

**Matthew 12:  
A Pivotal Change**



# Matthew 12

- **Chapter 12 is a turning point in Matthew's Gospel, the chapter where that generation of Israel loses the kingdom**
- **By the time we reach the end of this chapter, Jesus will have withdrawn His offer of the Kingdom because of their unbelief**
- **And He will issue an ultimatum to the nation concerning His return**
- **Meanwhile, the nation's rejection of Jesus altered Jesus' entire approach to ministry**

# Matthew Chapter 12

- **Jesus and the disciples pick grain on the Sabbath**
- **Jesus heals a man with a shriveled arm on the Sabbath**
- **He heals all the sick in a large crowd**
- **He expels a demon from a mute and blind man**
- **The crowd thinks he's the Messiah but the Pharisees accuse him of healing by Beelzebul**
- **The Pharisees ask for a sign – he refuses and says they will only have the sign of Jonah**

# 4 topics in Chapter 12

- **The Oral Law (Mishnah)**
- **The Messianic miracles**
- **The unforgivable sin**
- **Withdrawal of the kingdom proposal**



# The Oral Law (Mishnah)

- The rabbis were the authors of the Oral Law
- It formed the basis of their authority and power
- They periodically added new laws that burdened the people
- Matthew wanted to illustrate 2 points:
  1. How absurd the Sabbath rules were
  2. How determined Jesus was to ignore them
- Thus, in Ch 12 he writes about the Sabbath miracles and Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees



# The Oral Law (Mishnah)

- The Oral Law had morphed into legalism
- Rabbis made it more important than God's law
- They used it to control the people
- Jesus fought against it
- In the Sermon on the Mount, first, he clarified that he was not changing the law
  - "Do not think that I have come to abolish <sup>a</sup>the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but <sup>t</sup>to fulfill them Matt 5:17
- Then he corrects the oral law by offering examples
- You have heard it said... but I say...
  - ([Matt 5:21](#), [27](#), [31](#), [33](#), [38](#), [43](#))
- Then he ignores the Mishnah and performs miracles on the Sabbath in order to provoke the Pharisees

# Mosaic Law vs The Oral Law (Mishnah)

- **Mosaic Law – the 613 laws that God gave Moses written in the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)**
- **Oral Law (Mishnah) – a written collection of oral traditions that expands on and interprets God’s written Law, especially that given to Moses**
- **The Oral Law also includes edicts and ordinances enacted by the sages throughout the generations, and laws and teachings extrapolated from the Torah's verses**



# The Oral Law (Mishnah) Kosher Rules

- **Example: Kosher laws**
  - **Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 describe which animals, birds and seafood a Jew can eat**
  - **Anything beyond these were rules that did not come from the bible**
  - **The rabbis added all the other kosher rules about utensils, washing, preparing, serving, etc.**
  - **“Do not cook a kid in its mother’s milk”? *Deut 14:21***
  - **This was prohibited because it was a practice of worship for Baal**
  - **The Mishnah misses the point and explains that this passage prohibits eating meat and dairy together**



# Exodus -The Sabbath

- **Example: The Sabbath – a day of rest**
- **<sup>2</sup> For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. <sup>3</sup> Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.” Exodus 35:2-3**



# The Oral Law (Mishnah) Sabbath Rules

- Sabbath observance was something special for Jews; it is the law above all the rest
- There are over 1,500 rabbinical rules for Sabbath observance
- ... which turned the day of rest into a complex maze of regulations bringing burden and worry
- For this reason, Jesus ignored and mocked these rules to make clear that the Pharisees' rules weren't God's rule
- In fact, they weren't even keeping the spirit of God's law



# Jesus' opposition to The Oral Law (Mishnah)

- The rabbis called the Sabbath day Israel's "queen"
- Jesus refused to acknowledge the authority of the Pharisees' endless list of Sabbath day rules
- When confronted by the Pharisees about his Sabbath miracles, Jesus showed how the Sabbath rules were a means of oppression by the Pharisees and not what God had commanded
- He infuriated the Pharisees
- For this reason more than any other, the Pharisees conspired to have Jesus killed



# The Messianic Miracles

- In Jewish belief<sup>[1]</sup>, there were four physical conditions in mankind that could only be corrected by God Himself. It was believed that when God would send His Messiah, the SIGN that would prove to the Pharisees who He was would be the performance of four specific miracles. They are known as the four Messianic Miracles:
  1. Cleansing a Jewish Leper
  2. Casting out a Deaf and Dumb Spirit
  3. The Healing of Birth Defects
  4. Raising the Dead after three days (i.e. the fourth day)

# The Messianic Miracles

## 1. Cleansing a Jewish Leper *Matthew 8:2-4*

- There was no healing of leprosy – it was a miracle only the Messiah could perform
- However, in Leviticus 14, the Lord provided instructions on how to verify any supposed healing of leprosy – it was an 8-day process
- Until the miracle in Mt 8:2-4, no Jew had ever been cured of leprosy, so Leviticus 14 had never been put into action
- The Pharisees were in the audience when Jesus performed the miracle
- They followed the instruction in Lv 14 and verified that the man was cured
- They know this was a Messianic miracle



# The Messianic Miracles

## 2. Casting out a Deaf and Dumb Spirit *Matthew 12:22-37*

- The Jews practiced exorcism (casting out demons) by a formula involving three steps:
  1. They spoke to the demon asking its name.
  2. The demon would reply using the voice of the possessed individual.
  3. The exorcist would then cast out the demon by its name.

The Jews could not cast out a deaf and dumb spirit because the demon could not identify itself through one who could not hear the command nor speak the answer. This led to the belief that when the Messiah came, He would demonstrate His Messiahship by casting out a deaf and dumb spirit.

# The Messianic Miracles

## 3. The Healing of Birth Defects *John 9:1-5*

- The Hebrew sages believed that birth defects were a punishment from God for the sins of a child or his ancestors. This belief was based upon two scriptures:
- “He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:7b)
- “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I the Lord?” (Exodus 4:11)
- They, therefore, reasoned that since it was a punishment from God, only God (or His Messiah) could correct birth defects.



# The Messianic Miracles

## 4. Raising the Dead after three days *John 11:1-44*

In Jewish thought, a dead person's spirit remained with his body for three days. The dead person could, they believed, be brought back to life within that time. After three days, however, corruption of the flesh set in; then, only God Himself could raise the dead person back to life. It was believed that when the Messiah would come, he would raise someone from the dead after three days (on the fourth day)—after his spirit had left his body and corruption of the flesh had begun.



# Discounting the Messianic Miracles

- The Jews following Jesus (including the Pharisees) recognized that Jesus performed the 4 Messianic miracles
- *Can this be the Son of David? Mt 12:23*
- *But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Mt 12:24*
- They ALL – followers and Pharisees – rejected Jesus as Messiah, despite the clear and recognized evidence



# The Unforgivable Sin

- <sup>31</sup> “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy [every evil, abusive, injurious speaking, or indignity against sacred things] will be forgiven people, but [f]blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup> Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit [by attributing the miracles done by Me to Satan] will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the *age* to come. - *Mt 12:31-32 AMP*



# The Unforgivable Sin

- Is Jesus saying we can't be forgiven for blasphemy?
- No - In v 31 He says that any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people (or we could say individuals)
- Jesus said that any sin you or I could commit is forgivable by the blood of Christ...there are no exceptions
- So what is this unforgivable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?



# The Unforgivable Sin

- **The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a term Jesus uses to describe Israel's rejection of Jesus as their King and Messiah**
- **Israel blasphemed the Spirit's testimony when they claimed Jesus' miracles were done by Satan**
- **Both the religious leaders of Israel and the crowd slandered the testimony of the Holy Spirit by calling it the work of Satan**
- **As a result of that sin, the Lord withdraws the offer of the Kingdom for that generation of Israel**

# The Unforgivable Sin

- **The unforgivable sin is a national sin with a national consequence, not a personal sin that would condemn someone to hell**
- **Jesus confirms this in v32**
- **So what is the national consequence?**



# Withdrawal of Kingdom Proposal

- Through the first 11 chapters, Jesus is offering the Kingdom to Israel
- “... the Kingdom is at hand...”
- Now with their rejection of Him, he ends that offer until some time in the future when the nation recognizes Him as Messiah
- “Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’ Luke 13:35

# Renewal of Kingdom Proposal

- We know this happens at the end of the tribulation
- <sup>10</sup> “I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace (unmerited favor) and supplication. And they will look at Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him as one who weeps bitterly over a firstborn. <sup>11</sup> In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of [the city of] Hadadrimmon in the Valley of [d]Megiddo [over beloved King [e]Josiah]. *Zech 12:10-11*



# Matthew Chapter 12

- **Sad, pivotal, fortunate chapter**
- **Changed Jesus ministry**
- **Ended His proposal to bring the Kingdom to Israel in that generation**
- **Stopped trying to convince Israel that he was the Messiah**
- **Opened the door for Gentiles to hear the Word**



# Change in Ministry

## Matthew 13 and forward

- **Jesus stopped proclaiming he was the Messiah and that the kingdom was at hand – that offer was withdrawn**
- **Jesus only taught in parables**
- **He required an expression of faith before he healed anyone**
- **He told people not to disclose who he was or what he had done**
- **He began preparing the apostles for their mission: Spreading the Good News**

