



Searching for the SØN

Matthew 8-12



Matthew 8—12: Searching for the Son

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Important dates for Term 1:

February

04th – Start of Term 1
 06th – CG Leaders Meeting
 07th – Lighthouse & Soulies Launch
 08th – SRE Conference
 11th – CG Launch Event (10am & 7pm)
 12th – CG Launch Event (7pm)
 17th – CG's Kick Off
 26th – Discover

March

15th – Catch Ups for Six
 16th – Church AGM
23rd – Missionary Week (Webbs)

April

4th – Lighthouse & Soulies (last week)
 6th – Super Sunday Services (10/4)
 11th – End of Term 1
18th – Good Friday
20th – Easter Sunday
 23rd – CG Leaders Meeting
 25th – ANZAC Day
 28th – Start Term 2

Before You Begin

Introduction

This section of Matthew's Gospel begins with the words "When he came down from the mountain..." (Matthew 8:1). The events of the following chapters take place in the shadow of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7), which we explored last year. The Sermon is many things: a recapitulation of the law of God, a manifesto for God's Kingdom. But it is also a character profile of the true Son of God. The Sermon answers the question: "What does the true Son of God look like?"

The ensuing chapters (Matthew 8—12) can be read as a search for the true Son of God. Jesus continues his preaching ministry (Matthew 8—9) and then sends out his twelve disciples as an extension of his preaching ministry (Matthew 10). The response is underwhelming. Jesus denounces the cities in which his miracles had been performed for their lack of repentance (Matt 11:20). Jesus is opposed not only by the religious leaders of his day (Matt 12:22–45 cf. 12:14), but even his own mother and brothers (Matt 12:46–50).

Theology

The approach we are taking in these studies is to keep the focus on Christ. This makes sense of this section (Matthew 8—12), insofar as Christ turns out to be the true Son of God described in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7). It also makes sense of the Gospel as a whole. Martin Kähler (1835–1912) once described the gospels as "passion narratives with extended introductions." It is important to keep this in mind as we read this section of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is going to the cross in order to make the Kingdom of God a reality.

In these chapters, Jesus reveals himself to be the Christ or the Messiah, God's anointed one (11:2). The title that is used most frequently to describe Jesus is "Son of Man" (8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40). In the Old Testament, this phrase was used to describe a human being (e.g. the titular character in Ezekiel). In the New Testament, the title takes on divine connotations. This phrase is complemented by other titles like Son of David (9:27; 12:23) and Son of God (8:29). Jesus's identity is closely connected with what he does. The two most important summaries of Jesus's ministry are found in 4:23–25 and 9:35–36:

Matt 4:23–25: ²³*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*

²⁴*News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.* ²⁵*Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.*

Matt 9:35–36: ³⁵*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.* ³⁶*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 8—12 climaxes with Jesus's assertion that he is not subject to creation but the Master of it (Matt 12:1–14). As his followers finally realise who he is, he warns them to conceal his identity (Matt 12:15–16) to fulfil the promise of the first Servant Song in Isaiah (42:1–4):

¹⁸ *Here is My Servant whom I have chosen,
My beloved in whom My soul delights;
I will put My Spirit on Him,
and He will proclaim justice to the nations.*

¹⁹ *He will not argue or shout,
and no one will hear His voice in the streets.*

²⁰ *He will not break a bruised reed,
and He will not put out a smoldering wick,
until He has led justice to victory.*

²¹ *The nations will put their hope in His name.* (Matt 12:18–21)

Jesus thus reveals himself to be the true Son of God, who brings about the Kingdom of God (Matt 12:28).

Application

There is much that challenges us. Jesus underlines the high cost of discipleship (Matt 8:18–22). He challenges his disciples to take up the call to mission (Matt 9:35–38). But there is also much encouragement we can take from these chapters. To undergird his preaching about the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus shows compassion (see esp. Matt 9:36): healing many (Matt 8:14–17), driving out demons (Matt 8:26–34), healing the paralysed (Matt 9:1–8), healing the blind (Matt 9:27–34) and even raising the dead (Matt 9:18–26)! In all of this he offers rest for weary souls (Matt 11:25–30).

Resources

There are many good resources for studying Matthew's Gospel. Matthias Media has published a Pathway Bible Guide called *Fear and Freedom* (by Peter Collier), which covers the same material over 8 studies (available in print, e-book and PDF formats). These are designed for Christians who are new to studying the Bible and who find other studies too much of a stretch.

Although commentators tended to overlook Matthew's Gospel for a long time, this has recently been rectified with some very good commentaries. Michael J. Wilkins has an excellent commentary in the *NIV Application Commentary* series, which attempts to explain the original meaning of the text, bridge the original context with the contemporary context, and then explore the contemporary significance. This series aims in particular to drive the text towards pastoral application. Also reliable are the commentaries in the *Bible Speaks Today* series (by Michael Green) and the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* series (by R. T. France). The latter is based on the larger and definitive commentary in the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* series.

It would also help to have a copy of the *New Bible Dictionary* to assist preparation.

Study 1: The Healing Ministry of Jesus (1)

Matthew 8:1–17

Getting Started

1. Jesus is famous for his healing ministry. What does that ministry suggest about him?

Introduction

In Matthew 5—7, Jesus has just given his most famous speech, known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” When Jesus finished teaching, “the crowds were amazed... because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (7:28).

Matthew 8 and 9 give us some examples of what Jesus did in his earthly ministry in the region of Galilee. This ministry is summarised in Matt 9:35–36: “³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” This echoes a similar summary in Matt 4:23–25.

In this passage (8:1–17), Jesus heals and restores people who were often marginalised within Jewish culture: lepers (8:1–4), Gentiles or non-Jews (8:5–13), and women (8:14–15).

Read Matthew 8:1–4

2. The man with leprosy says to Jesus “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean” (8:2). What is the man with leprosy questioning? Why is this important?
3. Jesus said to the man with leprosy “See that you don’t tell anyone” (8:4). Why did Jesus say this?

Read Matthew 8:5–13

4. Why is it significant that a Centurion approaches Jesus asking for help?

5. Why does the Centurion explain and illustrate his own authority (8:5–9)?

6. Why was Jesus astonished at the Centurion's statement (8:10–11)?

7. What will happen to the subjects of the Kingdom of God (8:12)?

Read Matthew 8:14–15

8. Why is it significant that Peter's mother-in-law began to wait on Jesus (8:15)?

Read Matthew 8:16–17

9. What do Jesus's miracles show (8:16–17)?

Application

10. How does Jesus treat traditional boundaries of illness, nationality and gender (consider especially 8:2, 10, 15)?

11. Why is a person's assessment of Jesus and his authority important (8:11–12)?

12. What is your assessment of Jesus and his authority?

Prayer

- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus's authority is matched by his compassion.
- Pray for opportunities to point others to the love of Jesus.

Study 2: The Challenge of Following Jesus

Matthew 8:18–34

Getting Started

1. What is the most challenging thing you have ever done. What is it that made it challenging?

Introduction

In the previous study, we saw Jesus begin to break down the conventional boundaries of illness, nationality and gender so that all might respond to the invitation to enter the Kingdom of God. In this study, Jesus addresses the challenge of following him.

Read Matthew 8:18–22

2. A teacher of the law promises to follow Jesus (8:19). Why does Jesus reply: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (8:20)?
3. Why does Jesus refer to himself as the “Son of Man” (8:20)? See Dan 7:13–14 for the background of this important phrase.
4. A disciple asks Jesus for permission to bury his father (8:21). Why does Jesus reply “Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead”?

Read Matthew 8:23–27

In the previous section, we saw Jesus’s authority over sickness and death (8:1–17). In this section, we see Jesus’s authority over nature. On a map, the Sea of Galilee does not appear that big. However, it could be very dangerous. In the blink of an eye, an apparently calm sea could turn into a dangerous squall, thanks to an east wind that blew over the mountains, especially in the autumn and the spring. This produced downdrafts and storms which could result in waves seven feet and more. This threatened the lives of fishermen who found themselves stranded on the sea. The disciples have probably crossed

the sea many times, especially those who were professional fisherman, like Peter, Andrew, James and John (4:18–22). This must have been a powerful storm to induce so much fear in the disciples.

5. What criticism does Jesus level at his disciples (8:26)? Why is this criticism valid?

6. What did the disciples realise in the aftermath of the event (8:27)?

7. What does this event show us about Jesus?

Read Matthew 8:28–34

By crossing “to the other side of the lake” (8:18), Jesus and his disciples are moving from a Jewish region to a Gentile region. This explains why pigs are being raised, an animal which is unclean to Jews (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8). “Gadarenes” refers both to the village of Gadara, about five miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, as well as the surrounding region.

8. How do the demon-possessed men address Jesus (8:28)? What does this tell us about the nature of faith?

9. What is the response when Jesus tells the demons to “Go” (8:32)?

10. What was the reaction of those tending the pigs and their neighbours (8:33–34)?

Application

11. What are you afraid of? How does Jesus address your fears?

12. Many people struggle to balance responsibility to family with commitment to God. How does this passage address this challenge (see especially 8:18–23)?
13. Jesus clearly expected his disciples to grow in their trust in him (8:26). How do you need to grow in your trust in Jesus?
14. In Matt 8:27, the disciples ask the question, “What kind of man is this...?” How would your workmates or friends answer this question?

Prayer

- Pray that you would give priority to following Jesus ahead of anyone and anything else.
- Pray that our fears will not stop us from embracing the challenge of following Jesus.

Study 3: The Call to Follow Jesus

Matthew 9:1–17

Getting Started

1. Which people does our society regard as being morally sick? What cures are offered for their ills?

Introduction

In the previous study, we have seen Jesus demonstrate his authority over nature (8:23–27) and over the demonic world. In this chapter we see Jesus’s authority over disease and sin (9:1–8). Previously, Jesus had made a connection between sickness and sin (8:17).

Read Matthew 9:1–8

2. Jesus has already cured paralysis (4:24). How does this miracle go beyond this (9:2)?
3. How did the scribes react, and why did they react that way (9:3)?
4. Jesus responds with a rhetorical question (9:5). What is the logic that Jesus is using?
5. Why does Jesus heal the paralytic (9:6)?
6. Why were the crowds awestruck at the subsequent events (9:8)?

Read Matthew 9:9–13

7. What is Matthew’s response to the call of Jesus (9:9)?

8. What reason does Jesus give for eating with tax collectors and sinners (9:12)?

9. Read Micah 6:6–8. What is the problem? What is the solution? How does this material apply to this situation?

Read Matthew 9:14–17

10. What is the element of surprise in this passage (9:14)?

11. How does Jesus use the three analogies:

- a wedding feast (9:15)?
- an unshrunk piece of cloth on an old garment (9:16)?
- new wine and old wineskins (9:17)?

Application

12. What do these passages show us about Jesus?

13. What are the different responses to Jesus? What response would he like? How do you respond?

14. For Matthew the tax collector – the author of this Gospel – the cost of discipleship is immediate and tangible. He loses his livelihood and has a complete change of vocation. What has discipleship cost you? Are you prepared to pay the price?

15. How long does it take for Matthew to begin evangelising (9:9–10)? What does this suggest to us?

Prayer

- Pray that we would be prepared to pay the cost of following Jesus.
- Pray for one friend who does not see their need for “Dr Jesus” – that they would see it.
- Pray that we would see afresh the radical difference that Jesus’s kingdom brings.

Study 4: The Healing Ministry of Jesus (2)

Matthew 9:18–38

Getting Started

1. Think of a time in your life when you were the recipient of compassion. What difference did it make to your life?

Introduction

This passage returns to the healing ministry of Jesus (8:1–17). Jesus’s healing miracles thus bookend his teaching about the challenge of following Jesus (8:18–34) and the call to follow Jesus (9:1–17). While in the first cycle of healing miracles, Jesus shows that he came not to cater for the religious or social elite but to heal the marginalised, in the second cycle of healing miracles, he shows his extraordinary compassion.

Read Matthew 9:18–26

Jesus has already had a number of encounters with religious leaders, including the Scribes (9:1–8), the Pharisees (9:10–13) and John’s disciples (9:14–17). While in previous episodes the religious leaders were angry and annoyed with Jesus, the ruler here has the same trust as the leper (8:2–4), the centurion (8:5–13) and the paralytic and his friends (9:2–7).

2. How is Jesus’s compassion shown to the synagogue leader (9:19)?
3. How is Jesus’s compassion shown to the bleeding woman (9:22)?
4. The synagogue leader and the bleeding woman have different expectations about Jesus. What are they?

Read Matthew 9:27–31

5. Read 2 Sam 7:12–16. What is meant by the term “Son of David” (Matt 9:27)?

6. How does Jesus's response to the two blind men compare with his response to the bleeding woman?
7. As with the man with leprosy (8:4), Jesus says "See that no one knows about this" (9:30). Why did Jesus say this?

Read Matthew 9:32–34

8. The Pharisees attribute Jesus's power to the "prince of demons" (9:34). What does this say about them?
9. Once again, the crowd is amazed (9:33 cf. 7:28). What does this say about them?

Read Matthew 9:35–38

10. What was Jesus's response to the crowds (9:36)?

Application

11. What do these stories tell us about Jesus? What implications does that have for our lives?
12. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." Is Jesus calling you to consider pastoral ministry?

Prayer

- Pray for Jesus to send workers into his harvest field.

Study 5: Jesus Goes on Mission

Matthew 10:1–20

Getting Started

1. Who shared Jesus with you? Who have you shared Jesus with?

Introduction

At the end of the previous chapter, Jesus lamented that the crowds he encountered were harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd (9:36). He then noted that “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (9:37). He concludes by calling his disciples to pray that he would send out workers into his harvest field (9:38).

Read Matthew 10:1–4

2. What authority does Jesus give the disciples? Is that what we would expect given the preceding verses?

Read Matthew 10:5–15

3. Where does Jesus send his disciples initially (10:5–6)? Why do you think that is?
4. What message were the disciples given to preach (10:7–8)? How does this fit in with Jesus’s mission?
5. What manner were the disciples to preach in (10:9–15)?
6. In what circumstance were the disciples to shake the dust off their feet (10:14)?

Read Matthew 10:16–20

7. Where does Jesus send his disciples here (see v. 18)? What does this tell us about how this section (Matt 10:16–20) relates to the previous section (Matt 10:5–15)?
8. What does Jesus mean when he tells his disciples to be “shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (10:16)?
9. How will some people react to the preaching of the disciples (10:17–18)?
10. How are the disciples to handle this situation (10:19–20)?

Application

11. All Christians are expected to evangelise (e.g. Matt 5:16; Acts 8:4; 1 Pet 3:15). How will our experience be like that of the disciples?
12. How will our experience NOT be like that of the disciples (10:8)?
13. The disciples in this passage are devoted to full-time gospel work. How should their work be financed?

Prayer

- Give thanks for those who brought the good news of the kingdom of heaven to you.
- Pray that we would be as “shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” as we share Jesus with a world that so desperately needs it.

Study 6: The Preaching of Jesus

Matthew 10:21–42

Getting Started

1. When embarking on a project, why is it important to have the right expectations? Can you think of examples where having wrong expectations had very negative effects?

Introduction

At the start of Matthew 10, Jesus commissions the disciples and sends them on mission. Their task is to preach that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (10:7). He gave them authority to perform all kinds of miracles, like driving out impure spirits, and healing every kind of disease and illness (10:1). Here, Jesus prepares his disciples for the realities of mission.

Read Matthew 10:21–25

2. What warning does Jesus issue in 10:21?
3. What warning does Jesus issue in 10:22, and what consolation does he offer?
4. What promise does Jesus make (10:23)?
5. What principle does Jesus outline in 10:24–25? How is this an encouragement?

Read Matthew 10:26–31

6. What are some reasons that Jesus gives for having courage in the face of opposition?

Read Matthew 10:32–42

7. When it comes to preaching the gospel in public, Jesus's disciples face a stark set of alternatives (10:32–33). What are these alternatives?
8. When it comes to preaching the gospel at home, the implications are similarly stark (10:34–37). How will the preaching of the gospel affect the status quo?
9. What metaphor does Jesus use to illustrate the cost of discipleship (10:38)? Why is this significant?
10. What consequences follow for those who welcome the disciples of Jesus (10:40–42)?

Application

11. What is the paradox of taking up our cross and following Jesus (10:38)? How is this possible?
12. One of the main theological ideas in Matthew 10 is that the mission of Jesus's disciples is an extension of God's own mission. How does this truth offer us encouragement?
13. What are the challenges that accompany going on mission?
14. What are the consolations that accompany going on mission?

15. The reality is that not every person becomes a missionary overseas. Nevertheless, how can we all be involved in the task of worldwide mission?

Prayer

- Give thanks for Jesus's promise to stand by those who stand by him.
- Pray for courage to acknowledge Jesus before people.
- Pray for willingness to lose our lives for Jesus's sake.

Study 7: Stop the Search

Matthew 11:1–19

Getting Started

1. Think of a friend who has doubts about Jesus. What doubts do they have? How would you go about answering them?

Introduction

Jesus has just given his disciples instructions for preaching the gospel in Israel (10:5–15) and beyond (10:16–20), and prepared his disciples for the realities of mission (10:21–42). John the Baptist had come baptising people with water for repentance (3:11), proclaiming that one would come after him who baptises people with the Holy Spirit (a sign of salvation) and with fire (a sign of judgment; 3:12). John was then imprisoned (4:12), an event which served as the catalyst for Jesus's preaching ministry in Galilee. John will eventually be put to death (14:1–12). He has apparently heard of Jesus's teaching (Matthew 5–7), miracles (Matthew 8–9) and mission (Matthew 10). The question then becomes: can we stop the search for a saviour? Is he here?

Read Matthew 11:1–6

2. What did Jesus do immediately after commissioning the disciples and sending them on mission (11:1)? What does that tell us about their mission?
3. The disciples of John the Baptist seek confirmation that Jesus is indeed the Messiah (11:2–3). What does Jesus's cryptic answer suggest (11:4–6)?

For advanced students, you can identify corresponding promises in Isaiah 15:30–31; 26:18–18; 29:18; 35:5–6; 61:1–2).

4. What is the last miracle in the list in 10:5? Why is this significant? Look at the beatitude at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:3.

Read Matthew 11:7–10

5. Having told the disciples of John the Baptist to consider the evidence about himself (11:4–6), Jesus tells the crowd to consider the evidence about John the Baptist. How does Jesus characterise John by comparing him to:
- A reed swayed by the wind (11:7)?
 - A man dressed in fine clothes (11:8)?
 - A prophet (11:9)?
6. In Matt 11:10, Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1. Why does he include this quote?

Read Matthew 11:11–15

7. How can John the Baptist be simultaneously greater than anyone in the present generation and also least in the kingdom of heaven (11:11)?
8. How does John the Baptist figure in God's plans and purposes (11:12–15)?

Read Matthew 11:16–19

9. Who are "this generation"? Why does Jesus take such an unfavourable view of them (11:16–17)?
10. What proof does Jesus offer of the present generation's poor judgment (11:18–19)? Look back at Matt 9:14.

11. What irony does Jesus point to (11:19)? Look back at Matt 9:12.

Application

12. What is the appropriate response to Jesus (11:15)?

13. What is Jesus's identity and mission?

Prayer

- Give thanks that God kept his promise about sending a messenger like Elijah in the person of John the Baptist.
- Pray we would be prepared to listen and receive what Jesus teaches about himself.
- Pray for anyone you know who may be struggling with doubts, that they would not take offence at Jesus.

Study 8: A Warning and an Invitation

Matthew 11:20–30

Getting Started

1. How do you find and experience rest?

Introduction

In the first part of Matthew 11, Jesus rebuked the crowds and the religious leaders for the improper response to the ministry of John the Baptist and his own ministry. Here, Jesus speaks a word of judgment on those who repent (11:20–24). However, he also gives one of the warmest invitations to the crowds to become his disciples and find rest in relationship with him (11:25–30).

Read Matthew 11:20–24

The three cities of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida are sometimes known as the “Evangelical Triangle”, insofar as they were the cities in which most of Jesus’s miracles had been performed. Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus’s ministry in Galilee (4:13; 9:1, 9). Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities in northwest Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon). In the Old Testament, they are associated with Baal worship and pride in their wealth and power. They were places full of bloodshed (Isa 23:1–17; Jer 25:22; 27:37; Ezek 26:29; Joel 3:48; Zech 9:2–4).

2. What was the result of Jesus’s ministry of preaching and miracles (11:20)?
3. Advanced question: Some theologians (e.g. William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland, Alvin Plantinga, etc.) believe that Matthew 11:21–24 supports the idea that God predestines people to salvation based on his foreknowledge of whether they would have repented, given the opportunity to do so (the so-called theory of Middle Knowledge). Supposedly this supports the idea that people are truly free to accept or reject God. What is the problem with this argument?
4. What warning does Jesus give in Matthew 11:21–22?
5. What irony does Jesus highlight in Matthew 11:23?

Read Matthew 11:25–30

6. Who are the “wise and learned” and the “little children” (11:25)?
7. What are the implications of Jesus’s statement that “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (11:27)?
8. What feelings do the language of “weary” and “burdened” evoke (11:28)?
9. Why should we take up Jesus’s yoke (11:29–30)?

Application

10. What does this passage teach us about our knowledge of God? How is our knowledge of God limited? How are these limitations overcome?
11. Do you know the true God? Do you need to repent of your sin and put your faith in Jesus?
12. One of the theological principles that emerges from this passage is the fact that God’s sovereignty in salvation (Matt 11:25–30) is perfectly balanced with humankind’s responsibility to repent and believe (Matt 11:20–24). How is this an encouragement to us?
13. Does Jesus’s way of discipleship mean lawlessness? Why/why not?

Prayer

- Thank God the Father that we can know him through his Son Jesus.
- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus is a humble and gentle master, and for the rest and freedom he gives for our souls.
- Pray that we would be prepared to take Jesus's yoke upon ourselves, and not be stubborn and refuse to learn from him.
- Pray for a friend or family member who has not yet found rest for their souls in Jesus, they would come to him.

Study 9: Lord of the Sabbath

Matthew 12:1–14

Getting Started

1. Share an example of when you struggled to “see the wood for the trees” or to see the big picture in the context of the details.

Introduction

Jesus’s ministry has experienced an undercurrent of opposition from the religious leaders of Israel, especially the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Here, this opposition comes out into the open. In Matthew 12, Jesus vindicates himself in a number of ways, for example as the true Lord of the Sabbath (12:1–8). This passage should be understood in the context of Matthew 11:28–30, where in contrast to the yoke of the Pharisees, the yoke of Jesus is easy and his burden is light.

Read Matthew 12:1–8

2. When do the events in this story take place (12:1)? Why is this significant? See Exodus 2:8–10 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15.
3. What accusation do the Pharisees level at Jesus’s disciples (12:2)?
4. How does Jesus defend his disciples (12:3–6)? See 1 Samuel 21:1–9 and 22:9–23.
5. In Matthew 12:7, Jesus cites Hosea 6:6. What point does he make here?
6. What theological principle does Jesus lay out (12:8)?

Read Matthew 12:9–14

Jesus enters the synagogue (12:9) of the Pharisees who had just challenged him (12:2). Just as the Pharisees had attempted to trap Jesus in Matt 12:1–8, they attempt to trap him here. Earlier they had considered Jesus's healing and declaration of forgiveness of sins blasphemy (9:1–7).

7. What do the Pharisees attempt to do here (12:9–10)? How do they do this?
8. How does Jesus counter their dilemma (12:11–12)? How is this consistent with Matt 12:5?
9. What does the miracle confirm (12:13)?
10. What is the consequence of this confrontation (12:14)? Why does this happen?

Application

11. What warning is there for us in this passage?
12. Think back on Jesus's quote from Hosea 6:6: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." How should this understanding affect:
 - a. The way we treat other people?
 - b. The way we treat God?

Prayer

- Give thanks that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath who serves his people gently.
- Pray that we would see Jesus rightly and so avoid petty and harsh legalism.

Study 10: The Chosen Servant

Matthew 12:15–32

Getting Started

1. “It’s not what you know, but who you know.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

Introduction

In the previous section (Matthew 12:1–14), Jesus established his authority over the Sabbath, which firms up his claim to be the Son of Man (cf. 9:1–8; 12:8). These are the first times that Jesus is challenged publicly by the Pharisees. Jesus confounds the Pharisees, and in response they begin plotting to kill him (Matt 12:14).

Read Matthew 12:15–21

2. What is Jesus’s response to the imminent threat posed against him (12:15–16)?

Jesus explains that he has come in fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1–4, one of four so-called “Servant Songs” in the Book of Isaiah (42:1–4, 49:1–7, 50:4–9 and 52:13–53:12).

3. What is God’s relationship with this Servant (12:18a)?
4. What kinds of things does the Servant do (12:18b)? What does this show about him?
5. How will the Servant act (12:19–20)?
6. What will be the consequence of the Servant’s actions (12:21)?

Read Matthew 12:22–32

7. What new title is introduced here (12:22–23)?
8. How do the Pharisees respond to Jesus's latest miracle (12:24)?
9. How does Jesus challenge the Pharisees (12:25–29)?
10. What is the scope of Jesus's forgiveness (12:30–32)?

Application

11. What do you need forgiveness for? Do you really believe that Jesus is willing and able to forgive you?
12. What is "blasphemy against the Spirit"? How would you respond to someone who said, "I am worried that I have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit and cannot be forgiven."

Prayer

- Give thanks for the fact that Jesus is stronger than Satan and that he calls all who do the will of his Father his brothers and sisters.

Study 11: Signs of the Times

Matthew 12:33–50

Getting Started

1. Think of a time when you misinterpreted a sign. What were the consequences?

Introduction

In the previous section, we saw Jesus identify himself with the Servant in Isaiah (12:17–21) and the Son of David (12:23). The Pharisees responded by accusing Jesus of being under Satan’s sway (12:22–23). Jesus accuses them of inconsistency (12:23–29) and warns them against blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (12:30–32). The Pharisees are part of the current generation of Israel’s people who have rejected John’s and Jesus’s ministries (cf. 12:39, 41–42; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34). Jesus returns to his critique of this generation (12:39, 41–42, 45).

Read Matthew 12:33–37

2. What point is Jesus making here (12:33–35)? How do the illustrations prove to demonstrate this point?
3. What warning does Jesus give (12:36–37)?

Read Matthew 12:38–42

4. Jesus’ response to the Pharisees might seem harsh at first. Why is Jesus’s response justified? Glance back over at Matt 9:9–13, 27–34; 12:1–14, 22–37.
5. How does Jesus apply the story about Jonah and the big fish to himself (12:40)?

6. How will the people of Ninevah (12:41) and the Queen of the South (12:42) condemn the present generation? For Nineveh's response to Jonah's preaching, see Jonah 3. For the Queen of Sheba's response to King Solomon, see 1 Kings 10.

Read Matthew 12:43–45

7. How does Jesus turn the tables on the Pharisees?

Read Matthew 12:46–50

8. Why is this scene especially surprising (12:46–47)?
9. How does Jesus respond (12:48–50)?

Application

10. Why should we be encouraged by Jesus's response to his family?
11. How would you respond to someone who said, "I just wish God would give me a sign that I should follow Jesus – then I would believe"?

Prayer

- Pray that our words would not condemn us but would show that we follow the one greater than Solomon and Jonah.
- Pray for situations where you might be tempted to neither stand with Jesus nor gather with his people.

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