



Chapter 12: God's Chosen Servant

Eating from the Cornfield on the Sabbath (12:1-14)

Chapter 12 opens with a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees saw the disciples picking some ears of corn from a field and eating them. This was not stealing, the Law of Moses allowed Jews to take corn in this way (Deuteronomy 23:25). However, the Pharisees claimed that by doing it on the Sabbath day the disciples were breaking the commandment which forbade working on the Sabbath. They were missing the real point about it. God gave the law about resting on the Sabbath day so that on it Israel could spend time worshipping God and remembering the way in which He had delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

"But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work...

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day".
(Deuteronomy 5:14-15)

Jesus told to them, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*" (Mark 2:27). Jesus' work on the Sabbath is recorded to teach us that the work of the Lord should be a continuous activity, seven days a week.

Lessons for Us

Twice in this chapter Jesus challenges the Pharisees about their understanding of God's purpose. He says to them "*have you not read...?*" He points out that, unlike themselves, King David, and later the priests, understood that serving God was something to be done on every day of the week, not just on the Sabbath.

Our commitment to the Lord must be part of our everyday lives, not just something for Sunday. We must remember always the sacrifice he made to save us (read Matt. 26:26-30).

The Pharisees even thought that healing on the Sabbath was a form of work and therefore forbidden! So when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand (verses 9-14) they thought Jesus was a threat to their authority and met to plot how they could kill him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were devout Jews who attempted to keep strictly to the Law given by God through Moses. They added to the Law a great many extra rules – their traditions – and became very concerned with obeying these man-made laws. In doing this they lost the true spirit of God's Law. In fact some of their traditions went totally against the original purpose of the Law itself. Many were proud and looked down on their fellow Jews who did not keep their traditions.

Jesus condemned their hypocrisy – while claiming to be faithful servants of God they did not truly obey God; they were not humble, compassionate and merciful in the way they treated people. There were exceptions, like Joseph and Nicodemus who took care of Jesus' body after his death.

A Prophecy about Jesus (12:15-21)

Matthew quotes the words of Isaiah which show Jesus as the chosen Servant of God (Isaiah 42:15-21).

- The Servant would be gentle and would submit to suffering and unjust treatment.
- He would not strive but would be gentle with all who seek to learn God's ways.
- He would also triumph over sin and gain the victory on God's behalf.
- He would bring judgements on all the nations of the world. They would learn God's Laws and trust Him. This is part of the future work of Jesus when he returns to the earth (Matt. 12:21).





The theme of the Servant is an important one in Isaiah's prophecy. Other Servant prophecies include Isaiah 49 which speaks of Jesus as a light to all nations and not just the Jews, and Isaiah 52:13 – 53:1-12, a wonderful prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus.

God's Power and Beelzebul (12:22-30)

Jesus healed a blind and dumb man whom the Jews believed was possessed with a demon. Beelzebul was thought to be a chief demon. Whether or not the Pharisees really believed in Beelzebul, they accused Jesus of using Beelzebul's power in order to stop others believing in him. Jesus showed how foolish this was because if Beelzebul had caused this man's problems then Jesus could not be working with Beelzebul to heal the man. Jesus pointed out that there is no benefit in a kingdom (like the supposed wicked power and activities of Beelzebul) being divided against itself. Similarly, if an enemy fights against himself, he cannot win.

As Lesson 29 of the 40 Lesson Course shows, the word 'satan' simply means an opponent or enemy, and is here used by Jesus to show how wrong they were to argue that he was evil when he was actually fighting evil:

BEELZEBUL/BAAL-ZEBUB: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Baal-zebub occurs in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 1:2 where we can see that it refers to a false god:

"Now Ahaziah (*a Jewish king*) fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, 'Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.'"

The name of this god was actually Baalzebul, meaning 'lord of the house' or 'master of the house'. It is likely that the people of Israel had taken the original name of this Philistine god, changed the last letter, and produced this name which can be translated as 'Lord of the flies' because 'zebul' is Hebrew for dung or filth.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31, 32)

Since Jesus used God's Holy Spirit to heal people it was very wrong to say that he used the power of Beelzebul. Jesus said they were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and could not be forgiven. God is very forgiving and merciful but these Jewish leaders hated Jesus and were prepared to say that his extraordinary power working for the good of people was from an evil source. In this way they deliberately spoke evil of the Holy Spirit, God's power. This was unforgivable.

The Sign of the Prophet Jonah (12:38-41)

Even though Jesus had performed amazing miracles they still asked him for a sign! The greatest sign of all – the resurrection of Jesus – would be given to show that Jesus really is the Son of God, but the leaders of the Jews would reject him.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah was swallowed by a great sea creature and remained in it for three days and nights before God rescued him. Afterwards he went and preached the need for repentance to Gentiles at Nineveh who initially listened but then turned away from God and were destroyed.

This event was a type; it pointed forward to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was in the tomb for three days and nights before God raised him from the dead. The Jews initially accepted his teaching but turned against him and would be almost destroyed by the Roman invasion of their land in AD70.

The Relatives of Jesus (12:46-50)

We know from John 7:5 that Jesus' half-brothers – Mary and Joseph's children – did not believe in him during his ministry, although Mary, his mother, remained faithful. Sadly we read that the relatives of Jesus thought he must be mad (Mark 3:21). However, Acts 1:14, written after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, shows us that the fact of his resurrection changed their minds and they became faithful disciples of Jesus.



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 10

- 1 What work did Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John all do before they followed Jesus? (4:18-22)

- 2 What does the word 'soul' mean?

- 3b Do people have a soul (or spirit) which continues to live after they die?

- 3c Verse 28 shows that the soul is not immortal. Who can destroy it?

- 3c What is meant by destroying "the body in hell (Gehenna)"?

Questions on Chapter 11

- 1 John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus asking whether he was the One promised by God. In his answer Jesus spoke about the miracles he had performed. Why?

In the time of Jesus when a person suffered from some strange illness that could not be explained, people said that he had a demon

2a Why did people say that John the Baptist had a demon?

2b What reason did they give for also rejecting Jesus?

3 What punishment did God bring on the people of Sodom? (See Genesis chapter 19)

4 God's truth is hidden from those who think they are wise and clever. If we want God to show His truth to us, what sort of people should we be?

Questions on Chapter 12

1a Why were the Jews required to keep the Sabbath Day?

1b Why were the Priests exempt from keeping the Sabbath Day?

1c What lessons can we learn from the example of the Priests not required to keep the Sabbath Day?

2 Why should we think carefully before we speak (verse 36)?

3 What was meant by the sign of the prophet Jonah?