this Jesus is saying to the legalistic Pharisees that something greater than the temple building is with them which of course is Christ himself, and he goes onto say if they really understood the spirit of the law they would know that God prefers mercy over sacrifice (ceremonial law) meaning if it is a choice between a person going hungry or keeping a ceremonial law then feeding the hungry person overrides the ceremonial law. Even the Spirit behind the Ten Commandments is love because each of the six laws concerning mankind protects the innocent from physical, financial, sexual, verbal, emotional and spiritual harm. This is why those who know the heart of God endeavour to keep the law because it is the right and loving thing to do. It fulfils the Ten Commandments regarding man, and the Royal law love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:28-31).

Added to this Paul in his letter to the Romans wrote, "Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10). These words of Paul clearly shine a light on the truth that the spirit underlying the law is love. When we show love and mercy to others it honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith. Christians who know God's love are not motivated by the legal letter of the law and its demands, but by the love of God that dwells in their heart and mind. They do not keep the law to get saved, saved, but because they are saved. They understand that righteousness is a gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort or by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions.

Jesus words:

- For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.

Mean that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath Day, not the law, by extension it could be said that love and mercy are the Lord of the Sabbath Day and not legalistic ritual. It is interesting to notice that the law was put in the Ark of the Covenant under the mercy seat. The symbolism of course is that there is no way of getting to the law without first going through mercy.

MATTHEW 12:9-13

Jesus Heals a Man with a Withered Hand.

- **Matthew 12:9-13:** He went on from there and entered their (the Pharisees) synagogue.
¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"— so that they might accuse him. ¹¹He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?
¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.

The Pharisees have just witnessed a wonderful miracle and an overwhelming blessing to a man. They were the top religious leaders of the day and yet their only motivation was to trap Jesus so that they might accuse him simply because he performed an amazing healing on the Sabbath Day. Once again we see the extremely wrong priorities the Pharisees have toward the law, toward people and toward what is of the highest priority to God's heart which next to loving God with all our strength, our mind and our heart is doing good to other humans (i.e., love your neighbour as yourself). Jesus cared about people he points out that it is lawful to do-good on the Sabbath even though the law says, "Thou shalt not do any work on the Sabbath Day" mercy says, it is OK, "To do-good on the Sabbath" because mercy override the law. Jesus is repeating what he had told the Pharisees in verse seven.

Jesus Heals a Man with a Withered Hand.

- **Matthew 12:14-21:** But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. ¹⁵Jesus, aware of this withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ^{20a} bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; ²¹and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

The Pharisees pride and legalistic attitude to the law blinded them from seeing that Israel's Messiah the Christ who all the Old Testament prophets spoke of and said was to come was standing in their midst, they were so blinded that not only did they not recognise this wonderful fact they actually sought ways to kill him. Jesus knowing this flees, telling those who he has healed not to tell the Pharisees of his whereabouts because it was not yet his time to lay down his life. There is a practical lesson that we can learn from Pharisees attitude is to never get so legalistic over Scripture, ceremonial law and tradition that we are blinded to what is really important to God's heart. There is no law against any act of kindness or mercy, doing good overrides the law, because acting in compassion for another human is fulfilling Jesus commandment love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39). This is called the Royal law in the New Testament and means do unto others as you would have them do unto you, the apostle James says, "If we are doing this we are doing well (James 2:8). The words this was to fulfil what was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah (Matt 12:17-21) is cited from the following verses of Isaiah: -

- Behold my servant (echoing Jesus) whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him (at his water baptism) he will bring forth justice to the nations. ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ^{3a} bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth (this is still a future event) and the coastlands wait for his law (Isaiah 42:1-4).
- I am the LORD; I have called you (echoing Jesus Christ) in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you I will give you as a covenant for the people (on the cross) a light for the nations, ⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other (Jesus came to reveal the glory of God) (Isa. 42:6-8).

Isaiah spoke of Jesus saying he will:

- Be called in righteousness as God's chosen servant (Isa. 42:1, 6) (Matthew 12:18).
- Delight God and that God would be pleased with him (Isa. 42:1) (Matthew 12:18).
- Have God's Spirit put upon him (Isa. 42:1) (Isa. 42:6) (Matt. 12:18).
- Be given as a covenant and a light to the nations (Isa. 42:1, 6) (Matthew 12:18).
- Proclaim justice to the nations (Jews and Gentiles) (Isa. 42:1) (Matthew 12:18).
- Open the eyes of the physically and spiritually blind (Isa. 42:7) (Matthew 11:5).

- Not quarrel, argue or speak in the streets (Isa. 42:2) (Matt. 12:19).
- Never harm anyone physically or spiritually (Isa. 42:3) (Matt. 12:20).
- Continue his ministry until he brings justice to earth (Isa. 42:3-4) (Matt. 12:20).
- Bring together all nations (Jews and Gentiles) and in his name they will hope and trust (Isa. 11:10) (Isa. 42:4) (Matt. 12:21).

Paul also cites Isaiah's words, "In his name the Gentiles will Hope," in the following verses:

- Again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. ¹¹And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." ¹²And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope" (Rom. 15:10-12).

Jews and Gentiles become One New Nation in Christ.

The Apostle Paul said:

- **Ephesians 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God because in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to you:

If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

MATTHEW 12:22-29

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of healing by the power of Beelzebul.

- **Matthew 12:22-29:** Then a demon (daimon) oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²³But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.

For a greater understanding of Demon see the title:

- Demons and Devils (at the end of this chapter).

Beelzebub (Beelzeboul) (Beelzeboul) was:

- The Dung-god and the Baal of the fly.
- A special deity of the Ekronites (Baal-Zebub).
- The god of the Philistines.
- Believed to be the prince of devils and is used as a name of Satan.

(2 Kings 1:2-3, 6, 16) (Matt. 10:25) (Matt. 12:24, 27)
(Mark 3:22) (Luke 11:15-19).

The people of Jesus era believed evil inferior gods called demons possessed people and caused all sorts of sickness including blindness and the inability to speak added to this the Pharisees and scribes believed the chief of demons called Beelzebul had possessed Jesus. If the Jewish religious leaders believed Jesus was possessed by a demon and we know that this was a wrong diagnosis, why would their belief that other people were possessed by demons be a correct diagnosis? (Mark 3:22). Jesus does not attempt to show the Pharisees that what they believe is a false understanding of demons. Rather than show the Pharisees their belief is wrong he shows the Pharisees that their reasoning is false and simply speaks to them according to what they believe. Jesus says, to the Pharisees that any relationship or friendship, kingdom or nation that is divided against itself never lasts.

Jesus is highlighting the truth that if he is casting out demons (evil inferior gods) by the power of Beelzebub and Beelzebub is the chief of demons, then Beelzebub is casting out his own demons so how will his kingdom last, since Beelzebub is destroying his own kingdom, and if he is destroying his own kingdom he is destroying himself and therefore his kingdom cannot possibly last. Jesus goes even further than this by pointing out to the Pharisees that their reasoning is false and if they are going to accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub they will also have to accuse their own priests because they practice the same thing (with very little success I suspect). Jesus is telling the Pharisees if he is casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub then the Pharisees own priests must also be using the same power, therefore let

their own priest's judge him by their own belief and by the power they are using. If the Pharisees judge Jesus according to what their own priests are doing (or attempting to do) they will have to conclude that Jesus is also casting out demons by the power of God and when they come to that conclusion they will have to admit the Kingdom of God has come upon them.

NOTICE: Jesus does not say that the Pharisees belief in the lord of the flies is true or false he just shows them that their reasoning is incorrect, which avoids arguments and allows them to embrace the logic or reject it.

Entering a strong man's house and plunder his goods: Jesus reasons that for a robber to steal from a house with a strong man in it, the strong man must first be tied up. The strong man in this context can apply to two things:

1. The bondage of the law with is legal demands.
2. The Pharisees while Jesus is the robber plundering their house (the temple of God).

Jesus wants to steal the Pharisees goods which of course is, the eternal souls of their followers because the Pharisees have the people under bondage and oppression and Christ has come to set them free from both.

MATTHEW 12:30-32

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

- **Matthew 12:30-32:** Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹Therefore I tell you (the Pharisees) every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the (Holy) Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, he tells them not only are they against him, but they are also scattering God's people (thus the reason Jesus wants to plunder their house) (v29).

Unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in Jesus day: was the Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day they were Gods representatives; they knew the word of God but their own pride and greed for power blinded them. They should have known who Christ was and clearly recognised him, but instead they accused him of being an evil man possessed with demons. This was an unforgivable sin simply because Jesus did amazing and wonderful good deeds in front of the Pharisees, he did no wrong only good and yet they openly condemned Christ as a common criminal. Their hearts had to be totally dominated by their own pride, ego and craving for authority and power. Self-ambition was their god and their sin were unforgivable because they were denying the only one who had the power to save them.

John tells us that:

- No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also (1 John 2:23).

Unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit embraces anyone who has the knowledge and truth of Jesus and represents his name, but through their own pride and greed for selfish ambition and craving for authority, power, money and fame distort the truth of Christ for their own gain and deny his saving power are committing the unforgivable sin, because they are denying Christ and without Christ no one has God and without God no one can be saved to eternal life.

NOTE: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not apply to those outside of the body of Christ using the Lord's name in vain. Though this is naturally offensive to those who know Christ to those who don't Christ's saving grace is abundantly available and the instant they know him will be the instant they stop using his name in blasphemy. Many Christians have used the name of Jesus in blasphemy before they knew who Christ really is.

Unforgivable blasphemy in not: a believing Christian falling away from the faith because of weakness of the flesh, many of these believers later repent and find forgiveness and return to the faith with great joy. Often the testimonies of these people is that even in their fallen state they were still trying to justify themselves before God. Even though they have fallen to the weakness of the flesh they do not consciously, deliberately and willfully call God or Jesus evil.

Unforgivable blasphemy is: only committed by someone who has known Christ and then turns away from him and denies who he is and what he said, because then they are denying the only one who has the power to save their soul to eternal life. It appears if someone who has known the love of God given through Christ and deliberately, consciously and willfully turn against him that their heart become so harden it is almost impossible to find repentance and turn once again to the Lord, nevertheless the phrase unforgivable blasphemy most likely only applies while they remain in that state of denying Christ.

MATTHEW 12:33-37

Good and Bad Trees.

- **Matthew 12:33-37:** "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. ³⁴You brood of vipers! (the Pharisees) How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

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Bad fruit is:

- Unlawful sexual immorality, impurity and sensuality.
- Idolatry and sorcery.
- Hatred, resentment, strife, jealousy, fits of anger and rivalries.
- Discord, strife, contention, divisions and envy.
- Drunkenness, orgies and things like these (Gal. 5:19-26).

Good fruit is:

- Love, joy, peace, patience kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness.
- Goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:19-26).

Jesus is saying make a choice, either chose God and make your life good or chose sin and continue in it. A Christian should be known by their faithfulness toward God and by their patience and kindness toward other humans, whereas the wicked will be recognised by their corrupt lifestyle and the way they treat other humans (i.e. by using or oppressing them to achieve their own selfish ambition etc.). The evil of the Pharisees was pride, envy, jealousy, selfish ambition, and the lack of love, mercy, grace and compassion.

The Sign of the Prophet Jonah.

- **Matthew 12:38-41:** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (the grave) ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here (Jesus Christ).

Three days and three nights: Jesus said, just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Within Christianity there is confusion over the three days and three nights, so the following scenario is a brief overview of that period of time. Three days and three nights is a proper Jewish Bible idiom for saying, "the third day" it does not need to mean three full days. In this context it simply means, Christ will rise on the third day. The following lists the scenario of events leading up to this third day.

Jesus was in the tomb late Friday afternoon (14th), but before sunset, because the Jewish High Sabbath began on Saturday (15th) at sunset. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women (Salome) went to the tomb with Joseph late Friday afternoon but before sunset on Friday (14th) (Passover Day), so the woman saw where the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb (Luke 24:10) (Mark 16:6). Then Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other woman (Salome) went home to prepare spices for the body of Jesus. Then sometime early Sunday morning the women went back to the tomb to put the spices they had prepared on Jesus body. Mary Magdalene was first to get to the tomb. Jesus was is in the tomb after sunset Friday (Passover Day) (14th) all day Saturday (the Jewish High Sabbath) (15th) until sometime Sunday morning (the first day of the week) (16th) giving the three days (i.e., part of Friday all day Saturday part of Sunday morning which fulfils the Jewish idiom three days and three nights, meaning on the third day Christ will rise. For further detail see the title:

- Three Days and Three Nights.
- In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Queen of the South will Rise up at the Judgment.

- **Matthew 12:42:** The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation (the Pharisees, priests an scribes) and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here (Jesus Christ).

Jesus is saying a Gentile Queen made the effort to travel a great distance to hear Solomon's wisdom and the Pharisees have the Son of God standing in their midst and they don't even want to listen to him. The meaning of the Queen of the South, "Rising up in Judgement" has two possibilities:

1. The Pharisees are already judged by the Queen, because she was prepared to travel a great distance to hear Solomon, so she would have certainly listened to the wisdom of the Son of God whereas they have him in front of them and still refuse to listen.

2. The Queen recognised Solomon as a great man because of his wisdom and accepted his wisdom, because of this she will most likely be with all those who are resurrected when Christ returns. This is because it is certain the wisdom shared with the Queen would not only have been secular wisdom, but most certainly would have included the wisdom in knowing God and everything that embraces.

MATTHEW 12:43-45

When the Unclean Spirit has Gone Out of a Person.

- **Matthew 12:43-45:** "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

The unclean spirit is another term for the lust or craving of the flesh both terms (the flesh and unclean spirit) embrace all those sinful attitudes and desires that are found in the human heart.

An unclean spirit is manifested in:

- Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry and witchcraft.
- Hatred, variance, emulation's, wrath, strife, sedition's and heresies.
- Envy, murders, drunkenness, reveling (excess partying and drinking) and such like things.

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An unclean spirit should be replaced with:

- Love, joy, peace, longsuffering and gentleness.
- Faith, goodness, meekness and temperance.

Those that have cast out the unclean spirit are those that have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The expression unclean in some contexts can also refer to the common people, a Gentile and to people separated from God. The phrase, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a person refers to that moment a person repents and makes a decision to forsake his or her old and ungodly ways and he or she then continues to follow Christ and live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

John cleansed the House of Israel: John the Baptist cleansed the house of Israel with the message of repentance, he told the Pharisees to produce fruit that shows they are repentant. It is not enough for a person to simply say they are repentant there should be some form of outward evidence to witness to it, thus the Pharisees needed to replace their selfish ungodly behaviour with unselfish godly behaviour. If a person is going to forsake something, they need to replace it with something new, because it is near impossible to forsake old habits unless they are replaced with new habits. If a person does not do this he or she is left in a wilderness, meaning they are open to many other faiths, spiritual teachings or styles of living coming into their life. The parable of the unclean spirit literally applies to the law and the Good News of the Gospel. Jesus is saying it is not enough to get rid of the old belief system of the Levitical priesthood and ceremonial rites it must be replaced with a new belief system (i.e. Jesus Christ and his message of salvation by grace). The parable is prophetic of the generation under the law during the era of the Pharisees. Jesus is saying it is not enough to get rid of the law, unless they are

replaced with the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Pharisees and scribe's generation don't accept Christ's Gospel, they will lose everything. Sadly, they failed to accept Christ's message and seventy years later Rome destroyed the temple and the Jews lost everything they treasured and valued (this happened in 70 AD). That is what Jesus is saying his generation is like they saw and heard the truth for a time but did not commit to it. The Gospel will not yield its hidden joys to those that do not embrace it; eventually the people fall back to their old lifestyles or false beliefs system. In this case the law, trusting in self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. In this way they end up worse than they were before. Jesus is teaching his generation when a person trusts in something other than Christ for salvation they are separated from God and have an unclean, unsaved or common spirit with the secular world, meaning a false religious system (note unclean does not always mean morally corrupt).

The practical application of this message today: would be as follows, when an unsaved person constantly hears the Gospel and does not commit his or her life to it they will be spiritually dry, the Gospel will not yield its hidden joys and pleasures to them so they eventually give it up and go back to their own way of life. Now they are worse than they were before, because they constantly have to deny Christ to be able to live the sinful life, they need to find joy and live as they desire.

The man in the story: when the man in the story hears the Gospel, if he does not repent from what he was trusting in, and choose to follow and trust Christ he will be spiritually empty. Eventually the man will go back to his unclean or common unbelieving friends or what he previously believed, so the man ends up worse than before (note unclean and common does not always mean morally bankrupt).

The strongman: the strong man in this story of Jesus is the Pharisees, the priests and the Law because they had the power and authority over the people, but Christ and grace are the stronger man. Jesus came and took away the ceremonial and religious laws that the Pharisees and priests trusted in, he stripped them of all they valued. Christ has robbed the synagogues of their power and authority (the stronghold) they had over the people. Jesus now says if a person does not follow him, they will be spiritually barren and eventually re-establish the old system of law that Christ has pulled down and then be worse off than before.

The practical application today: old Judaism and the Levitical system is seen in some churches today that have re-established legalism, formalism, ritual and tradition as ways of maintaining salvation or being saved. Some of these things may be OK in themselves and perhaps necessary for an organisation to run smoothly, but when they become laws to be kept to be counted worthy before God or to be saved or to maintain salvation, they become grossly wrong and spiritually destructive. This is because the moment we trust in anything other than Christ and God's grace for our righteousness is the moment we nullify everything Christ achieved for us on the cross and even worse than this we make his brutal, bloody and cruel death serve no purpose.

MATTHEW 12:46-50

Who is my Mother, and who are My Brothers?

- **Matthew 12:46-50:** While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Then one said to him, Behold, your mother and your brothers stand outside, desiring to speak to him. ⁴⁸ But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

The will of the Father is to, believe in Christ and love our neighbour as ourselves it is called the royal law in the New Testament and Jesus says, it sums up the entire law regarding mankind. The apostle James says, "If we are doing this we are doing well" and Jesus is saying to the crowds, "Whoever does these things belongs to his family."

DEMONS, DEVILS AND SICKNESS

The English word demon and demons are not found in the entire King James Bible. In the New Testament of the King James Bible the translators have unfortunately translated both (diabolos) and (daimion) as devil or devils which gives a completely wrong understanding of the Greek words diabolos (devil) and daimion (demon). This has over the years led to a misunderstanding of the difference between devils and demons. Most well recognized and globally accepted modern Bibles have translated demons (daimion) and devils (diabolos) correctly. The word demons (daimion) was believed to be an inferior deity or god and primarily relates to sickness whereas devils (diabolos) means a false accuser or slander and primarily relates to people's behavior and not sickness.

THE JEWS AND DEMONS

The Jews believed demons to be an inferior evil god or deity that held possession of those with severe sickness either bodily or mentally those that were mentally sick were believed to be possessed by an evil inferior god called daimon. They believed that the demons (daimonions) so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves and that people possessed with demons were forced by the demons to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them, and the only cure was by the expulsion of the demons. The fact that the Pharisees and scribes and certain Jews believed John the Baptist and Jesus were possessed by demons (Jn. 7:20) (Jn. 8:48-49) (Jn. 10:19-20) (Matt. 11:18) clearly shows us that just because the religious leaders of Jesus era believed mental illness, deafness, blindness and sickness they didn't understand were a result of demons does not mean it is a true fact.

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THE BIBLICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SICKNESS AND DEMONS

In most instances when people had an illness that does not control the person, it is referred to in biblical writings as a sickness, but when a sickness (mental illness) controls a person to do things they do not want to do (have fits etc.), they are referred to as having demons or an unclean spirit. Sickness commonly related to illnesses the people understood, while demons primarily relate to severe illnesses and diseases, either bodily or mentally the people did not understand. Just because people believe something does not mean it is true if the Bible were being written today it would contain words like bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia epilepsy, melancholy, loss of speech etc., which in the New Testament are referred to as unclean spirits, demons or caused by demons as are paralysis, blindness and deafness and any other sickness the people did not understand.

ONE SUPER EVIL GOD IN CONTROL OF MILLIONS OF LESSER EVIL GODS

Any force in a human that controls a person to do things they cannot control themselves, things that affects their behavior and mental well-being, voices or words in the mind and severe diseases, either bodily or

mentally, (such as schizophrenia paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy, insanity and seizures etc., plus speeches that entice people against the things of God and God Himself are all commonly called demons in the New Testament. But the Bible does not present a picture of one super evil god (slightly less in power than God) being in control of millions of lesser evil gods. This is a modern-day misunderstanding of the language of the Bible. Demons are not evil people as Hollywood portrays demon possessed people in their movies. People in the Bible that had demons were morally good people and, in some case, only children who were sadly afflicted with severe diseases, either bodily or mentally such as paralysis, blindness, deafness and loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy and insanity, etc. In the opinion of the Jews demons had entered their bodies, and so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves. The people of Jesus age believed the possessed were driven to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them; and their only cure was thought to require the expulsion of the demon.

THE ORIGIN OF DEMONS

A demon is believed to be a supernatural being, spirit, or force capable of influencing human lives, usually by evil means. Demons have played a role in the traditions of most religions. The practice of expelling demons (exorcism) that possess people or places has been carried out by many religions. The belief in evil spirits and their ability to influence the lives of people dates from prehistoric times. Many early people believed that spirits occupied all elements of nature. Evil spirits or demons were spirits that brought harm to living people. Societies that believed in demons sought to influence the actions of both good and bad spirits through worship and sacrifices. Some ancient societies, including those in Egypt and Babylonia (now Iraq), believed that such spirits were responsible for the functions of the body and that demons caused specific illnesses.

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The word demon originated from an ancient Greek term, daimon, which referred to beings whose special powers placed them between people and the gods. These beings had the ability either to improve people's lives or carry out the punishment of the gods. Basic Christian ideas about demons originated from references to evil beings or unclean spirits in the Old Testament. By the middle ages, Christian theology had developed an elaborate hierarchy of angels, who were associated with God, and fallen angels, or demons, who were led by Satan. Satan himself was considered the original fallen angel. Islam also developed a complex system of demons. Muslim writings describe a group of evil beings, called jinn, who cause destruction and preside over places where evil activities take place. The original jinn were called Iblis, who was cast out by Allah for refusing to worship Adam, the first man.

MODERN DAY MISUNDERSTANDING OF DEMONS

Demons can be seen as any controlling power or force in people that is destructive to their well-being, science says, anorexia and such like are mental problems and not physical, doctors call anorexia a destructive mental power or force whereas the Bible calls it, demons meaning, something that is destructive to a humans well-being. Today's generations primary understanding of demons comes from Hollywood and not New Testament or spiritual thinking because of this to think of someone having a demon is highly offensive as it implies, they are either extremely evil or extremely morally bankrupt which not one of the persons who are said to have demons in the Bible were. It is not the Bible that is wrong, but the modern-day misunderstanding of the terminology and language of the Bible because modern generations have been influenced by a wrong understanding of the language used during the time of Jesus and the apostles.

SOME SIMILAR BIBLICAL STORIES

A WOMAN AND HER DAUGHTER

A Greek Syrophenician woman asked Jesus to cast forth the demon (daimon) (meaning an inferior deity or god) out of her daughter, Jesus said the demon is gone out of her daughter and when she went to her house, she found her daughter healed. This is a woman's young daughter, a child. The child would not be evil or morally bankrupt, this was not an inferior evil god or deity possessing the child as the Jews believed but a mental disorder or disease (Mark 7:23-30).

A MAN AND HIS CHILD

A man tells Jesus that a spirit takes his child, and the son cries out during his epileptic fits and the boy suffers bodily harm. This is a man loved his son, the child would certainly not be evil or morally bankrupt, the spirit, is not an evil god possessing the child as the Jews believed, but a mental disorder, illness or disease (Luke 9:37-41).

A LUNATIC

A man came to Jesus and asked him to have mercy on his son telling Jesus that his son is lunatic (meaning affected by the moon), and often has very bad fits that sometimes seriously harm the boy (Matt. 17:14-18). The Jews believed evil inferior gods caused mental disorders and the Greeks believed the moon could cause bodily seizures or fits. Today we know the moon does not cause illness, but understand that the child had epilepsy or a similar disease and was having a fit, the Greeks and the Jews knew nothing of epilepsy or the like so they simply referred to illnesses and sicknesses they did not understand as being the result of the moon or the sick person being possessed by inferior evil gods. The Jews mistaken understanding of demons was the same as the Greeks wrong belief about the moon.

THERE ARE MANY SO-CALLED GODS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

The Bible teaches that there is only one real God and creator of all that exists and His name is I AM the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, yet the apostle Paul says there are many so-called gods in heaven and on earth (1 Cor. 8:5). Immediately after making this statement Paul says, nevertheless not everyone possesses this knowledge. Meaning the knowledge that there are many gods, neither do they understand how and why (1 Cor. 8:7). Pagans believed in various gods, often referred to as "the god." These false but very real illusionary gods are created by a very strong belief in "the god" in the imagination of the mind. The New Testament calls these gods demons (daimonion), but that does not mean real inferior false gods actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the person believing in false gods and demons they are very real entities this is most likely why Jesus did not try to explain the medical terms as we know them today.

Jesus rather than go into lengthy detail to explain in detail the medical causes of sickness simply used the common language of his era and manifested God's power over all other gods people believed in by supernaturally healing people. Once a person saw and experience the healing power of God why would they continue to believe in their false inferior gods who had no power? When Jesus gave this same healing power to his apostles to heal physical sickness and spiritual or mental

disorders of the mind it was not solely so they could deliver people from their sickness, but to prove to the people that they were teaching the words of the only true God and the only way to eternal salvation, because the apostles and Jesus ministry was not to teach medical science, but to connect people separated from God to God.

DEMONS (ILLUSIONARY GODS AND THE MIND)

Demons as evil spiritual gods only exist in the mind of those who believe in them, they are an image of the mind created by imagination through a false belief in them. This false image in the mind will affect a person's emotions and feelings accordingly because the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between a real image of the mind and a false one. The imaginary but real images of the mind create real emotions and feelings of fear through the human nervous system and these feelings in turn reinforce and convince those that believe in demons or monsters that real evil gods do exist.

NOT EVERYTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE

Perhaps everything regarding demons is not quite as black and white as I have explained, even the best doctors and scientist in the world today still don't fully understand the cause of many of these illness, but one thing that is very clear and is black and white is that those in the Bible who were said to be possessed by demons were not evil wicked people in fact some were children and others humbly fell at the Lords feet and wanted to follow him added to this God through the Lord Jesus Christ showed them great compassion and mercy.

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For further information see the titles:

- Devils and Demons.
- Beelzebub.
- Unclean Spirits in the New and Old Testament.

All titles are in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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